

COALITION OF BLACK, ASIAN, ASIAN-AMERICAN,  
AND LATINO/A THEOLOGY I— CONSULTATIONS

Topic: That's How the Light Gets In (Session I)—“Moving toward  
Conversion: Methods, Languages, and Practices”  
Convener: Ramón Luzárraga, University of Dayton  
Moderator: Teresa Maya, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word  
Presenters: Brett Hoover, Loyola Marymount University  
Sophia Park, Holy Names University  
Freddy Washington, Xavier University of New Orleans

The Latino/a Theology Consultation, as part of a program coordinated with the African American and Asian and Asian American consultations, had representatives from each group speak to the foundations of conversion. Brett Hoover spoke of the spiritual conversion Catholic immigrants to the United States from Latin America experience in parish life. This conversion consists of an ecclesiastical discourse with Latin American "New Evangelization" roots but also includes more individualistic Evangelical Pentecostal tropes of conversion, all of which impacts how they approach faith and ethical questions. Specifically, Hoover asked, “What did immigrants gain or lose from this experience?”

Sophia Park spoke of how women religious constantly rededicate their vocation by living it out with the understanding that they are part of the church as the people of God, with its concomitant focus on issues of justice among the poor, marginalized, and uneducated. This priority means women religious do not primarily see their vocation within the context of the institutional governance of the Church alone. Park argues how the Sisters' understanding of their vocation and their work to carry out their sense of the same has led to struggles with religious authority, including the papacy.

Freddy Washington sought to move beyond the false dichotomy of conversion and identity as opposing forces, where the former is often portrayed as threatening the latter. Employing Bernard Lonergan's notion of "being in love," Washington argued how Black Catholics view the experience of conversion as essential to Christian identity itself; it is the total absorption of the experience of God. Conversion, argues Washington, is a series of movements from external conflict to internalization and then to integration of this experience. He then presented a paradigm for exploring the community as a source for this dynamic conversion.

All three papers attracted strong attendance and discussion, with attendees trying to tie the speakers' arguments with concrete experiences in their own local church experience, and asking probing questions about how immigrants "lose and find," why the Sisters' stance causes conflict, and the totalizing nature of conversion.

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