



Top left: Mary Hunt; Gabriella Ferrazzini and Elisabeth Aeberli of Switzerland; Cathy Jaskey; and Kate Stoltzfus at DC's Justice For All march in December 2014. **Top Right:** Kim Klein of Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training and Mary Hunt at a Loretto Community event in February 2015. **Bottom Right:** Mennonite Volunteers Emily Bender, Kate Stoltzfus, Will Kanagy, Lauren Stoltzfus, and Brandon Waggy. **Bottom Left:** Cecelia Lapp-Stoltzfus, Cindy Lapp, pastor of Hyattsville Mennonite Church, and Diann Neu work on donor mailings in December 2014.



Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual • NEWSLETTER

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Amplifying Marginalized Voices

How do we work to make all voices heard?

That question hung in the air as WATER gathered a diverse group of 14 activists, academics, and ministers for “Amplifying Marginalized Voices” in December 2014.

The Consultation's roots began in 2012, when WATER launched Catholic Lesbian/Queer Women's Conversations as a



safe space to share voices of Catholic lesbian women. Two years later, a Consultation inspired by those conversations met at the Retreat and Conference Center at Bon Secours in Maryland with the goal of enlarging its scope beyond the Catholic community. This was the first time a group of women with intergenerational

voices of various gender identities, sexual orientations, races, and faiths came together for the purpose of figuring out how to push the parameters of a still largely male and cisgender-focused LGBTIQ movement. The aim was to see how women's voices are so often muffled, and outline strategies for broadening the conversation's impact for all marginalized groups.

The group's first action was to endorse the “Black LGBT Religious Leaders United” press release of December 11, 2014, calling for united action for “Black Bodies Matter.”

One agreement was the need for brave—rather than safe—spaces of accountability to have difficult conversations on issues of race, class, sex, and gender marginalization. There was also a need for environments that nurture shared listening and understanding.

“How can you be a people if you hate who you are?” said Bishop Yvette Flunder of City of Refuge UCC. “I am very aware of what happens if we are not encouraged to celebrate our own realities.”

As the Consultation drew to a close, there was an awareness that the future teachings and writings of the members gathered would reflect intersectional analysis in a new way, pushing marginalized movements along.

Said Sharon Groves of the Human Rights Campaign, “Accountability is about a deep love, and when you deeply love, it doesn't mean that you agree and it doesn't mean that you are off the hook...We need to be called into account when we're not brave.” ■

Upcoming Programs

Our series of **WATERtalks** feature conversations with feminist activists and theologians for a dialogue of ideas, research, and experiences. This spring promises a fresh set of upcoming programs: **Namsoon Kang** (April 15), **Gina Messina-Dysert**, **Rosemary Radford Ruether**, and **Xochitl Alvizo** (May 6), **Nancy Wilson** (June 3), and **Aisha Beliso-De Jesus** (July 8). All WATERtalks are free and run from 1 to 2 p.m. ET on their selected dates. WATER also offers a monthly **Contemplative Prayer/Meditation** session, a gathering time for shared meditation followed by discussion of the month's topic. Upcoming dates in 2015 are **April 13**, **May 4**, **June 8**, and **July 13**. Register for upcoming talks on our website waterwomensalliance.org.



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Who We Are

WATER is a a global network, an educational and spiritual space, a center for dialogue on feminism, faith, and justice. We connect activists, religious leaders, students, scholars, and allies who are using feminist religious values to create social change. WATER was founded in 1983 by Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu and has been empowering women to address structural violence for more than thirty years — making WATER one of the oldest feminist religious non-profit organizations in the world. The WATER community needs you to work toward inclusive theologies and rituals, to push for social change, and to collaborate across many differences. Join us! **To learn more about what we do, visit waterwomensalliance.org.**

Mary E. Hunt Diann L. Neu | Co-directors

Cathy Jaskey Kate Stoltzfus | Staff Associates

WATER is a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible. We thank you for your support. © 2015 Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual.

WATER Debuts the Clearinghouse

To continue the momentum of the Consultation, WATER launched a new clearinghouse project, **Amplifying Marginalized Voices**, on WATER's website in January 2015. The goal of the initiative is to inspire action, start conversation, and create safe spaces for listening, learning, collaboration, and support. WATER accepts articles, rituals, lectures, spiritual resources – any writing or media that promotes equality. The site is, as consultant Meg Riley named it, “a curating space [to] find the voices we want to push out at this moment in history.” To submit a resource, send an inquiry to waterstaff@hers.com.



March Ritual: Celebrating Women

by Diann L. Neu

March is Women’s History Month. It is a time to celebrate women, speak their names, tell their stories, and thank them for sharing their gifts.

Share Stories of Revolutionary Women

What women come to your mind and heart as you think about Women’s History? What women have inspired you to change the world?

Thank Women for Their Unique Gifts to the World

Thank you, *Michelle Obama*, for promoting education and working to create a healthier country as the First Lady of the United States.
Thank you, *Malala Yousafzai*, for defying the Taliban in Pakistan and demanding that girls be allowed to receive an education.

Thank you, *Claudette Colvin*, *Rosa Parks*, and the brave women who sparked the Civil Rights Movement, for refusing segregation.

Thank you, *Sally Ride*, for showing the world that women can reach for the stars and fly into space.

Thank you, *Helen Keller*, for campaigning on behalf of people with disabilities.

Thank you *mothers*, *grandmothers*, *aunts*, for shaping generations with your inspiration.

The list is endless. Who else would you add?

Share Your Stories: A Revolutionary Act

“I believe that telling our stories, first to ourselves and then to one another and the world, is a revolutionary act. It is an act that can be met with hostility, and exclusion... It can also lead to love, understanding, transcendence, and community.”

- Janet Mock, author of *Redefining Realness*

What do you hear in the quote that inspires you? What unique gifts do you share with the world?

Take Action: Celebrate Women

- . Post pictures of women who inspire you
- . Search for a woman online, read her biography, and let it inspire you to shape your own story
- . Write a letter or send an email to a woman who has guided you
- . Take a wise woman out to dinner
- . Advocate for women’s rights to move forward and not regress on issues such as choice, non-discrimination, comprehensive immigration reform, and voting rights

© Diann L. Neu is co-founder and co-director of WATER. A full version of this ritual is available on our website.



Vatican Council On Women Would Be Funny Were It Not So Insulting

by Mary E. Hunt



It may be Women’s Week at the Vatican, but you have to look carefully at the skirts to find many women. However well-intentioned Vatican officials may be, they embody Murphy’s Law when it comes to women: everything that can go wrong does go wrong. Maybe if women were more than bit players, things might improve.

The Pontifical Council for Culture in Rome, presided over by Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi and made up of cardinals and bishops who are all men, are discussing “Women’s Cultures: Equality and Difference” from February 4-7, 2015 in mostly closed-door sessions. There are enough contradictions in that sentence to end my analysis right here.

I persist, if only to encourage others to trust their intuitions about such dubious endeavors and to think about women when they sing the praises of Pope Francis. Women make up slightly more than half of the Catholic population, and many more than half of its active members. Only by ignoring women can Francis fans herald his achievements.

Only by setting aside the all-male priesthood, bracketing any mention of kyriarchal decision-making structures, and passing over outmoded notions of gender can one honestly say that Francis, who captains the ship, is any better than his immediate predecessors when it comes to half of the church.

His own unfortunate choice of women-related words like “Europe is now a ‘grandmother,’ no longer fertile and vibrant” and women theologians are “the strawberries on the cake!” reveal his personal limitations with regard to women. Let every praise of his papacy contain an asterisk until it is no longer necessary. Maybe that will motivate some people who want him to succeed to get working on women’s issues as well as poverty, war, the environment and the like, all of which have disproportionate impacts on women. **To read the full article, visit the blog at waterwomensalliance.org.**

Mary E. Hunt is co-founder and co-director of WATER. This article was originally posted on Religion Dispatches (religiondispatches.org/vatican-council-on-women-would-be-funny-were-it-not-so-insulting/).

Summer Intern Applications for 2015

WATER welcomes students from seminaries, universities, and colleges worldwide to apply for a summer or year-long internship. The program includes work such as event planning, writing and editing projects, non-profit fundraising, community outreach, and website/social media maintenance. Internships typically begin in May and end in July, but there is flexibility; a minimum of six weeks is required. The application deadline is **March 25**. To apply, visit waterwomensalliance.org or call 301.589.2509.

From left: 2014-2015 staff associates Kate Stoltzfus of Mennonite Voluntary Service and Cathy Jaskey of Loretto Volunteer Program.



Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network Gathering

by Mary E. Hunt and Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza

The Feminist Liberation Theologians’ Network held its annual meeting in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion/ Society of Biblical Literature gathering in San Diego, CA on November 21, 2014. The topic was teaching and activism that engage gender-based violence as part of feminist liberation theological praxis. More than sixty colleagues from ten countries joined in an intense but enjoyable session.

The meeting opened with a message from **Monica Maher**, a longtime FLTN colleague (and WATER’s first intern!). In sending her regrets that she could not come to the meeting, Monica told

about a colleague, **Margarita Murillo**, who was killed recently in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, and that even more recently the woman lawyer working on the case was also murdered. “Clearly, femicide is on the rise around the world and theological resources/voices are urgently needed!” she said. “*Gracias* for your work on this.”

To that end, we were fortunate to have four speakers whose remarks focused on ways in which colleagues’ work in religion can be useful in eradicating violence: **Solveig Anna Bóasdóttir**, **Marie M. Fortune**, **Elizabeth J. A. Siwo-Okundi**, and **Traci C. West**. Wide-ranging discussion followed small group conversations. Much of it focused on the need for resources around the world.

Several colleagues reported the closing of gender studies programs in their countries. Backlash in Germany and Australia was reported. With Mexico a mere fifteen minutes from the site of this meeting, **Maria Pilar Aquino** reminded the group of issues of violence there.

Thanks to all presenters and participants in both sessions. This was a wonderful experience of theory and praxis coming together for change.

The FLTN seeks brief presentations for the November 20, 2015 meeting at the AAR/SBL in Atlanta, GA. Presentations should explore the connection between feminist liberation theologies and the arts. Please submit a short summary of your topic to FLTN c/o water@hers.com by March 30, 2015. Visit WATER’s website waterwomensalliance.org for more information. ■



Elizabeth J.A. Siwo-Okundi, Mary E. Hunt, Solveig Anna Bóasdóttir, Traci C. West, and Marie M. Fortune at the FLTN 2014 annual meeting at the AAR.

Thank You For Your Generosity

Spring brings new opportunities for change, meaningful work, and expanded community. As WATER looks ahead to programs, resources, and waves of activism this year, we are thankful for your generosity in sustaining our broad network of religious feminists, as well as their passion for good around the world. We ask you to continue remembering WATER as our work for social justice carries on in spring and beyond. Consider a gift if you are able. Send a check to WATER or donate online at waterwomensalliance.org. May we return blessings tenfold as the spirit of WATER overflows into the world.