

LATINO/A THEOLOGY—CONSULTATION

- Topic: “Tierra, Justicia, y Libertad”: Spatial Ecology and Latino/a Theo-Ethics
Convener: Robert J. Rivera, St. John’s University
Moderator: Robert J. Rivera, St. John’s University
Presenters: Melissa Pagán, Mount Saint Mary’s University
Jacqueline Hidalgo, Williams College

In her presentation, “*Laudato Si’* en Aztlán: Technocratics and Power in the Negotiation of Land and Identity,” Melissa Pagán interrogates the uses of interpretive and moral categories in Papa Francisco’s encyclical, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*. These categories include *nature*, *human dignity*, *family/kinship*, *home*, *indigeneity*, and *sovereignty*. Deploying decolonial feminist thought in an effort to strengthen and supplement Papa Francisco’s use of these categories and “re-conceptualize care for our (un)common home,” Pagán argues for the importance of “las indocumentadas,” persons and realities that are obscured by the document’s missing or underdeveloped concepts—*settler colonialism*, *coloniality*, *race*, *gender*, and *sexuality*. Countering Eurocentric views that consider *colonialism* to be premodern and no longer relevant as a category of social analysis, and countering views that narrowly define “the poor” in relation to industrial capitalist wage labor, Pagán emphasizes the central role of race and gender in the violent construction of “a citizenship [indigenous peoples] never asked for.” Drawing upon María Lugones’ feminist critique of Aníbal Quijano’s *coloniality of power*, Pagán warns that a merely ameliorative praxis is likely to emerge from Francisco’s inadequate attention to *race*, *indigeneity*, *gender*, and *sexuality* as pillars of our (un)common modern/colonial home. *Coloniality*, Pagán argues, “must be considered if we want to understand the particular spatial, social, political, and cultural ecologies necessary to implement the integral ecology Francis calls for.”

Following Pagán’s presentation, a structured conversation ensued between Pagán and Jacqueline Hidalgo, which included prepared remarks by Hidalgo. This conversation enacted what in Latinx theologies is referred to as *teología en/de conjunto*, theology done conjointly or collaboratively. According to Orlando Espín, this manner of theological production brings together a *conjunto*, a group of theologians, sometimes with religious practitioners and/or scholars from other fields, to create theology by way of critical, collaborative, and communal conversation. The conversation between Hidalgo and Pagán focused on Pagán’s contention that *Laudato Si’* fails to attend to the interpersonal, institutional, and territorial legacies and implications of two of its central categories—*home* and *family*.

Hidalgo’s reflections focused on the empire-resistant yet kyriarchal metaphors of *home* (*oikos*), *household*, and *citizenship* in the New Testament’s *Letter to the Ephesians*. She elucidated insights regarding “the coloniality of home or, at very least, the ambivalent nature of home,” elaborating how early Christians subverted but also reinscribed the Roman Empire’s dominant “family values” rhetoric. This power-laden rhetoric, Hidalgo argued, was aimed at “mutually reinforcing the expectations of hierarchy and control” in both the Roman household and wider empire. Informed by Chicana feminist queer theory, which perceives *home* as both meaningful and harmful, Hidalgo carried her insights regarding home and ambiguous resistance into her analysis

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of the mixed-race nationalist Chicax movement and its spatial-relational constructions of *aztlán* and *familia*, wherein she similarly recognizes both resistance to oppression and reinscribed social hierarchies. Hidalgo concluded her remarks by calling for a decolonial relationship to scripts (including *Laudato Si'*), arguing against “submission” to texts: “decolonizing communities can remix and defy their households and their attendant scriptures; they don’t abandon them, but they do challenge practices of authorization in relationship to them.”

Group conversation followed, and focused on the conjunto’s concern that the categories and metaphors of *Laudato Si'* undermine its aims. Jeremy Cruz maintained that Francisco’s uses of *home* and *family*, aimed at constructing planetary unity and cooperation, mitigate against his desire for “the church to go out into the streets” and his call to “¡hagan lío!” (raise a ruckus). María Pilar Aquino underscored the importance of interdependence and coalitions, cautioning against the creation of fragmented resistance movements. Bryan Massingale named the enduring tension between separatist impulses to create new, more nurturing homes and the desire to “go home and be ourselves there.” Others further underscored tensions and ambiguities, including Roberto Goizueta, who reminded us of one of the only examples of “holy family” that we receive from the gospels—Jesus running away from home.

JEREMY V. CRUZ
St. John’s University
Queens, New York

ROBERT J. RIVERA
St. John’s University
Queens, New York