

CONSULTATION ON BLACK CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

- Topic: The Triune God as Theological Response to the Church Confronting and Resolving Community Fragmentation and Violence (Part one of two in cooperation with the Consultation on Hispanic Latino/a Theology)
- Conveners: C. Vanessa White, Catholic Theological Union
Shawnee Daniels Sykes, Mount Mary University
- Moderator: C. Vanessa White, Catholic Theological Union
- Presenters: Neomi DeAnda, University of Dayton
Shawnee Daniels Sykes, Mount Mary University

This year's CTSA the Consultation on Black Catholic Theology and the Consultation on Hispanic Latino/a Theology continued our intentional collaboration and participation across sessions. The administrative teams of each consultation met to develop a cohesive response to this year's theme of Identity and Difference, Unity and Fragmentation. The sessions' collaborative titles were "The Triune God as a Theological response to the Church Confronting and Resolving Community Fragmentation and Violence." Session one met on Friday, June 6, in the afternoon.

DeAnda's paper, "If We Do Not Know Our Histories, then we are Unlikely to Repeat Them: A Historically Violent Silencing of Bodies in Relationship to the Trinity," reinforced the intentionality of the shared discourse of these consultations by stating that, "For Black and Latino/a communities, historical silencing has been used as a weapon to stunt epistemological, philosophical, and theological development." She went on to explain that, if scholars do not have access to theological sources from these communities, historical violence continues to be perpetuated. She shared with those in attendance one particular theological source—the writings of Sor María Anna Águeda de San Ignacio from Puebla Mexico (1695). In sharing this source, DeAnda particularly highlighted Sor María Anna's "incorporation of biblical text into her own writings about Mary's place within a Trinitarian formulary to a theology of breast milk."

These texts by Sor Maria have been translated by DeAnda and shed light on the theological intensity of the Latino/a religious women's understanding and relationship to the Triune God. As DeAnda states, Maria Anna "weaves Mary and her milk all through Christian tradition rooting it all the way to the beginnings of the Church and Paul's interaction with the community in Corinth." For DeAnda, what can be seen as problematic in retrieving Sor María's work is the use of the symbol of the nursing mother as the only image of the Trinity. DeAnda continues her research to also gain a greater understanding of Sor María Anna's depiction of Mary as Mother of all which for her includes those of indigenous and mixed race. She realizes that this question may never be answered but that uncovering the work of those who have been silenced gives hope "in how these marginalized and silenced writings will continue to inform, expand, as well as be interrogated and help the interrogation of broader Catholic tradition."

Next, Shawnee Daniels Sykes, in her paper, "Erecting Death Shrines/Memorials At the Roadside: Unified Sympathetic Faith Responses, Gunning for Empathy and Compassion in the Second Amendment Debates," gave a mesmerizing as well as

troubling view onto the development of “death shrines” that are finding their way into the roadsides and neighborhoods of inner city life in the United States. These death shrines have become a part of the normal life of those persons living in such cities as of Milwaukee (the context of her paper) and have been erected after violent gun homicides. They can be found in children’s playgrounds, daycare centers, as well as along the roads.

Daniels-Sykes begins with her own introduction to this phenomenon, and then gives a brief overview of second amendment debates as well as her reflection on the ethical concerns surrounding “senseless” gun violence homicides (she includes a video depiction of these shrines) and concludes with a focus on the intersection of these shrines with Black Spirituality as well as suggestions on how to act more empathetically and compassionately to this phenomenon. The silence of Catholic theological ethicists to speak on this topic of gun violence is of note and it is with courage of conviction that Daniels-Sykes focuses attention on this phenomenon in the context of further research into these death shrines.

She contends that it is not “enough that these death shrines/memorials are erected after gun violent homicides as a sympathetic or even a frozen intellectual, emotional or spiritual catharsis to tragic loss and grief.” Rather empathy and compassion are also important for spiritual, social, and political healing and transformation as we set out to address homicides by gun violence. She sources Erika Doss’ essay, “Spontaneous Memorials and Contemporary Modes of Mourning in America,” which states that spontaneous memorials are products of human thought and emotional need that help to mediate the psychic crisis of sudden and often inexplicable loss.” In these shrines, Daniels – Sykes states, loved ones leave flowers, rosaries, teddy bears, as well as liquor bottles that are more than just a sympathetic response to grief and mourning. These shrines push us to empathic and compassionate action. She looks to Jesus’ ministry at the roadside as seen in the Good Samaritan story (Lk 10:29–37) and Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46–52) as guides that can teach us about what it means to see with new insights and further reiterates how we must be Good Samaritan neighbors in our response to gun violence.

The discussion following these papers gave suggestions to both scholars on further avenues for research. It was suggested that DeAnda look at the work of Sue Houchins (Bates College) who is researching the writing of Sr. Teresa Chicaba, an 18th-century African cloistered religious woman in Spain. The recommendation was also made that Daniels-Sykes delve further into the books of Job and Lamentations in finding appropriate avenues of response and hope.

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