

HISPANIC LATINO/A THEOLOGY

- Topic: People on the Move: Asian American and US Latin@ Theologies in Dialogue
- Convener: Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández, Catholic Theological Union
- Moderator: Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández, Catholic Theological Union
- Presenters: Jonathan Tan, Xavier University
Jean-Pierre Ruiz, St. John's University

This session continued a series of intercultural conversations between Asian and Asian American theologians and US Latin@ theologians. Working en conjunto, the presenters considered intersecting trajectories with attention to immigration and transnational identities as sources for theologizing that have implications across disciplines and for the construction of just relationships.

In his paper entitled "Hybridities, Multiple Belongings, and Multiple Border Crossings: The Quest for a Common Latino/a and Asian American Theological Method," Jonathan Tan began by deconstructing the first wave of Asian American theologies. He suggested that an element of ahistorical essentialism constitutive of these early theologies marginalizes those who do not neatly fit-in, for example, "adoptees, bi/multiracial, queer, transnational, and undocumented Asian Americans." Tan appreciates the political utility of pan-ethnic categories especially in response to external forces of dominance and discrimination; however, these categories imply a homogeneity that does not exist.

Tan draws on the scholarship of Asian American theologians and interdisciplinary scholars who have focused in particular on the experiences of Queer Asian Pacific Americans (QAPAs), and on the complexity of transnational identities to demonstrate "a multiplicity of heterogenized, hybridized, and conflicting constructions of identity and relations in relation to the dominant White American mainstream." In light of this shift, he contends that new generations of Asian American scholars reflect instead on conflict, particularity and hybridity with respect to the impact on their theologizing. Toward this end, he proposes a method of traditioning as a common departure to cultivate cross-contextual dialog between Latin@s and Asian Americans. He sees traditioning not as an exercise uncritically re-inscribing the past, but as a creative and dynamic method that arises from multiple subjectivities navigating a multidimensional daily living.

Biblical scholar Jean-Pierre Ruiz in his contribution entitled "Found in Translation: Asian American and U.S. Latino/a Theologies en Conjunto beyond the Impasse," observed how very different this conversation would be without President Barack Obama's nominations of Latin@s to two high profile positions. The announcements of Judge Sonia Sotomayor as a nominee to the Supreme Court and theologian Miguel Díaz as U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See immediately preceded the CTSA annual convention in late May 2009 and resulted in debates of Latin@ identity throughout a variety of media. With charges of identity politics unsettling an allegedly postracial U.S., Ruiz insisted that this juncture calls for ongoing alliance-building across minoritized racial-ethnic groups in

defiance of an imposed multiculturalism that prefers “an image of living-apart-together” (R. Bailey, B. Liew, F. Segovia, eds., *They Were All Together in One Place?* 5). Careful to avoid essentializing identity, Ruiz noted that the manner in which Sotomayor and Díaz intentionally and publically embraced their Latin@ identity entailed a construction beyond the circumstances of one’s birth. He concluded that Latin@s are born, made and, borrowing from Fernando Segovia, reborn, “consciously appropriating the community ties, marginalized status, and minoritarian agenda associated with such a designation” (Bailey et al, 201).

Ruiz agreed with Tan that traditioning provides a key point of convergence that can move forward “our efforts toward solidarity *ad intra* and *ad extra*.” Traditioning occurs in the daily and invites mutual readings across contexts that challenge temptations to essentialize, absolutize or universalize particulars. As the dialogue continues, traditioning en conjunto can be helpful in moving identity categorizations beyond destructively self-referential, fossilized and fetishized impositions. Thus, Ruiz returns to his title whereby his intentional inversion of the cliché “lost in translation” instead suggests “that border crossings across our academic disciplines, across academic and ethnic idioms, and even across national borders can in fact bring Asian American and Latin@ scholars together in significant ways.”

A rich and extensive conversation followed the presentations with participants discussing the potential of traditionings as a way to open up and embrace plurality beyond impasse, and the type of hermeneutic necessary to avoid homogenization.

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