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Boston University School of Theology

# ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER

*Volume 39 Issue 2 Spring 2022*

## OUR HEALING JOURNEYS



# IN THIS ISSUE

Shaw Center Staff	<b>Women in the World 2022</b>	3-6
Claudia Alvarez	<i>Love's Healing Journey</i>	7
Yewon Park	<i>What is Healing?</i>	8
Amber Jogie & Yewon Park	<i>Just Heal; What is Healing?</i>	9
Xiaodi Wu	<i>A Finger Cut</i>	10
	<b>List of Donors</b>	11
	<b>Thursday Lunch Lecture Series</b>	12-13
	<b>Meet Our Staff</b>	14





After a long struggle with COVID-19, our Women in the World Annual Conference finally came back in person and hybrid gathering on March 30, 2022. It was one of the most moving and exciting moments in our Shaw Center herstory. We could not hide our joy in getting together and sharing our bodily warmth again in person. As we all struggled with not only the COVID pandemic but also with serious anti-black, anti-asian, and racial/sexual violence, we experienced the absolute necessity to be in solidarity together. Because of this necessity and need, we decided on a theme called “Towards a Theology of Cross-Racial Solidarity and Advocacy: Histories, Theologies, and Contributions of Female Leadership” this year. The conference was divided into three sessions: teatime with Dean Pak, an anti-racism workshop with Rev. Sheila M. Beckford and Rev. E Michelle Ledder, and the keynote lecture with three panelists: the keynote speaker, Dr. G. Sujin Pak, Dean of BU School of Theology, and the respondents, Rev. Dr. Laurel E Scott, the Pastor of Wakefield Grace United Methodist Church, and Rev. Laura Everett, the Executive Director of Massachusetts Council.

Dean Pak is the first woman of color appointed as the Dean of the School of Theology, Boston University. As she started her term in the middle of the pandemic, we had limited chances to meet her in person. Having the teatime with her gave our conference participants an excellent opportunity to engage in honest conversations on issues of racism, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the struggles of immigrants and refugees, imperialism, capitalism, etc. One of the participants asked Dean Pak, “How do you see the BU School of Theology working through these kinds of problems?”

In her response, Dean Pak starts with a process of decolonizing BUSTH curriculum. Then, she suggests a real balance between cerebral theology with lived theology (theory vs. practice). As a diverse community, we need to find ways to stand with conviction and listen to others with humility without being another embodiment of oppression. Finally, she mentions that there is an urgent need to diversify the faculty by bringing in new faculty, especially Black faculty. Not just creating new positions, but creating a sustainable environment that is welcoming as the school diversifies its faculty.



The anti-racism workshop was the foundational step to understand how we needed to work on solidarity together. Rev. Sheila M. Beckford and Rev. E. Michelle Ledder, who are co-authors of *Anti-Racism 4Reals: Real talk with Real Strategies in Real-Time for Real Change*, provided an excellent workshop for us to re-think the anti-racism work and proposed a new way to engage in this work through relationship building. They claim that we need REAL TALK and not MORE TALK about racism and anti-racism. REAL TALK, according to them, is always anti-racist; its goal is to dismantle racism, while MORE TALK reifies the status quo and generates new expressions of racism. They encouraged everyone to call out racism at the moment it occurs, even in public spaces. Racism happens in real-time; therefore, anti-racism must happen in real-time too. Racism must be confronted in public spaces. Public wrongs must be corrected publicly. To not correct it when and where it occurs encourages its repetition, thus perpetuating the harm.

In our keynote speech, “Toward a Theology of Intersectional Solidarity & Advocacy: Intersectionality, Hybridity, and Female Leadership,” we continued this deep conversation. Dean Pak brought her lecture from her own social context and embodiment, drawing inspiration and references from various fields.

Quoting Vivian May, she defines intersectionality as “problem-solving, action-oriented, justice-oriented, through an approach that makes power visible and holds multifaceted identities with systems of oppression in mind.” As she encourages how we can engage one another not merely as issues but as persons seeking our becoming, she points out that intersectionality has the tendency to collapse everything to sameness—which she calls “a subtle or not so subtle form of assimilation.”



Then Dean Pak segued into the theme of hybridity. She spoke of hybridity in four different ways. The first is about her hybrid identity as a half Korean and half white North American. Second deals with the hybridity of Jesus. Third is the hybrid nature of the church. And finally, hybridity as a force for faithful resistance. In referring to her hybridity as a biracial, she talks about how she struggled to piece together the different halves of herself against one another. Citing Dr. Choi’s *A Postcolonial Leadership*, she said hybridity supports forms of leadership that are resilient. In a way, hybridity informs a better understanding of authentic leadership. Authenticity is not understood in terms of purity; however, we should think of authenticity as an affirmation of the process of becoming.



The last section of Dean Pak’s lecture focused on two concrete examples of possibilities of cross advocacy and cross solidarity. She talks about the current situation of Anti-Black Racism, Anti-Asian Hate, the black/white binary, and political pressures that pit minorities in competition with one another. She claims that we should share stories, histories, and experiences to better understand one another, but such are not the root or source of our solidarity or of our coalition and cross-advocacy.

Responding to Dean Pak’s lecture, Rev. Dr. Laurel Scott focused on the practicality of intersectionality in her social context. Referring to her work with immigrant communities and as a pastor in the Bronx NY, Rev. Dr. Scott identified her goal as helping the people live a better life.

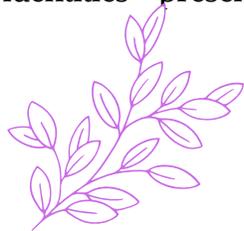


She wondered how the ideas of intersectionality and fluidity could be translated into helping the communities to which she ministers. Her task was to look for ways to use Dean Pak’s idea of hybridity as a biracial and both/and worldview to help the church recognize the multiple identities present within themselves.

She said, “If I were asked to describe my culture fully, I am a Caribbean woman of African descent. To the church, she says, “ We are both of African descent, and we are of different expressions of sexuality. We are of African descent, and we are of different abilities. We are of African descent, and we may speak different dialects.” Honoring and supporting the multiple identities in ourselves could be a starting point in the practicality of intersectionality and solidarity work.



Rev. Everett also responded to Dean Pak’s lecture by starting with, “I come to this work of intersectional solidarity and advocacy as a queer white woman in church leadership. White supremacy is a violent ideology and system that hurts those around me, and it hurts me. It damages the image of God in me and in all.” Queerness is a gift from God, but there is also the burden of double rejection, rejected by both her religious community and society. She said, “There is a double blessing and a double curse, and this doesn’t sit easily in the church but it sits in God. We deny ourselves, and the truth is not in us if we fail to name the blessing and the struggle for everybody who carries all of these hybridities.” She encouraged the idea of a lack of fixedness in Dean Pak’s concept of hybridity and explored the possibility of queering as the verb in movement.



As these amazing women/femmes have shared their personal and communal wisdom at this conference, we, as the Anna Howard Shaw Center, recognize how important our work and commitment to solidarity and advocacy are. We work very hard to cultivate solidarity and advocacy not only for women but also for people of many colors, sexualities, and different abilities. Even though we are tired and exhausted from our current challenges, we are so proud that we have been persistent and never lost the strength to support each other. After this long and arduous journey, we made it, and we are making it together again.

Here are some more photos from the conference!



Thank you to all the Speakers and Participants who made this conference a success!!



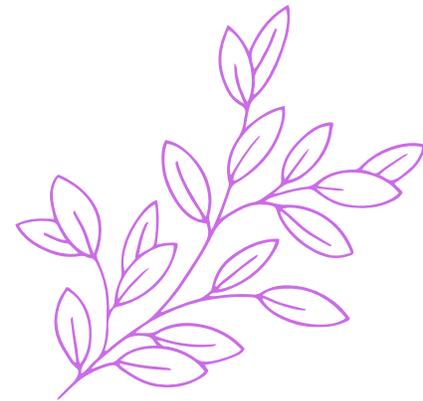
I am writing this on Valentine's Day, a day of love. Although this date is not celebrated in my native Colombia, being here in the United States allows me to reflect on the many ways we experience and understand love. Beyond the roses, the balloons, and the chocolates, there is something sacred that occurs amid every act of love: the recognition of the others as deserving of affirmation in their full humanity—and to be seen in this way brings healing. That is what happened to me in my healing process which, like many, began with a profound crisis of meaning that took me out of most of the certainties I had at the time, just a few years ago. In trying to find meaning in the (for many years unexplored) spiritual realm, I was confronted again with what distanced me from the Church in which I had grown up: homophobia, evangelization by fear, the demands of obedience, the imposition of moral models that limited women to decide about their bodies, among others.

I went through a lot of emotional pain and confusion in my struggle with the idea that I had to deny and change almost everything I was to be loved by this amazing God everyone talked about. Something was wrong. But I was determined to convince myself that it was neither me nor my sexual orientation, nor my political struggles. So I prayed. I prayed even without knowing whether I was being heard, without expecting any concrete answer. I just prayed with sorrow but with hope.

Then the miracle happened; as Delores Williams beautifully claimed, God opened possibilities out of nothing. Someone introduced me to Fidel, who turned out to be part of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics; through him, I also later met Jhon, the first openly gay pastor of the Latin American Methodist Church, and Laura, who worked for Catholic Women for the Right to Decide. I couldn't believe it; there was a place for me and what I stood for within my religious tradition!

All of them became not just good friends of mine but a representation of what God's loving and liberating promise looks like to me.

It was then I realized that if I was desperately looking for God, God was looking for me even harder. I felt seen, appreciated and loved, since everything that had been denied about my humanity turned out to be part of what God needed from me. This touched me so deeply that I changed my vocation, embarked on a long journey, and am offering my life to gain the spiritual and theological skills that will help me spread the good news to those who, like I used to be, cannot fully love themselves because they had not experienced that kind of affirming, overwhelming and empowering love. A love that heals.



**Claudia Alvarez, she/her**  
MDiv, STH





Artist: Yewon Park



# A TALE OF TWO

## WHAT IS HEALING?

My life is too hectic to allow me to think of healing. When I hear the word healing, unfamiliarity and embarrassment come to my mind. The Republic of Korea, where I was born and raised, has been in extreme economic hardship since the outbreak of the Korean War in the 1950s. It was so bad people could not have bowel movements because there was nothing to eat, people lived desperately without natural resources.

Being born in an infinitely competitive society where it is natural to work hard to survive, this present society can view healing as a new concept. Maybe that's why I'm unfamiliar with myself facing this thing called healing. What is healing? How does healing work? Simply falling into a wave of information in my cell phone? Going to exercise? Reading a book? It was confusing to look at the world without having time to look into myself.

To pause for a moment, to watch the flowing waves, to feel the clouds move, and to listen to the flowers sway. I am pausing myself and looking at the vast creation of God, looking at how small I am in this vast universe. When the divine piece found in the creatures encounters me and vice versa, it reminds me of who I am and who they are. For me, this is healing



**Yewon Park, she/her**  
MDiv, STH

## JUST HEAL

Why do we rush to be healed?  
Obsessing over unblemished skin,  
And applying treatment before letting it breathe.  
Take a breath,  
No need to rush your own healing  
We will never fully be healed.  
Each one of us,  
Stained with scars and bruises  
Reminders that our humanity isn't invincible and our  
pain isn't invisible  
For our skin never returns back to its original form.  
May we be willing to show the places we now bear  
victory marks  
Each battle wound reminding us of the days we  
chose to live  
You can't rush your healing, take your time  
It is meant for you daily

-A



**Amber Jogie, she/her**  
MDiv, STH



# A FINGER CUT

When I think about “healing,” I am reminded of a small moment that happened to me years ago. Although brief, it bears wisdom and has helped shape my journey of healing today. For me, healing means I choose to be patient and kind to my own story. A few years ago, I went through a breakup. Exactly one day before the breakup, I happened to have cut my left index finger when I was cooking. The point is that two ruptures happened almost at the same time—one to my finger, one to my heart.

It is worth noting that at the time, I did not make the connection between these two events. As I proceed through my days, I remember being extra attuned to my finger—checking on the wound, changing bandages, and protecting it from further damage. It hurt, but I knew it would heal over time. The physical pain reminded me to be careful and patient for the next couple of weeks.

On the other hand, when it came to the breakup, I thought—what’s the big deal? It’s a breakup, and I’ll get over it, only that I did not just get over it. About a week later, I remember feeling frustrated with myself that I was still upset about it! I blamed myself not for the breakup but for my inability to move on and the fact that I was sad. “This is not me,” I thought to myself, “this is weak.”

Later that evening, I went to change the bandage on my index finger. That was when it hit me that a finger cut from a week ago was still open-wounded and hurting—let alone my heart? I never questioned why the index finger was taking its time to heal; in fact, I was extra supportive and tentative about it. It is unthinkable that one equates a physical injury to the body’s weakness, yet I brought the narrative to a heart that grieves in sorrow. This realization gave me perspective as to how harsh I had been to the healing of a wounded heart.

Ruptures come in many forms, and while I recognize physical aches, sometimes I forget that my heart bruises too. More importantly, I was not able to extend the kind of compassion, patience, and generosity that I had in me to my own troubled heart. This tiny moment taught me to bear witness to and be in dialogue with my own sadness, anger, and disappointment. They show up with the message to which I need to listen: something troubles me, and it requires good-enough care. Sometimes this means I take a long walk alone, and other times I invite myself into good companies.

To conclude, I will tease out an important nuance to complicate my little story, inviting you to continue pondering the meaning of “healing.” Today, I am unable to locate the spot where I had the finger cut, it didn’t leave a scar. In a way, one could say that my finger is “healed.” However, it is not my intention to suggest the notion of “being healed” is the end goal or even possible. Simply put, I have moved on from this past relationship, but it will always remain a part of me. Additionally, although the finger did not leave a physical mark, this story will be ever-present and transformative for me. The journey of healing, in this sense, is not the removal of a history—scarred or not, but making peace with it, respecting it, and flourishing with it.



**Xiaodi Wu, she/her**  
MDiv, STH



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12:30-1:30P.M ROOM 325

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**AN HONEST CONVERSATION ABOUT THE CHALLENGES OF NAVIGATING GRADUATE SCHOOL ALONGSIDE THE PRESENCE OF ANXIETY**



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**WHO AM I, REALLY? - A REFLECTION OF AN AFTER-GRADUATION LIFE**



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RUTH KAUSE  
STH ALUMNA

**THURSDAY MAR 3RD**  
12:30-1:30PM ROOM 325

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12:30-1:30PM ROOM 325

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SPECIAL EDITION

**WHEN HEALING AND CHILLING INTERSECT**



**GUEST SPEAKER**  
BISHOP SUSAN HASSINGER

**THURSDAY MAR. 31**  
12:30-1:30PM ROOM 325

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THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURE SPECIAL EDITION

**Crossing New Thresholds and Speaking one's truth ("without blame and judgement")**



**GUEST SPEAKER**  
DR. JUDITH OLESON

**THURSDAY APRIL 28**  
12:30-1:30PM ROOM 325

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**CHILLIN' AND THRILLIN' ON THE ART**



**GUEST SPEAKER**  
DR. EILEEN DAILY

**THURSDAY APRIL 7**  
12:30-1:30PM ROOM 325

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THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURE

**HEALING AND CHILLING THROUGH THE LIFE-GIVING AND SLOW WORK OF GARDENING AND INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY**



**GUEST SPEAKER**  
JAMIE SHORE  
STH ALUMNA

**THURSDAY APRIL 21**  
12:30-1:30PM ROOM 325

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THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURE

**HONORING OUR INTUITIONS**



**GUEST SPEAKER**  
FLORENCE GLYNN  
3RD YEAR MTS/MSW

**THURSDAY APRIL 14**  
12:30-1:30PM ROOM 325

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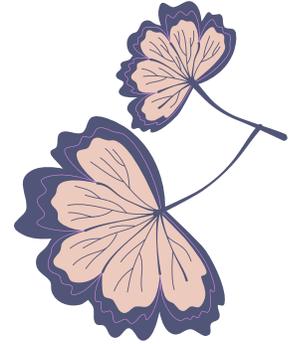

Thank you to all the Guest Lecturers and Participants who attended these lectures!





**Nataly Romero, she/her**  
MDiv, STH

Nataly Romero is a second year Master of Divinity student at Boston University School of Theology. She served as a pastor in the Methodist Church of Peru and is currently a candidate for the ordination in her church. She attends the First Community United Methodist Church in Medford, MA. She has a bachelor's degree in Biblical Sciences and a bachelor's degree in Tourism Administration, Hospitality, and Gastronomy. Her hobbies include watching movies, cooking, traveling, reading about fish and life in the sea, and spending time with her family.



**Ebiye Seimode, she/her**  
MDiv, STH

Ebiye Seimode is a second year Master of Divinity student at Boston University School of Theology. She is an international student from Nigeria, where her family currently resides. She earned her bachelor's degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering (BSECE) from Baylor University in Waco, Texas. She loves working with kids and was an assistant youth coordinator. She is currently the treasurer of her church, and is pursuing ordination as an Elder in the United Methodist Church. She serves on the board of the Association of Black Seminarians as the treasurer. She loves spending time with her family and friends, photography, singing, and playing the guitar.



# ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER NEWSLETTER

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Rev. Dr. Choi Hee An

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Ebiye Seimode

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