

LATINO/A THEOLOGY – CONSULTATION
(JOINT SESSION WITH THE BLACK THEOLOGY CONSULTATION)

Topic: Healing
 Administrative
 Team: Leo Guardado, Cecilia González-Andrieu, Jennifer Owens-Jofré
 Convener: Jennifer Owens-Jofré, University of San Diego
 Moderator: Cristina Castillo, Barry University
 Presenters: Marinus Chijioke Iwuchukwu, Duquesne University
 Carolyn M. Jones Medine, University of Georgia
 Mauricio Najarro, UC Berkeley-UCSF Joint Program in Medical Anthropology

In preparation for the 2022 convention, the administrative teams of the Black Theology and Latino/a Theology Consultations revived their practice of collaboration for two primary reasons. They acknowledged aspects of shared experience—both historically and contemporarily—among Black and Latine Catholics living in the United States, neither group belonging to the dominant culture of US American Catholicism. More concretely, in consideration of the conference theme, “Thinking Catholic Interreligiously,” members of the administrative teams agreed that interreligiosity is an inherent part of those shared experiences, which do not fit into neatly defined divisions between thought and practice. They invited presenters to illuminate the conference theme by focusing their comments on how their interreligious experiences of life promote resistance, as well as healing. The second in this two-part effort, this session treated the latter theme of healing.

Marinus Chijioke Iwuchukwu opened his presentation by recounting the actions of Donald Trump on June 1, 2020, in the wake of protests of the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers. After making a brief statement, Trump crossed the street from the White House to the front of St. John’s Episcopal Church for a photo opportunity with a Bible, which he held upside down. Iwuchukwu explained that he began that way to invoke the immoral legacy of Christian churches that have perpetuated racism in enslaving Black people, appropriating Indigenous lands, abusing Indigenous children at residential schools in efforts toward cultural erasure, and dehumanizing Latines. He points to the inconsistency in the position of Bartolome de las Casas, who argued for the humanity and consequent emancipation of Indigenous peoples from enslavement in the *encomienda* system, simultaneously requesting that Black Africans, whom he regarded “as more resilient and physically stronger,” take their place. Iwuchukwu raises the question, “What have Christian churches and their leaders of our age done to ensure that the most outstanding structural, psychological, economic, and institutional recrudescence of slavery are effectively ended, as well as restituted, restored, repaired?” He notes how individual and institutional racism violate the most fundamental understanding of humanity as reflections of the *imago Dei* and recommends practices of restorative justice as potentially fruitful steps toward restitution and repair.

Carolyn Jones Medine contradistinguishes religious practice in the United States from religious practice in Japan, describing the former as somewhat suspicious of the

latter in its embrace of multiplicity. In doing so, she offers an example of an individual who practices Shinto, seeks a Buddhist priest to perform a funeral rite for a loved one, then participate in their own Christian or Shinto wedding, an example many Christians in the United States would discourage. Even so, Jones Medine treats the question of integration among practitioners who engage in dual religious belonging. To this end, she draws on the dialogue between American Zen Buddhist teacher, Robert Aitken, and Benedictine monk, David Steindl-Rast, in *The Ground We Share: Everyday Practice, Buddhist and Christian* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 1996). Jones Medine looks to silence and practice as potential sites for integration of both Buddhist and Christian commitments, cautioning against the limits of such integration within the individual. She encourages her audience to look to the fruit these practices bear, to “what happens when we get off the cushion and out of the church.”

Mauricio Najarro offered reflections on Eucharist conceived in light of the Farmers’ Protest in India (July 2020–December 2021). Drawing upon the notion of the “brown commons” as the grounds of encounter between Catholicism and South Asian religious traditions, Najarro discussed the ongoing relevance of neoliberal economic policies and the legacies of colonial oppression and dispossession as context for eucharistic liturgies today. Mindful of the Indian farmers’ slogan, “No Farmers, No Food,” he asked those gathered to consider what it would mean to say, “No Farmers, No Eucharist.” Najarro concluded by offering lessons for Catholics from the victory of the Farmers’ Protest at the borders of Delhi, especially recognizing and lifting up the expertise of those most affected by any policy.

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