

COALITION OF THE BLACK, ASIAN AND ASIAN-AMERICAN, AND
LATINO/A CONSULTATIONS

Topic: God's Call to Conspire for Freedom: The New Birth of Catholicity
Convener: Sophia Park, Holy Names University
Moderator: Carolyn Chau, King's University
Presenters: Ramón Luzárraga, Benedictine University
Linh Hoang, Siena College
Kwame Assenyoh, Graduate Theological Union

This is part three of the Coalition of the Black, Asian and Asian-American, and Latino/a Consultation under the theme of *That's How the Light Gets In*. This session envisioned the New Catholicity in terms of conspiracy, which means "breathing together" and emphasizing the multicultural nature of the Church.

Ramón Luzárraga in his paper, "Breathing together: Conspiracy as a Means to Pluralism," asked the question of how—with contextual theology like we did as an alliance at CTSA—can we avoid dividing the Church into ethno-theologies, similar to the ethnic and national churches of the Eastern Orthodoxy and the national and state Protestant churches. Luzárraga argued that a critical retrieval of John Courtney Murray's use of "conspiracy," used in its classical understanding "to breathe together," can help to develop a new Catholicity. Despite Murray's use of the term politically, he suggested that the term in his context is essentially theological. He also argued that it could unite a plural Church by using the term around a shared commitment to faith in God, which is as basic to theology as faith seeking understanding.

Linh Hoang presented his paper entitled, "Dwelling in Place: Asian Americans Enhancing a New Catholicity." Using place as an important aspect for theological reflection, Hoang discussed how the distinction of ethnic enclaves is crucial to Asian American identity and formation. The importance of place—such as Chinatown, Little Saigon, or Korea town—is what creates a new sense of acceptance and foundation within America. He acknowledged that place is neglected, not only within theology but also in broader Western intellectual history, due to the strong emphasis on space and time. A turn toward place is crucial, especially when immigrants such as Asians are creating new places, within which occurs the threefold movement of place-making: implacement, displacement, and re-implacement. It is a movement that all immigrants have experienced, beginning with the earliest biblical immigrants such as Abraham and Moses up to today. The Bible is a storied place that not only gives recognition to the current immigrant place making, but also informs contemporary theological reflection. It is only through places that immigrants, as well as all people of faith, begin their conversion. This happens when people dwell in the places that they have settled and embrace familiarity with God. Through ethnic enclaves, Asian Americans strive to place a new identity that is now fused with former beliefs and practices. Conversion happens when places become familiar and inviting. A new Catholicity occurs when immigrants dwell in places that they have created anew.

Kwame Assenyoh, in his paper, "Politics of Conversion: A Diaspora Perspective on Being 'Black and Catholic' in the USA," argued that today's decline of black Catholicism results from the politics of the conversion of slaves. Black Catholics are

strongly linked to the power play in the conversion of black slaves in the U.S. South. Assenyoh analyzed from a diaspora standpoint the consciousness of both the slave and slave owner regarding slave baptism. He argued that, for the African slave in the U.S., conversion to Christianity was but the beginning or continuation of a constant blending of traditions in search of identity. On the one hand, the slave's consciousness regarding her or his conversion was liminal, in between hegemony and ideology, with the ability of morphing into either. On the other hand, the slave owner's understanding of the slave baptism was naturalizing the slave's obedient and loyal status in the hegemony. In this struggle for power within the slave's conversion, black Catholic slaves were won over into hegemonic power—a non-agentive power—while black Protestant slaves adopted ideological agentive power.

The three presentations brought discussion of power, identity, and the concept of space and place in terms of the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic milieu of the Church and society.

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