

HOLY RAGE: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF ANGER, RAGE, AND WRATH IN
TRANSFORMATIVE WORK – INVITED SESSION

- Topic: Holy Rage: Assessing the Role of Anger, Rage, and Wrath in Transformative Work
- Convener: Tracy Sayuki Tiemeier, Loyola Marymount University
- Moderator: Karen Enriquez, Loyola Marymount University
- Presenter: Melissa Pagán, Mount Saint Mary's University
- Presenter: Michael P. Jaycox, Seattle University
- Presenter: Jennifer Owens-Jofré, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

In her presentation, “On Willful Anger and/as Burdened Virtue? Creating a Coalitional Politics Constitutive of Human Flourishing,” Melissa Pagán develops anger as a willful function of love for oneself and community. Pagán questions Lisa Tessman’s argument that some virtues like anger are “burdened” (necessary, but painful and inhibiting flourishing). She connects Sara Ahmed’s critique of Grimm’s “The Willful Child” and development of a politics of willfulness with María Lugones’s distinction between first and second order anger. If oppressed groups express first order anger when they have a specific claim to justice, second order anger refuses to engage dominant groups on pre-set, unjust terms. Indigenous feminist scholar Rachel Flowers argues for the inseparability of love and anger. Rather than trying to work within a colonial relationship, willful anger encourages Indigenous (and other oppressed) communities to separate. This allows them not only to care for themselves but also to go back to dominant groups with different, equal terms. In the end, anger may be a burdened virtue, but willful anger can come from love, be creative, and lead to human flourishing.

In “The Challenge of Privileged Anger: Moving from Moral Impotence to Sustainable Solidarity,” Michael P. Jaycox assesses white liberal anger (seen notably in racial justice work and in the classroom) that may express outrage “on behalf” of persons of color but also resist being challenged by people of color. For Jaycox, such white liberal anger originates from a psychological need to expiate white guilt and preserve white goodness and innocence. This white liberal anger is “impotent.” Jaycox proposes three practices that can counteract the impotence of white liberal anger. First, a system of accountability provides a structure for oppressor groups to give an account of themselves to others, opening themselves up to advice, questions, judgment, and even accusations. Second, decentering requires a thorough self-examination of prior socialization into white cultural norms, assumptions, expectations, etc. Finally, an assets inventory allows organizations to know what, specifically, each member brings to the organization, and what types and levels of involvement and risk members are currently willing to assume. Such an inventory should be based on empirical evidence, rather than (white) aspiration.

In “Anger as a Resource for Ecclesial Change: Responding to Sexual Abuse in the US American Catholic Church,” Jennifer Owens-Jofré argues for a process of ecclesial conscientization. Owens-Jofré first compares the website for the Diocese of Pittsburgh with that of BishopAccountability.org. BishopAccountability.org offers a more informative and user-friendly site, suggesting more of a commitment to transparency

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and concrete change. Second, website videos of victim/survivors show a conflation of priests with God, indicating how deep the disorder of clericalism goes. Drawing on Stuart Hall's notions of inferential and referential racism, Owens-Jofré argues that the lack of full transparency on the part of the Diocese of Pittsburgh is inferential clericalism, while the conflation of priests and God is referential clericalism. However, BishopAccountability.org can be helpful on both counts as a resource for ecclesial conscientization. Ecclesial conscientization can equip Catholics with the tools necessary to address the abuse crisis. This includes the capacitation of emotions like anger and grief that have been damaged by inferential and referential clericalism but yet are necessary for what Carmen Nanko-Fernández calls "ortho-proxy" and an effective response to injustice.

Comments and questions were appreciative of all three papers, and the conversation was lively and wide-ranging. Some of the discussion centered on anger in (at) institutional settings, whether they be the CTSA, the Catholic church, or Catholic universities/colleges. Other lines of conversation explored pedagogy and anger, anger as virtue, anger's relationship to other virtues, and further theorizing of anger in highly divergent contexts. Additionally, there was interest to engage privileged anger and intersectional issues of race, gender, and class. A comparative comment highlighted the ways anger and the wrathful deities in Tibetan Buddhism were important socio-spiritual indicators and educators for transformation. Finally, there was agreement that future CTSA sessions should explore anger and rage further, including the ways CTSA members' anger signals a number of structural issues that the Society ought to address.

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