

ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER NEWSLETTER



Boston University School of Theology Winter 1986 Vol. 2, No. 2

Women Around the World: The Personal Is Global

During Christmas break, I participated in a three-week travel seminar for theology students sponsored by the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries. Our group traveled in Kenya, India, and Pakistan and experienced so much that our senses were nearly overloaded. I share with you here a sampling of this experience.

Kenya is a country struggling to be self-sufficient, to feed every hungry mouth, to educate every child. But despite the hardships here, I experienced something almost paradisiacal: the strength and the joy of the people we met in Kenya was something I had never before encountered. Margaret was one of these sources of strength and joy. A former lecturer at a Kenyan institute of higher learning (a position rarely held by a woman), Margaret now heads up a church-sponsored program, Education for Life. She works primarily with teenagers, helping them to make sexually responsible choices. In a country where motherhood at the age of thirteen or fourteen is not uncommon, her work is vital. Smiling, she spoke about the Pope's visit to Kenya and his strong stance against birth control. "We let him speak and then we go on with our work. What does the Pope know about overpopulation problems--does he have any children?"

Though Christians make up less than five percent of the population of India, their contributions through educational institutions and relief agencies are significant. One of our Muslim hosts admitted that of all the religions in India,

"Christianity is the one that really meets the needs of the poor." Unfortunately, there are few opportunities for women to assume leadership positions in the church. Though the Methodist Church of India does allow the ordination of women, the bishop we visited has only one ordained woman under his jurisdiction. The future looks no brighter. Less than three percent of the students at Leonard Theological Seminary (an ecumenical seminary in northern India) are women. Although a woman graduated at the top of last year's class, she was not appointed to serve in a church.

Two things impressed me most about Pakistan: the status of women and the status of Afghan refugees. The most liberal estimate of the female literacy rate I heard was six percent. In order for a man to be convicted of rape, four adult, male Moslems must have witnessed the crime. Under the Pakistani Law of Evidence, the testimony of two female witnesses equals the testimony of one male witness. Pakistan has absorbed nearly three million Afghan refugees in seven years. To a great extent this has been done with grace and compassion.

I returned with a better perspective on how big the world is and more painfully aware of the privilege we exercise by living in middle-class America. Life is hard in the Third World--especially for women. I was also impressed by a Church that is transforming lives, renewing hopes, and questioning economic systems in Kenya, India, and Pakistan.

--Shelley Matthews, second-year M.Div. student

HEROINES OF HOPE

From the view of seagulls flying overhead it is a verdant paradise. As a seaside village it appears as a visual explosion of color--blue skies, white sand, and tropical green. However, the village from a human perspective is a congested settlement of squatters. Like the other denizens of Dovao City, on Mindinao in the Philippines, these people live on land they do not own. The houses of Dovao City rest precariously on stilts above swamp mud and water filled with human feces. Most of the families in these "houses" live on less than \$9.50 per day. There is no running water nor any source of uncontaminated water in the village.

Yet this place of inhumane habitation is home. The squatters have no place else to go. They say President Marcos misuses or misappropriates the development money that might create humane housing. A short time ago a pro-Marcos businessman made plans to demolish the village and construct a factory. The villagers took this man to court. The court ruled that the village land was zoned for nonindustrial use. Nevertheless, the businessman circumvented the law and went ahead with his plan. Hence, a surveyor was sent to survey the land. The village women surrounded the surveyor, took his recordings, and played with his instruments. The surveyor left in disgust and returned with an armed guard the next day. The women, undaunted by the guns, converged by the dozens on the men and stripped them naked. The men retreated with their guns, minus a bit of dignity.

That village scene is a tragically funny metaphor for the national Filipino struggle. For Filipino women, the effort against politically induced poverty and the struggle to end patriarchy are two parts of one movement for human liberation.

--Cornell William Brooks, second-year M.Div. student and representative on the AHSC Program and Policy Committee

WOMEN OF THE PHILIPPINES

During the first two weeks of January, nine students and I traveled to the Philippines on a trip sponsored by the University Christian Movement in New England. We sought to broaden our worldview through experiencing life in this Third World country and to better understand the history and current situation of this former U.S. colony, especially in light of American foreign policy. We also explored the ways in which individual Christians and the Church are integrating their faith and the current struggle for freedom and democracy and what our responsibility as Christians in relation to our own country and the Philippines is.

Our days were full, rich, challenging, and, at points, overwhelming. We felt despair at our visit to "Smokey Mountain"--a smoldering garbage dump on which three thousand families live. Though this sense of despair cannot (and should not) be easily dismissed, we received a sense of hope for the future from other experiences.

One place this hope, energy, and commitment were most evident was in the women's movement. Emerging from centuries of patriarchal Spanish and American rule, women in the Philippines are reclaiming their history of resistance, articulating their current situation of double oppression (under Marcos rule and under sexual oppression within the larger system) and boldly throwing off these shackles as they move toward genuine freedom and democracy. The most instructive aspect of our interaction with a variety of women's groups was the way they view their struggle to liberate themselves as women within the larger movement to liberate their country. They say these two goals are inseparable.

We have much to learn from these women of courage as they express their anger, form new visions of a just and free future, and develop a plan of action to work for the liberation of all in the process of bringing about that future.

--Kathryn Johnson, BUSTh alumna

Women and the Word

The Prophetic Stance

April 7-8, 1986

Sponsored by the Anna Howard Shaw Center
Boston University School of Theology

In an effort to discern and affirm the unique gifts which women bring to preaching, the *Women and the Word* seminar series of the Anna Howard Shaw Center was born. The Shaw Center's second annual preaching event for women, *The Prophetic Stance*, will focus homiletically on prophetic preaching and its power for women.

Teaching preacher for this seminar, Katie G. Cannon, will lead participants in study on how preaching out of the Black idiom can be empowering to all women who proclaim the Word.



Katie G. Cannon is Assistant Professor of Christian Ethics at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA. She is the first Afro-American woman to earn her Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary and the first Afro-American woman to be ordained to the ministry by the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

Joining Katie in leadership will be:

Kip Tiernan founder and director of Boston's Rosie's Place, a shelter for homeless women, and co-founder of the Poor People's United Fund. Kip brings to this seminar her experience of living out a prophetic ministry in inner-city Boston.

Format of Women and the Word: The Prophetic Stance:

Using a preaching model presented by Katie Cannon, the seminar will include: focused workshops on sermon development, small-group opportunities for sharing the Word proclaimed, worship, and opportunities to meet other women striving to preach and proclaim the prophetic word in dance, music, storytelling, and traditional homiletic styles.

Women and the Word
Boston University School of Theology
April 7 and 8, 1986

NAME: _____

DENOMINATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Please indicate yes or no:

Bed and Breakfast:	_____ (\$25)	At Cenacle Retreat Center, Brighton, MA
Lunches and Dinner:	_____ (\$16)	
Student Registration:	_____ (\$ 5)	(\$10 if postmarked before March 20)
Registration (all others):	_____ (\$10)	(\$15 if postmarked after March 20)
Total Amount Enclosed:	_____	

Detach and return with your check or money order to: Anna Howard Shaw Center,
Boston University School of Theology, P.O. Box 175, 745 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston,
Massachusetts 02215.

Women and the Word
Boston University School of Theology
745 Commonwealth Ave., P.O. Box 175
Boston, MA 02215



Direction Information to Cenacle Retreat Center and Boston University

The Brighton Cenacle Retreat Center, 200 Lake St., Brighton, MA, is accessible traveling east on Rte. 90 (Mass. Turnpike): Weston Exit 14, 300 yards on Rte. 95 North to Exit 51, to right on Rte. 30 East (Commonwealth Avenue) to Newton/Boston for about 5 miles. At St. Ignatius Church (at traffic lights below Boston College) turn left onto Lake St. Pass St. John's Seminary on right to Cenacle, large red building on left. Coming North or South: Take Rte. I-95 (128) to exit 51 and follow directions above.

Boston University School of Theology, 745 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, is accessible via Rte. 90 (Mass. Turnpike), Allston-Cambridge Exit to Storrow Drive, and Kenmore Square. on public transportation-- the Green Line. The School is a ten-minute walk from Kenmore Square.

For further information, call the Shaw Center at: (617) 353-3075

ORDINATIONS

The following BUSTh women were ordained deacon this past summer (1985) by their Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church:

Stacey E. Fischer Nickerson--Baltimore

Patricia Jewett--Maine

Elizabeth Vernon--Maine

Please let us know about other ordinations and/or appointments to celebrate!

DEVELOPMENT NEWS

The Shaw Phonathon, held January 27 and 28, raised \$2,700! Thank you for your generosity. Those who were not at home to receive our call will be receiving a letter from Margaret Wiborg, director of the Shaw Center. If you would like to make a pledge, this letter will explain how to do so. If you would like to become one of "Anna's Friends," we would love to hear from you. Support categories are "Friend"---\$100 to \$500, "Donor"---up to \$1,000, and "Benefactor"---beyond \$1,000.

The result of the rollicking "Annual Shaw Center Faculty, Administration, and Staff Auction" was \$780. Orchestrated by the (in)famous Rev. Dr. Horace Allen, the proceeds of this auction go to benefit a special project a woman student is undertaking. This year's proceeds went to Shelley Matthews to help finance her trip to Kenya, India, and Pakistan. Thanks to all who donated, bid, and laughed!

CORRECTION

The telephone number listed in the last newsletter for the Rev. Ellen Chahey of the "Iris" sacred dance group should have been 482-1078. Sorry!

NEW BOOKS IN THE SHAW CENTER

Mamie Garvin Fields, Lemon Swamp and Other Places

Trudier Harris, Black Women in the Fiction of James Baldwin

Susannah Heschel, On Being a Jewish Feminist

Barbara Hill Rigney, Lilith's Daughters

WOMEN, RELIGION, AND SOCIAL CHANGE --a book review

Women, Religion, and Social Change. Eds., Yvonne Yazbek Haddad and Ellison Banks Findly. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985.

It is with a note of pride that this review is written, for Yvonne Haddad is a graduate of Boston University. This recent edition is an anthology describing individual women and groups of women who have played important roles in times of religious and social change. One of the gifts of this book is that it is not limited to western Christianity. The struggles of Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, African, Central American, Asian, and Native American women are given as they have sought to maintain or change their religion and culture.

As a Christian feminist, I have been challenged by several ideas presented which give alternative views of strength and justice for women. "Liberation" to the Islamic woman, for example, may mean putting on the veil as a sign of revolt against western corruption--a fact this western mind would like to ignore.

What role do women play in social change? Why is their record often not kept? Why does their influence wane after the institutionalization of change? If history is determined by those who tell it, Women, Religion, and Social Change is a statement that women were not only determiners of our past, but will be of our future as well. As women scholars uncover our "herstory," our past become more honest and our future more hopeful.

--Beth Jenkins, second-year M.Div. student

POWER EQUITY WORKSHOP

An "Equity Retreat" will be held Friday and Saturday, February 21 and 22, at BUSTh. The retreat will be facilitated by Carol Pierce and Richard Orange who specialize in group dynamics and the effects of socialization on groups. The focus will be on race and gender issues. This event is co-sponsored by the Anna Howard Shaw Center, Women's Collective, Black Seminarians, Peace with Justice, and the Social Action Committee.

--Nancy Ginty, Sexism Intern

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SUGGESTIONS SOUGHT

The Anna Howard Shaw Center, in its aim to be for the women and by the women, is conscious that we need suggestions from clergy and laywomen for events we should be sponsoring and issues we should be addressing. What were your needs as a woman during seminary? How did they change as you entered ministry? How can we prepare women students to be better pastors, leaders, laywomen? Please send your thoughts to Margaret Wiborg, care of the AHSC.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

"Feminist Auto Mechanics," a four-session course, will be offered this spring to help you get to know your car. Lead by Hal McSwain, Th.D. student and car buff, the course is open to all women and men who seek to build their confidence in things motorized. Bring your car, bring your socket wrench, bring your good humor! The date will depend on the spring thaw. Contact Anna for more details.

If you have come
to help me
you are wasting
your time.
But
If you have come
because
your liberation
is bound up
with mine
then let us speak
together.

--Lila Watson, Aboriginal Australian