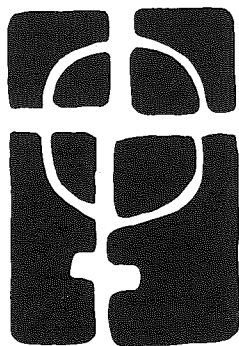


Women's Theological Center



Quarterly Newsletter

MARCH, 1991
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In this issue:

**Humans Brutalizing Humans:
Necessary Images in
the Christian Religion**
by Delores Williams

**In Search of
A New World Order**
by Asoka Bandarage

**Gleanings from an Interview
with Renae Scott**
by Wendy Ritch

**The Hermeneutics of
Being a WTC Alum**
by Leslie Ann Whited Pasewark

Dear Friends,

At the moment of this writing, the US government stands poised for war against Iraq, even while oppressed peoples here struggle against continual assault. The damage of these and other endless wars runs very deep and very wide. Where people survive, bodies, spirits and psyches are often broken.

We understand our work at the WTC to be about working against such death and damage both before and after they are perpetrated. Thus the focus of this newsletter is on the ways in which religious traditions might be used for or against such healing work. Delores Williams, a Womanist Christian theologian, looks at the ways in which much Christian imagery has been used to oppress certain people and suggests images which might be more liberative. Asoka Bandarage, a Sri Lankan Bhuddist, suggests strategies toward transformation.

We hope something in each of the articles and in the newsletter in general speaks to you, gives you something you need as you struggle against injustice where you are, and strengthens the connections between us.

We thank all contributors for sharing some of their time and energy with us.

Humans Brutalizing Humans: Necessary Images in the Christian Religion?

by Delores Williams

Until I became conscious of the effects of sexist, racist and classist oppression upon the growth and development of women, poor people and people of color, I never thought to ask questions about the way in which my religion, the Christian religion, supported oppression. But after my consciousness was thus raised, I began to see that some of the images and the ritual basic to this religion showed humans brutalizing humans. The religion, in its theology and in its sacred text, assigned positive, redemptive and often liberative value to brutalization. I reasoned that the religious imagery portraying instances of cruelty reinforced oppression in society.

First of the images to come to my attention was the cross. I began to explore its symbolic meaning and how it was valued in the religion. This image showed a good and innocent man (Jesus) falsely accused and murdered by the powers that be. In the course of its development, the Christian religion gave this cross redemptive value, conferring upon it symbolic status pointing to God's way of acting in history to save sinful humankind. What my new consciousness saw was that this death on the cross could be used consciously or unconsciously to support



Delores Williams

several kinds of brutalization in the society. If God, the Father, intended the death on the cross of Jesus, his innocent son, then child abuse by fathers might not be taken as seriously as it need be in Christian societies. Rather, the social tendency might be to ignore the need to enforce stringent measures upon child abusers because the religion fosters the belief that God, the Father, was in some ways in agreement with the death of Jesus. Thus a sacred aura encircles the act and the cross.

In the history of Christian theologizing about this death, it became standard to interpret it as Jesus being on the cross in the place of sinful humankind, atoning for human sin. However, this kind of interpretation made Jesus a surrogate for humans. Since African-American women have experienced horrible oppression because of the surrogate roles they have been forced to assume from slavery to the present, this Christian notion of Jesus standing in the place of humans can give credibility to brutal instances of surrogacy. In the areas of labor (field work), nurturance and sexuality, black American women have assumed surrogate roles -- i.e., they performed tasks that the larger society assigned to someone else. For instance, black women assumed the nurturing role for white children as they served as mammies during slavery. They worked in the fields like men, assuming work roles the larger society designated as male roles. In the area of sexuality during slavery, black women were substitutes for white women as white males made black females their sexual partners. In the racist ideology of the South at this time, this sexual role should have been filled by white women. Many slave narratives by female slaves describe the brutality they experienced in these surrogate roles. It seems to me that a "surrogate Jesus" merely supports the brutality black women experience.

Further, this image of the poor ethnic Jew (Jesus) on the cross -- crucified by the power of the state and

...[the] Christian notion of Jesus standing in the place of humans can give credibility to brutal instances of surrogacy.

later interpreted in the Christian religion as an act related to human redemption -- gives warrant to the acts of violence and violation white Christians perpetrate against ethnic sons and their people like Jews in the holocaust, blacks in the middle passage and during slavery, and Native

Americans in North, Central and South America. The point is that "redemptive" suffering imaged by way of murder of an ethnic person makes ethnic people vulnerable before the adherents of a religion (Christianity) that puts great emphasis and value upon suffering. I think Eli Wiesel was correct in his conversation with Harry James Cargas when he expressed suspicion of religions that put great value upon suffering. The adherents of such religions could find it easy to justify the suffering they inflicted upon others. Thus, human abuse of humans was justified and rationalized by the grandiose fabrication called "manifest destiny": the philosophical and theological rationalization allowing white European Christians to bring suffering and genocide to millions of Native Americans.

One of the most troubling emphases in Christendom is the ritual of the eucharist in which believers eat the bread (symbolic of Jesus' broken body) and drink the wine (symbolic of the blood Jesus shed on the cross, supposedly for our sins). In addition to the cannibalist insinuations in this ritual, the accompanying ritual-word as it is spoken in many churches, puts great emphasis upon the sacrifice Jesus made in dying for human sin. The question that always comes to my mind is whether this emphasis upon dying-sacrifice has implications for women's oppression. Since many women are conditioned to sacrifice "all" for their family's well-being, I wonder if this "sacred sacrifice", achieved through brutalization of Jesus' body, can encourage battered women to stay in battering situations, thereby sacrificing themselves for some "higher purpose" like family unity?

In addition to images of brutalization and ritual ceremonies emphasizing brokenness and blood, the sacred text of the Christian religion (the Bible) is not without stories containing motifs of cruelty. Often we have paid little or no attention to these motifs when the text suggests the brutalization is somehow intended by God. For instance, in the story of the deliverance of the Hebrews from bondage in Egypt, we seem to ignore the genocide these people committed as they journeyed

from Egypt in the book of Exodus to the promised land in the book of Joshua. The violent acts of the Israelites were sanctioned by their God as they killed every person in the city of Jericho (except the harlot Rahab and her family) in the land of Makkadah, in Libhan and in the land of Canaan.

To me, what all this brutality means -- supported by some of the images, theology and sacred text of the

...the wilderness should replace the cross as a symbolic meaning pointing to Jesus' victory over sin...

Christian religion -- is that we must now evaluate the social effect of the images and ritual central to the Christian religion and search our tradition for those that foster healing rather than brutality. As I see it, the important images and symbols of the Christian religion are those that communicate some hopeful message about sin and salvation in relation to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. A variety of suggestions are possible. The mustard seed could be an important image in the Christian religion, simultaneously emphasizing the importance of faith in the healing ministry of Jesus, the importance of faith for salvation, and the centrality of the kingdom of God in Jesus' preaching ministry. Matthew, Mark and Luke describe the kingdom of God by comparing it to a mustard seed. Luke says, "And to what shall I compare it [the kingdom of God]? It is like a grain of mustard seed which [a person] took and sowed in [his/her] garden; and it grows and became a tree, and birds of the air made nests in its branches" (Luke 13:18-19).

Of prime significance for humans is the reminder this parable provides of the connection of human destiny with the growth and care potential of nature. It is also a reminder of the protection/shelter nature provides for life forms. This kind of reminder is certainly significant for our time when

the environmentalists all over the world are trying frantically to direct our attention to the way in which humans are destroying the natural environment. Lifting up the mustard seed as a central image in the Christian religion has the social effect of raising our consciousness about the way societies use and relate to nature and the religious effect of providing hope for human destiny.

As another kind of transformation in Christian imagery, the wilderness should replace the cross as a symbolic meaning pointing to Jesus' victory over sin. If Christians can think of their redemption as modeled not by Jesus on the cross but by Jesus refusing the temptations Satan offered him in the wilderness, more human volition is involved in redemption than the death on the cross indicates. That is, redemption becomes more realistic in light of the way we experience it, for we do have the power to resist or

assent to sinful temptations, just as Jesus did in the wilderness. Also, Jesus' resistance to what Satan offered him in the wilderness is what we have to resist if just and right relation is to happen between humans and between humans and the natural world. Just as Jesus resisted the injustice of monopolistic ownership, of the misuse of power and refused to destroy life (his own), humans are confronted with these same kind of temptations in their daily lives. What Satan offered Jesus in the wilderness is readily available to us today. This switching of Christian imagery of redemption from the cross to the wilderness can accomplish other needed goals of the religion. For instance, the wilderness imagery allows more meaningful and unoppressive relation and dialogue between Christians and others who have been scapegoated by Christian societies -- i.e., the Jews, blacks, women, muslims and other cultural and racial minorities.

Judaism, black-American religion, Islam, all have important wilderness events and meanings in their histories. Many of these religions point to some redemptive act(s) happening in the wilderness. Thus the wilderness, rather than the cross, connects Christians in a positive way with their Jewish heritage.

There is much more that can be said about the ethical significance of this lifting-up of more humane and non-brutal images within the Christian religion. Perhaps it is enough to end here by urging Christians to take seriously the social implications of the imagery and symbolic meanings central to the religion and ask the question: "Can this image or symbolic meaning be used to support brutality and suffering in any form?"

Delores Williams is a member of the faculty at Drew University Theological School. She is also a member of the WTC Board of Directors.

Gleanings from an Interview with Renae Scott

by Wendy "Scoop" Ritch



Renae Scott

Who is Renae Scott? Before I interviewed her, I thought she was simply a woman with dashing wit and a stunning personality, but I was never really sure what she did at the WTC. Now I know, and I would like to share these discoveries with you, dear readers.

Renae works in the Resource Center coordinating the ChangeWorks program and doing outreach. She became involved with the WTC while co-leading "Loves Herself...Regardless", an eight week course for African American women. Renae's desires are to create space for women of color and

to explore the question: "What sustains you?" She doesn't have an answer for anyone asking her to expound on her spirituality and feels that rephrasing the question in terms of sustenance will make it easier for herself and others to discuss this issue. She would like to meet with anyone interested in this topic during the spring. In 1991 Renae plans to spend time developing outreach to women of color and asks that you send the WTC the names/addresses of three women of color who might like to receive information and materials, or that you host a house party. She would love to see neighborhood gatherings taking place to talk about the WTC. Renae is looking forward to a "Loves Herself...Regardless" series in April or May and is excited about a retreat for African American women which will take place from April 12th - 14th. (Call the office for further details.)

Life before the WTC was spent doing trainings on issues of diversity for the Multicultural Project and working for the Haymarket People's Fund. She helped to organize a conference on domestic violence for the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, but ended up discouraged because the world seemed to be "in too much distress to really have things change."

Renae is active on the boards of the Boston Women's Fund and the Margaret Fuller Settlement House, which is a pre-social security aid house founded by a woman who dared to have children without marrying and to travel the world without a male escort. Renae is also the mother of sixteen year old Michelle, who likes to remain anonymous -- sorry Michelle!

Why does she enjoy working at the WTC? "The pay is great!" she says, kidding of course. She loves sharing a desk with three other people in the office, or "working cooperatively" as it's called, and she likes the Resource Center staff. "The WTC is an interesting place and I see the ways that it's trying to make connections across class and race. It already fits what I do as far as taking these issues to the larger community."

Wendy Ritch is an intern at the WTC and a student at Harvard Divinity School.

**Memorial/Recognition Fund
Contribution in memory of
Jane Cary Peck
from
Alice L. Hageman
and Robin Joyce**

In Search of a New World Order

by Asoka Bandarage

This article has been excerpted from a work in progress which Asoka Bandarage is writing for a special issue of Women's Studies International Forum on the topic of teaching women's studies from an international perspective.

Although as individuals we have little or no control over outside forces, including other people, we do have control over ourselves. The relation to the self is the foundation of psychological strength and freedom. As Buddhist teachings make clear, the notion of a separate self is ultimately an illusion, causing much human confusion and suffering, but the concept of the illusory self must be carefully applied. In a world where the majority of people, especially women and people of color, have been denied any sense of self and are struggling to achieve not only material survival but cultural identity, groups in power might misuse visions of "organic unity" and "no-self" to keep the oppressed in "their" places. Most people, it seems, need to develop a sense of self before they can transcend it.

Education plays the central role in all these different transformations. Educational systems now in place are

constructed largely to uphold the status quo and maintain rigid and hierarchical occupational systems. Nonetheless, many individuals and organizations, mostly outside the established educational systems, are attempting to prepare students for a new world order. During the last twenty years, scholars in women's studies have made extraordinary progress in bringing women's experiences and perspectives into the college curriculum and academic discourse. By developing approaches such as action research, educators like Paulo Freire have brought social analysis closer to solving social problems. New Age educational centers, drawing on traditional therapeutic and artistic modalities from around the world, encourage people to express fully their emotional and physical selves. Great teachers such as S. N. Goenka and Thich Nhat Hanh are helping thousands of people learn the techniques of meditation and universal teachings of the Buddha Dhamma. Peace activists and educators are developing innovative methods for resolving conflicts and building coalitions. New electronic media, in addition to ancient methods of communication, need to be used more



Asoka Bandarage

widely and creatively in bringing these diverse approaches to the larger public.

Despite these many efforts, it is not always easy for an individual or group to feel optimistic or powerful. The dominant structures are *violent*, and we have deeply internalized them. Often, it seems easier to give in to anger and hatred than to develop the tolerance, humility, deep self-love, and inner peace that constructive change requires. For this reason, many feminist, socialist, and other progressive

collectives have folded or given way to authoritarian models, remaining socialist or feminist only in name. The disparity between theory and method is also acute in that part of Women's Studies confined within the hierarchical academic system.

Some people and organizations are willing to change only those aspects of the old social order detrimental to their self-interest, reluctant to abandon their existing privileges. For instance, some men speak of feminism but are unwilling to open their hearts to the issues raised by feminists. Similarly, many whites speak of cultural diversity but resist moving away from the dominance-subordination paradigm in their actual behavior. Some Westerners taking on Native American or Buddhist philosophies, rituals and names pay no heed to the suffering of Native Americans existing on reservations or indigenous Buddhists being killed by authoritarian regimes. The radical environmentalists of Earth First state that both famine in Africa and AIDS arise inevitably from ecological imbalance in the human population without examining their own ignorance, racism, and homophobia. It is indeed easier to place the blame on others, but one of the fundamental tenets of self-empowerment is that we are

We hold both a need for security, permanence, and control and a need to let go and move with the natural processes of life.

responsible for our own change. Since we are each unique and differently placed in the world, the kinds of changes we have to make are also different. For example, as groups, men and Westerners need to share resources more widely, while women and people of the so-called Third World need to assert their rights. Socially subjugated groups and individuals need to develop a healthy sense of self, where dominant groups may need to work toward transcending their egotistical selves. Then the world can become more balanced and hence more peaceful.

The struggle between the old

order and the new is a constant one within each of us. If we apply Buddhist concepts to our modern circumstances, we can see life as a battle between those aspects motivated by ignorance, greed, fear and hatred and those motivated by compassion, loving kindness, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. We hold both a need for security, permanence, and control and a need to let go and move with the natural processes of life. Historically, there has been an inverse relationship between technological and material development and human spiritual development. The necessary concern for physical survival, as interpreted within capitalist culture, misleads people into confusing freedom with materialism.

The Buddha Dhamma teaches the universal laws of nature, explaining the law of impermanence -- *anicca* -- which holds that all mental and physical phenomena are subject to change and that attachment to inevitably changing phenomena causes human suffering. It shows that craving and constant external seeking are the roots of unhappiness, that the pursuit of permanence and security are delusions, and that freedom and happiness are within us, not outside. The dominant culture and its component hierarchies of capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy are based on surface criteria; they disallow healthy inner development and balance, essential foundations for a new world order. But, today the spiritual path is merging with the political path as more people throughout the world place their political activism upon spiritual, moral and ethical foundations.

Increasing numbers of people now conscious of the global human dilemma are caught between the old order and the new vision, yet they remain afraid to make necessary personal changes. The shift required at this point is not necessarily a final gigantic transformation, however. Difference and struggle, being aspects of nature, are bound to continue even after more egalitarian social structures are set in place. As we enter a new stage of consciousness and maturity, we are forced to give up our fantasies of the New Age as permanent paradise or utopia. Unfortunately, glorious sunsets

and erotic embraces with soul mates are not eternal! At best, we can expect to work toward inner equanimity, our minds more poised and less swayed by adversity, as we work together toward a society where peace and harmony

To truly understand and appreciate life, we have to come to terms with the reality and inevitability of death.

prevail over violence and exploitation. Even if humanity makes the required paradigm shift now, there are no guarantees that in the future hierarchy and exploitation will not become the dominant forces again. The forces of freedom and repression are in constant dialectical interaction.

By and large, the old model of revolution has failed. Fundamental nonviolent change, which requires slow and gradual steps, cannot be postponed. Vision and goals are important, but since the future can never be known, means must not be sacrificed for ends. Meditation, an important tool in the process of transforming consciousness, teaches us how to dwell in the present moment, flowing with the process without attempting to control its outcome; practiced properly, meditation can provide the psychological foundation for the shift to a new global order. It may not be necessary for all 5.2 billion or more people in the world to do sitting meditation, but it might be a good idea if the poor young boys running around killing on behalf of causes they hardly understand and the rich older men making money from arms sales were made to meditate instead! Seriously, dispossessed youth can not be turned away from violence merely by offers of meditation retreats; they require food, shelter, clothing, education, and human caring, in other words, a social order that gives them a chance to live.

To truly understand and appreciate life, we have to come to terms with the reality and inevitability of death. Modern technological expansion is ultimately driven by a deep fear of



Loves Herself. Regardless.

(Open to African American women only.)

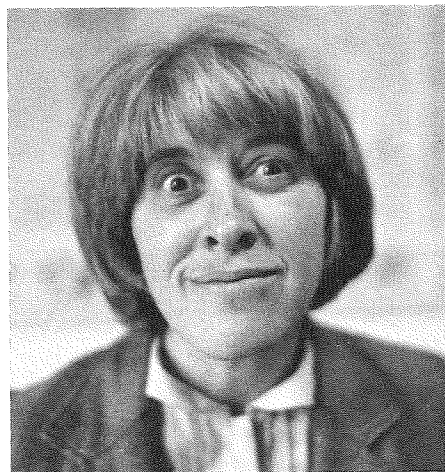
A program exploring Black women's spiritual resources for love and political struggle.

Legacies & Inheritance: what we've come from, where we are & what we'll leave behind
 Date: 5 Wednesdays beginning March 27, 1991
 Time: 6:30 pm Suggested Donation: \$25
 Led by: Renae Scott

Weekend for Renewal and Reflection
 Date: April 12 to 14, 1991
 Location: Blairhaven Conference Center, Duxbury, MA
 Cost: \$75.00 - includes room and delicious meals

death and its attempt to conquer it. But humanity will never conquer death. The totality and mystery of nature is beyond the comprehension of man or woman. Life is precious and precarious. Caught in the daily struggles for physical and emotional survival, we easily lose sight of the brighter and lighter sides of life. The process of working for change should also be a process of global community building. The struggle against the old order must be creative, holistic, and as joyous as possible. It must escape stultifying and obfuscating academic discourse, whether Marxist, feminist or any other, appealing to human emotional needs for connecting with one another and celebrating nature and life. Music, theater, other forms of innovative arts and entertainment, and the creative use of mass-communication systems are vital in the human struggle for freedom and happiness. While fully recognizing that the struggle is fraught with danger, let us not forget to enjoy ourselves in the process of change. Like Emma Goldman, I too don't want to be part of the revolution if I can't dance.

Asoku Bandarage is Associate Professor of Women's Studies at Mount Holyoke College.



Nancy Richardson, before sabbatical

It's 1991 and the Women's Theological Center is still located at 400 the Fenway. What with the state of the economy in Massachusetts, we seem no nearer to our intended home at 555 Amory Street in Jamaica Plain. We will, however, be moving to another [smaller] office at Emmanuel College. We are grateful to Sr. Claudia Blanchette and others here at Emmanuel for helping us out in a



Pearl L. Adams
Jacqui Alexander
Polly Attwood
Dorothy C. Bass
Alvord M. Beardslee
Susan Becker
Nancy Beecher
Phyllis A. Bird
Boston Foundation
Julianne Bousquet
Marion Brink
Margaret Bullitt-Jones
Mary Burke
Sr. Paulina Chung
Linda J. Clark
Betty E. Cooney
Sue Costa
Fran Cooper
Sarah Dawson
Aya de Leon
Geri Dee-Ann Dixon
Sr. Mary Dostal
Sr. M. Helen Driscoll

Rose Edington
Susan Evans
Karen E. Fields
Janis E. Gangano
Barbara A. Gerlach
Clifford Green
Jan Griesinger
Alice Hageman
Diane L. Harwood
Elizabeth Hess
Suzanne Hiatt
Sr. Mary Ann Hindsdale
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Jean E. Jenkins
Erika H. Jenssen
Serene Jones
Katherine Keefe
Maureen Dallison
Kemeza
Gloria Kemper-O'Neil
Jennifer Kerby
M. Noelle Khattab

Mariel Kinsey
Paula Kowalke
Hee Soon Kwon
Esu Lackey
Carlene Larsson
Florence Lerrigo
Literary Society of
St. Catherine of Siena
Lois Gehr Livezey
Detra MacDougall
Ella Mahler
Brigit McCallum
Mona McElderry
Sr. Moni McIntyre
Margaret L. Meggs
Salem Mekuria
Elizabeth Moore
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Mayme Noda
L.W. Norman
Noriko Okada
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Lillian Solimine
Kathryn K. Stevens
Jeanette Stokes
Elizabeth Tarbox
Sr. Frances Thomas
Angelique Walker-Smith
Mary Helen Washington
Judith Westerhoff
Loretta Whalen
Barbara Wheeler

We are only \$5,000 away from our Annual Fund goal of \$40,000!!! Big and small, the donations have been coming in. We thank all those who remembered us in their giving. If you are still planning to contribute to the 1991 Annual Fund campaign, please do so soon.

OFFICE UPDATE by Meck Groot



Nancy Richardson, after sabbatical

pinch. We also want to thank the Episcopal Divinity School, MassCOSH, Women in the Building Trades, and the Haymarket People's Fund who have generously and graciously given us space to hold classes and other events. We will keep you posted as to our whereabouts.

Nancy Richardson, WTC Co-Director, is back from her sabbatical looking refreshed, relaxed, and ready.

As you can see from her before and after pictures, Nancy's sabbatical was long overdue. I've asked Nancy to write something to share with all of you in the next newsletter called "How I Spent My Sabbatical from WTC". It promises to be riveting.

Donna Bivens, the other WTC Co-Director, is leaving for her sabbatical in February. She will be back with us in August with many tales to tell.

Our divinity school intern this year is Wendy Ritch. Wendy's main project with us is something called "The Quilt Project". Those of you in the Boston area may have noticed Wendy's plea for volunteers to come out to help put the quilt together. If you missed that notice (which is especially possible since we had a few computer difficulties) and are interested in doing some quilting -- whether you've ever done it before or not -- please give us a call at the office. Wendy would love to hear from you.

The rest of us (Becky Johnson, Renae Scott, Loretta Williams, Elizabeth Bettenhausen, and myself) keep on keeping on.

Books for Sale

(Prices include shipping and handling.)

Haney, Eleanor H.
Vision and Struggle: Meditations on Feminist Spirituality and Politics \$11.95

Heins, Marjorie
Cutting the Mustard: Affirmative Action and the Nature of Excellence (Hardcover) \$17.95

Inheriting our Mothers' Gardens: Feminist Theology in Third World Perspective. Edited by Katie Cannon, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Kwok Pui-lan, Letty Russell \$11.95

Mud Flower Collective
God's Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education \$11.95

Schaper, Donna
A Book of Common Power: Narratives Against the Current \$11.95

Schaper, Donna
Superwoman turns 40: The Story of One Woman's Intentions to Grow Up \$8.95

Tapes for Sale

The following tapes were recorded at the WTC *Troubling the Waters: Risking Contradictions of Race, Sex and Class* conference held in the spring of 1990.

Deepening the Contradictions: God's Fierce Whimsy Revisited
An exchange of letters between Katie G. Cannon and I. Carter Heyward

Perceiving the Contradictions: Looking for Trouble
Women of Color Panelists: Unzu Lee, Margarita Suarez, and Sylvia Wright
White Women Panelists: Carol Dittes, Bonnie Neumeier, Elizabeth Schussler-Fioranza, Susan Thistlethwaite

Risking the Contradictions: Troubling the Waters
Alice Hageman, Lydia Hernandez, Sun Ai Park, Donna Schaper

\$10 each or 3 for \$25
(includes shipping and handling)

IF YOU ARE

* a political activist looking for spiritual resources;

* a religious activist or clergy woman living in the tension of a tradition that acts as a fuel for the work and also hinders the work;

* a spiritual and political woman trying to deepen the connection between these two aspects of her life;

* a seminarian looking to spend one year of your degree in a feminist/womanist, praxis-oriented setting;

* a woman who has experienced much personal growth and change and who is trying to understand her life within a larger context. . .

IF YOU ARE

* looking for a place where women new to understanding the effects of sexism in their lives and women with a radical feminist consciousness can learn

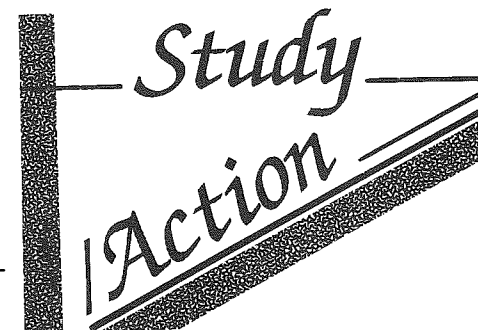
from each other how to be together;

* trying to live in a way that mirrors what you say your values are;

* struggling to put together theory and practice;

* wondering how to build community that honors and struggles with difference. . .

. . . then you might consider



The Study/Action program of the Women's Theological Center is a nine-month Masters-level program that begins with you -- your experience and your questions.

If you would like more information about this program, fill out the form below and send it to us.



THE WOMEN'S THEOLOGICAL CENTER
400 The Fenway, Boston, Massachusetts 02115 (617) 277-1330

Check one or more items as appropriate:

___ Please send me information on:

___ Study/Action 1991-92

___ ChangeWorks ___ Anti-Racism Workshops

___ Please add the name(s) below to your mailing list.

___ My contribution of \$ ___ is enclosed.

___ I would like to buy: ___

and I have enclosed \$ ___ for this.

___ Please do not release my name and address to other groups.

Name ___ Phone ___

Address ___

City/State/Zip ___

The Hermeneutics of Being a WTC Alum

by Leslie Ann Whited Pasewark

Sitting in my study, sipping tea (yes, it's herbal) in my CBer's mug that I rescued amid the many, often bizarre, donations to shelters, it hardly seems possible that a year and a half ago I met on campuses in Boston with women from all over the map so to speak. After nine months of togetherness and apartness, I pulled inward to puzzle over myself as well as "our" "process" and, yes, "theory". And fought within myself for what the relation to WTC was to be, given the insights which necessarily follow taking time, time-taking. As I entered into a mainstream which is anything but woman-centered or even creation-centered, I found that the nine often agonizing months took on a great significance. Speaking only for myself (an important lesson in itself), I find the heart of the matter was that a seasoned joy and a seasoned sorrow began to emerge. Joy, because women had come together from far out places, which in itself is a modern miracle in action. Sorrow, because I learned how far I have to go and what that means in a contrasting/systemic sense. Perhaps this is why the significance of WTC and the risk to take time there (in that place which only alumnae have daringly gone) grew in importance. Because from my limited but sometimes insightful perspective, the coming

together and coming apart, caused us to look at the ways in which we were/are seriously wounded by brutal, yet often polite, apartness. And it brought forth glimpses of the complexity of honest life together. And ironically, what I did not always want to see really needed to be seen. I found that I was not only strong enough to begin seeing what I had been taught not to look at, but now months later I am stepping and moving in more authentic ways. The challenge seems to me now to act in biophilic ways in whatever place we find ourselves.

This is why I claim to be an alumna of WTC. *Alumna* meaning to love and nourish the multitudinous variety of life in myself, others and the planet. There is no residual sense of "pomp and 'arrogance'"; no sashes or robes of prestige; no hoods (which by definition prevent us from seeing); no union of the academic and religious. Instead, it simply means that I was in a place in which women cared enough to look, to discover a greater degree of spiritual response and to more fully nourish life.

Leslie Ann Whited Pasewark graduated from the Study/Action program in 1989. She is currently working in parish ministry in Topsfield, MA.

ChangeWorks

Spring, 1991

Black Women's Writing and the Search for the Self - Wednesdays from 6:30 to 8:30 beginning February 6, for 6 weeks. - \$70 (*Open to Women of Color only.*)

Anti-Racism Training for White Women

Women Looking Toward the Nineties

March 2, 10:00am to 3:00pm - \$35 (*includes lunch*)

Fundraising: the Politics of Giving and Taking

March 8 and 15 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm and March 9 and 16 from 10:00am to 3:00pm - \$90 (*includes lunches*)

AIDS and the Meaning of Community

Tuesdays from 6:30 to 8:30 beginning March 12 - \$50 (*Open to Women of Color only.*)

The African-American Woman's Body: what they say it is is not what we've got

April 5 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm and April 6 from 10:00am to 3:00pm - \$50 (*includes lunch*) (*Open to African American women only.*)



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