

LATINX THEOLOGY– CONSULTATION  
(JOINT SESSION WITH THE BLACK CATHOLIC  
THEOLOGY CONSULTATION AND THE ASIAN AND  
ASIAN AMERICAN THEOLOGY CONSULTATION)

Topic: Social Salvation and Institutional Hospitality  
 Convener: Ish Ruiz, Pacific School of Religion  
 Moderator: Stephanie Wong, Villanova University  
 Presenters: Jaisy Joseph, Villanova University  
 SimonMary Asease Ahiokai, University of Portland  
 Jeremy V. Cruz, Saint John’s University (New York)

This year, the Latinx Theology Consultation joined the Asian/Asian American Consultation and the Black Catholic Theology Consultation to produce a joint call for proposals in order to explore the topic of Social Salvation by drawing from the traditions and wisdoms of our respective groups. In response to our call to proposals, we received an excellent paper from Jaisy Joseph from Villanova University on the topic of “interstitial” epistemology and the church that drew from the wisdom of these three groups. To further conversations on how the church can take better advantage of the “liminal” space Joseph alludes to, we invited SimonMary Asease Ahiokai from the University of Portland to offer a paper on institutional hospitality. Since the joint consultation team only received one paper from the Latinx tradition and assigned that paper to another session (out of the three joint sessions), we searched for a theologian for this session who could tie in the concepts of an interstitial Church and institutional hospitality to welcome those marginalized at/by CTSA and were fortunate to have Jeremy Cruz from Saint John’s University respond to Ahiokai and Joseph from this vantage point.

Jaisy Joseph’s paper, titled “Church as Leaven and Pilgrim: Interstitial Epistemologies for an Interstitial Church,” addresses the historical and cultural amnesia faced by US Catholics who forget what it felt to be “the other” prior to President Kennedy’s election. In response, she synthesizes three key perspectives from various racial/ethical traditions represented in our joint consultation: Jung Young Lee’s conception of the divided self and the split consciousness, Virgilio Elizondo’s theology of *mestizaje*, and W. E. B. Dubois’s idea of double consciousness—along with various other prominent interlocutors such as Roberto Goizueta and M. Shawn Copeland. In her synthesis, Joseph describes how a liminal space of hurt and split consciousness, while painful, contains the potential for healing. Justice and inclusivity—or the notion of “kin-dom”—according to Joseph, are not predicated upon superficial platitudes of inclusivity but rather a willingness to engage and enter this interstitial wound that straddles past and present. This produces what she refers to as a mystical political orthopraxis that effects such healing and represents the hopeful promise of resurrection/salvation.

SimonMary Asease Ahiokay’s paper, titled “‘Who Do You Say that I Am?’: Making a Case for Existential Inclusiveness at the Crossroads of Liberation, Institutionality, and Hospitality,” proposed a vision for unconditional hospitality that challenges notions of empire. Ahiokai develops this anticolonial theology by

constructing an eschatological notion of forgiveness. This eschaton is currently present as history develops but also contains vestiges of futurity. Forgiveness, from an eschatological standpoint, upends Empire because the latter relies on the reciprocation of violence or evil to operate. Citing Levinas, Aihokai proposes a challenge to oppression through a surplus of social grace. Considering the institutional nature of our society and the constant “otherization” of those we subjectively construct as “other,” such social grace is best embodied in the concept of unconditional hospitality—which Aihokai contrasts from the conditional hospitality of *familia* where people can only enjoy a sense of “belonging” if they adhere to the rules. For Aihokai, true challenge to the empire of exclusion requires an adoption of forgiveness and a synthesis of forgiveness with unconditional hospitality where the other, though they may offend or hurt us, continues to receive an offer of welcome. This creates a transcultural reality for society that transgresses the talk of empire and creates a sense of belonging in our shared spaces.

In response to the papers, Jeremy Cruz raised several important critiques to Joseph about the use of *mestizaje* and the eschatological vision of this “interstitial” church in light of the historical violence that yielded *mestizaje* and other forms of double consciousness. Joseph acknowledged the troubled past but argued that the concept, as an epistemological avenue, responds to the contemporary realities of the marginalized and continues to offer potential for salvation. In response to Aihokai, Cruz encouraged him to provide concrete examples of how this unconditional hospitality—which Aihokai did—and challenged Aihokai to better define his vision by grounding it in the field of either eschatology or ethics: the former presents a futuristic vision while the latter prescribes a set of principles to guide personal and socio-political action. After several attendees similarly raised questions about the desirability and applicability of such an unconditional hospitality, Aihokai clarified that the hospitality of which he dreams is semi-permeable and will have some pragmatic considerations on the journey toward unconditionality. Finally, Cruz asked some important reflective questions about welcome at CTSA. Our time concluded with a business meeting for the Latinx Theology Consultation.

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