

WOMEN'S CONSULTATION ON CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY

Topic: Contemporary Feminist Intercultural Theologies  
Conveners: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College  
Paulette Skiba, Clarke University  
Moderator: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College  
Presenters: Maria Pilar Aquino, University of San Diego  
Gemma Tulud Cruz, Australian Catholic University

The Women's Consultation sponsored a session aligned with the convention's theme of Identity and Difference, Unity and Fragmentation by focusing on feminist intercultural theologies. Interculturality has gained theo-ethical and political traction as an important way to traverse and transform many unequal relations in our world resulting from racism/white privilege, hetero/sexism, religious exclusivism, colonialism, militarism, political exceptionalism, and so on. Interculturality constitutes and contributes to a religious form of worldmaking, that is, of making an alternative, more just, and more reconciled world through dynamic dialogical and ethical encounters. Both presenters in this session have published groundbreaking works on interculturality with regard to women's experiences in different contexts.

In the first paper, titled "Feminist Intercultural Theology: Strategies for Transformation," Maria Pilar Aquino pointed out that contemporary social and religious pluralism is forging new opportunities and possibilities for constructive theological interventions in society and religion. Feminist intercultural theologies respond to these challenges of pluralism by promoting shared visions and practices for a just and peaceful restructuring of social systems and relationships. Aquino explored theological criteria—in particular, a hermeneutic based on the reign of God and a prophetic Christology—and ethical as well as political strategies for greater involvement of religious and theological actors in the processes of transformation taking place at the heart of a plural and violent world. Aquino offered descriptive analyses of global women's experiences, especially poverty in both developed and developing countries; a constructive theo-political proposal for the good society (*convivencia*) based on indigenous peoples' and women's struggles for living well together and on Latin American constitutional reforms; and a clarion call for our theo-ethical frameworks to promote justice, peace, human rights, and sustainability.

In the second paper, titled "Border Crossings: Women on the Move and Intercultural Feminist Theology," Gemma Tulud Cruz proposed interculturality as a fundamental and promising method to do contemporary feminist theology. Cruz rooted intercultural feminist theology in the experiences of three women on the move, with particular attention to border-crossing: Shu-mei, a Korean-born, Taiwan-and-US-educated ethnic Chinese woman, who served as a translator for a gathering of American and Chinese writers and became more sensitized to the complex socio-historical formation of women under Chinese socialism; Carrie, a British scholar who lived the cultural contrasts between analytical and praxis-based theologies while researching the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians; and, Sylvia, an internationally recognized scholar and activist who has worked with indigenous women's movements in and beyond her native Mexico but who ended her collaboration with global feminists because she found feminist movements' agendas

often coterminous with reproductive rights—to the neglect of other women’s health issues. Drawing out key insights from these stories for doing feminist intercultural theological work, Cruz argued that interstitiality based on the life and writings of Rita Brock can help navigate unequal distributions of power in the quest for mutual trust and respect; that interdisciplinarity can aid in decentering absolutist definitions of theology; and that transpositional relationality, or living and working within radically multiple subject positions, can aid in decolonizing any unilateral theology by emphasizing the complexity of different women’s different contexts.

Prompted by the presenters’ questions for discussion at the conclusion of both their papers, participants pondered in roundtable discussions how our theo-ethics contribute or do not contribute to justice and peace, how digital media might foster a critical dynamic process of cross-cultural dialogue while resisting any flattening of differences or false universal synthesis, among other topics. Following these roundtable discussions, questions for the presenters encouraged the whole Consultation to consider both the theological criteria which guide cross-cultural dialogues and encounters, and the lived practical implications of such dialogues and encounters for feminists, whether western or non-western, whether northern or southern, who contend with and contest unequal power relations.

Following the papers and the discussion, Paulette Skiba, on behalf of the steering committee of the Women’s Consultation presented the Ann O’Hara Graff Memorial Award to M. Shawn Copeland of Boston College. Christine Firer Hinze, Bryan Massingale, Michele Saracino, and Mary Ann Hinsdale offered congratulatory comments. Approximately 90–95 members attended and participated in this year’s lively session.

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