

## **Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network Chronology 1995-2022**

1995 Idea formed; first meeting held at Marriott Crystal City Gateway Hotel, Crystal City, VA as part of Women's Ordination Conference meeting "Discipleship of Equals: Breaking Bread/ Doing Justice."

1996 Letter sent out widely to propose network with 4 levels: US Canadian; link across racial/ethnic lines; gather and share info about existing networks around world; general location is Christian so link with other religious traditions

1997 AAR/SBL San Francisco- focused conversation on US theological scene

1998 AAR/SBL Orlando update on groups like European Society; women theologians in Costa Rica

1999 AAR/SBL Boston at Bunting Institute with reception at HDS with Womanist and Women's Caucus

2000 January 6-9 Daytona Beach STUDY, SUN AND SOLIDARITY conference  
AAR/SBL Nashville Discussion of FL mtg.

2001 AAR/SBL Denver "Thinking Globally, Acting Locally" pub. JFSR

2002 AAR/SBL Toronto Economics and fem. theo.

2003 AAR/SBL Atlanta "Feminist pedagogy" with small groups to discuss it

2004 AAR/SBL San Antonio "Nationalism: published in JFSR as round table

2005 AAR/SBL Philadelphia "Mapping the Connections: Feminist Work in Religion and Activism"

2006 AAR/SBL Washington, DC "Religion and politics as it relates to our pedagogical work." Catherine Pinkerton of NETWORK, a Catholic Social Justice Lobby, and Sandy Sorenson who is on the staff of the United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries.

2007 San Diego Remarks by Maria Pilar Aquino on the local situation on the border with Mexico; remarks by Jen Bird, Kate Ott, and Nami Kim on issues related to new scholars.

2008 Chicago Following the Summer Forum, three colleagues looked at problems raised by using "feminism" as a name or a brand. Susan Abraham of Harvard Divinity School focused on naming as a strategy, not a theory, something that emerges from a context, not something that can be taught. Rosemary Carbine of Whittier College used U.S. Catholic examples to

explore her view of the topic, suggesting the importance of reinvention. Keri Day emphasized the policy dimensions of feminist analysis with an eye toward multiple forms of human flourishing rather than getting caught in the limits of identity politics.

2009 Montreal The discussion picked up on the deconstruction of feminism the year before by doing the same thing with “liberation.” Lisa Isherwood suggested that liberation is a function of “abundant life.” Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre used “anecdotes and artifacts” to discuss liberation, drawing on the work of feminist geographer Doreen Massey. Mayra Rivera spoke of “Liberation” as lasting justice for everyone and “liberation” on smaller scale as struggles even where change can seem illusory. She urged a theological attitude of wonder in the face of divine glory, what she described as the antithesis of the horror of injustice. Mary E. Hunt reported on the 2009 meeting of the World Forum of Theology and Liberation whose theme was “Water, Earth, Theology — for another possible world.” She noted that the well placed focus on ecology serves, however inadvertently, to eclipse anything but the macro issues of climate change, land use and the like, leaving even less emphasis on concrete challenges many women face around the world.

2010 Atlanta “critical theology” as it relates to the agenda of feminist liberation theologians to complete our cycle. People suggested that we look beyond the Christian tradition, that we assess theological illiteracy as a problem in the field, and that we consider how the media manipulate religious concepts in political discussion

2011 San Francisco The Feminist Liberation Theologians’ Network met for its annual gathering in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meetings in San Francisco, CA, on Friday, November 18, 2011. Introductions by the more than fifty colleagues present revealed a very diverse group from many countries (including Brazil, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, Sweden, as well as Canada and the United States). A good number of students and activists joined the scholars and professors in a discussion of some of the successes that colleagues have had in feminist liberation theological efforts. Speakers included Shannon Clarkson, Margaret Miles, Hi Rho Park, Sharon Welch.

Discussion moved to the need to look at feminist principles as they inform the practical efforts to overcome racism, for example. Epistemological issues included how we learn and from whom we learn (including our students). Another issue raised was the move beyond identity politics to individual and collective multi-culturalism, that is, the reality that most of us claim more than one identity. Still another comment focused on activism a la the Occupy Movement and how people from religious starting points can be part of that.

For an interesting reflection on the FLTN by longtime participant Dorothy Jensen Rupert interviewed by Mary C. Churchill, see the current issue of the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. “Religion and Politics: A Feminist In the House and Senate, An interview with Dorothy Jensen Rupert,” *JFSR* 27.2(2011), pp. 109-117.

## 2012 Chicago

The Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network met in conjunction with the Annual Meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature on November 16, 2012 in Chicago, Illinois. More than fifty colleagues from a dozen countries gathered for conversation and strategizing. With the leadership of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary E. Hunt, the group looked critically at how members live out their feminist liberation theological commitments in their daily lives. Four colleagues provided concrete examples. Small group discussion and a lively plenary session followed.

**Rebecca Alpert**, Associate Professor of Religion and Women's Studies at Temple University (Philadelphia, PA, USA), offered a thoughtful assessment of Jewish feminist justice work. As a rabbi, she takes on responsibility for public discourse about the deeply fraught situation in Israel/Palestine. She embraces non-violent efforts to overcome the seemingly intractable struggles.

As part of Jewish Voices for Peace, she has found a place for her feminist liberation work. In feminist writers/activists Adrienne Rich, Judith Butler, and Sarah Schulman she finds kindred voices for the complex work ahead. Nonetheless, the difficult situation faced by people in the region and the complicated political/religious calculus for supporters results in problems future generations will tackle.

**Rita Nakashima Brock**, co-director of the Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School (Fort Worth, TX, USA), described her involvement in the Occupy Wall Street Movement, especially its work to Occupy/Decolonize Oakland, California. As a minister, Rita joined other people of faith in non-violent witness that resulted in their arrests. She was part of the strong presence of women of color in Oakland who insisted on economic justice for workers.

Rita finds insight in the work of feminist writer Naomi Wolf who looked at the deeply interconnected power players – business, government, and police – who cracked down on the people camped in the streets. Rita cites the “civic arts” as making possible the exercise of “imagination and creativity” in social movements like Occupy. Young people and social media assure that Occupy's work is not done until the unjust social conditions to which it points are changed.

**Peggy Schmeiser**, Director of Government Relations at [the University of Saskatchewan](#) (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada), is a religion scholar who brings her feminist liberation commitments to government service. She engages in both scholarly work and administration. She encourages people “to challenge the perceived sacredness and irrefutability of religious belief and practice, particularly where it gives rise to violations of recognized human rights.” She draws on the work of feminist writer Alison Stuart to highlight the ways in which women's lack of religious freedom plays out in larger social/legal settings.

Peggy describes her own successful struggle to get her parental status reflected on her child's birth certificate without going through an adoption process. Her look ahead is to the formation of well-funded alliances of feminist scholars who can have similar impacts on society by bringing religious liberation insights to public policy.

**Zilak Spahic-Siljak**, research associate at Harvard Divinity School for 2012-13, is a professor at the University of Sarajevo (Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina) where she specializes in religion, human rights, and peace building. She offered the little known history of feminist liberation theology as it emerged from war and struggle in the former Yugoslavia. The theological work was done by those who responded to the need for “religious answers and comfort for the shame and guilt felt by female survivors of sexual trauma.” Later, the scholarly

apparatus of feminist work in religion, and the writings of many well-known colleagues came into play as useful resources for making sense of women's lives. It is a "bottom-up approach in doing and practicing feminist theology and then learning how to name it."

Zilka's report is a startling reminder of how most feminist liberation theological work has been done over generations. Necessity, not ideology, drives it. Nothing less than the achievement of women's human rights and peace is the goal. That focus links the community in Bosnia with so many others around the world.

Discussion illuminated the many overlapping lines in these diverse presentations. All of them are focused on using feminist theological resources for concrete social change aimed at human rights and peace. The academic work of feminist scholars is an indispensable tool in every case. Response to immediate and crying needs of people, especial women and children, is a trigger for this work in many places. Academic and practical work combine to get results. Connections to larger social/political movements are important to the success of feminist liberation theology.

Participants added their stories and insights, including the importance of focus on the arts and ritual as feminist liberation resources. Cross-generational sharing is key to keeping this work going and growing

2013 Baltimore, Maryland

**Report on Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network Meeting  
2013 Meeting, Baltimore, MD  
Mary E. Hunt and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza**

More than sixty colleagues from more than ten countries met on Friday, November 22, 2013, at the annual gathering of the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network. The focus was on intergenerational learning, how contemporary practitioners build on the work of those who went before them, and how that process continues. This year's meeting was videotaped for future viewing. WATER has the tape.

**Nicki Young** of Bucknell University highlighted the work of Beverly Wildung Harrison, Traci West, Rebecca Alpert, Mary E. Hunt, and others as foundational for her own. She pointed out both mentorship as well as scholarship, style as well as substance as what she gleaned from those whose work influenced hers in this arena. Womanist queer studies are integral to the feminist liberation theological project.

**Robyn Henderson-Espinoza** traced her roots to Mary Daly, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Rosemary Radford Ruether. She praised Chicana/Latina work, especially that of Gloria E. Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa's work on bridges, and the centrality of intersectionality shape Robyn's current queer thinking and writing. She cited the Human Rights Campaign Summer Institute for Religious Scholars and Theologians as a locus of learning, and her collaboration with Nicki Young, among others, as part of her scholarly commitment.

**Monica Melanchthon** named many of the same feminist pioneers (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Letty Russell, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Mary Daly) and went on to describe how the work of western scholars was crucial in India at a time when there were no Indian feminist theologians. The borrowing and adapting was important so that now there are Indian women doing this work rooted in their own context. Aruna Gnanadason is one example. Caste issues are unique content in India. Biblical studies reflect the local priorities.

As always, lively conversation ensured both in the small groups and in the plenary session. It quickly became clear that next year's topic must focus on gender-based violence. So many threads of that topic were woven into the history of feminist liberation theological work. Collaboration with the Women's Caucus and with a group of women focusing on teaching about gender-based violence in theological settings is under discussion.

The gathering ended with singing and a spiral dance, courtesy of Diann Neu, a first in our history!

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*The Network will discuss teaching that engages gender-based violence as feminist liberation theological praxis. Speakers include: Solveig Anna Boasdotir, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Iceland; Marie M. Fortune, FaithTrust Institute; Lisa Gelber, Jewish Theological Seminary; Elizabeth Siwo-Okundi, Boston University School of Theology; Traci West, Drew University Theological School. Discussion and strategizing will follow their short presentations. All are welcome. RSVP: Mary E. Hunt, Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER), 301 589-2509, [mhunt@her.com](mailto:mhunt@her.com); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Harvard Divinity School, [eschussler@hds.harvard.edu](mailto:eschussler@hds.harvard.edu).*

This year the Women's Caucus and the FLTNT will collaborate to amplify colleagues' voices on this important topic. The Caucus will hold a session entitled "Weeding and Seeding: The Role of the Scholar in Gender-based Violence and Activism" on Saturday, November 22, 2014 from 9-11:30 AM in the Women's Lounge. Several of their presenters will participate in our meeting in order to share some of the fruits of our conversation. Likewise, Marie Fortune and I plan to be at their gathering to learn and strategize. This is an exciting next step for FLTNT, which has long been concerned with concrete articulation of our commitments in teaching, research, and action. You are more than welcome to attend the Caucus session as well as the FLTNT event.

2014 San Diego

**Report on Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network Meeting  
2014 San Diego, CA  
Mary E. Hunt and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, February 2015**

The Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network held its annual meeting in conjunction with 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. 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, feminicide 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** is Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Iceland where she is dean of the theological faculty. She insisted on the need to theorize anti-violence work in the context of feminist studies in religion, citing bell hooks, Iris Young, and Rebecca Chopp as guides. She stressed the need for theological students to understand social connections and sexism as part of the big picture.

**Marie M. Fortune** founded the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, now known as FaithTrust Institute, in 1977 in Seattle, WA, USA where she served as Executive Director until 1999. Now she serves as Founder and Senior Analyst of the Center. She cited progress in the field insofar as sexual and domestic violence is now part of the conversation in many schools if not taught as a stand-alone course. She asked how religious leaders are dealing with campus sexual assault. And she underscored the complexity of faculty sexual misconduct. Her advice was to encourage young scholars to take on anti-violence issues as part of their academic research.

**Elizabeth J. A. Siwo-Okundi** is Ph.D. candidate in Practical Theology and Homiletics at Boston University from Kenya. She stressed the importance of doing anti-violence work “boldly, truthfully, lovingly, and faithfully.” From her perspective as a preacher, she observed that many people--victim/survivors,

bystanders, and perpetrators alike-- are in congregations. How they hear the message variously makes preaching a daunting task.

**Traci C. West** is Professor of Ethics and African American Studies at Drew University Theological School (Madison, NJ). She discussed what works well in addition to what is challenging about teaching anti-violence materials. On the plus side, integrating anti-violence education into the general curriculum seems to be most effective. Whether dealing with the medical ethics of pregnancy as the result of rape, or about coercion in heterosexual marriage, the many fields of theological study (history, theology, sacred texts, etc.) are relevant. Challenging but rewarding work includes her collaboration in Zimbabwe, an example of the complexity of transnational intellectual learning.

Wide-ranging discussion followed small group conversations. Much of it focused on the need for resources around the world. For example, the World Council of Churches, the World YWCA, and the Lutheran World Federation collaborated on a project entitled "[NoXcuses for Violence Against Women.](#)"

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. She also reported on a recent conference on women's peace efforts. Transgender Remembrance Day is November 20th, an occasion to recommit to eradicate violence against trans people.

The following morning, the Women's Caucus of the AAR featured this discussion on their program. It was a marvelous opportunity to collaborate with more colleagues for several hours as Marie Fortune and Mary E. Hunt reported on the FLTN session. Sharon Davis, Gina Messina Dysert, Nancy Nienhuis, and Elizabeth Ursic made remarks. Small group discussions ensued. This format was a great way to extend the FLTN conversation and will be repeated in November 2015.

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

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The theme for the November 20, 2015 FLTN meeting at the AAR/SBL Annual Meetings in Atlanta, Georgia will be the connection between Feminist Liberation Theologies and the Arts. The FLTN seeks submissions exploring the multi-faceted connection between feminist liberation theologies and the arts. Brief presentations will open discussion on how the arts broadly conceived play a role in communicating feminist liberation theological themes, as well as ways that artistic expressions can be countersigns of that work. FLTN also wants to consider how the arts can help to socialize resources and bring more people into progressive religious conversations. Please submit your proposal to FLTN c/o [water@hers.com](mailto:water@hers.com) by March 30, 2015.

Your participation in the FLTN is part of what is AAR and SBL term an Additional Meeting. Therefore, it does not count as one of your allotted slots. Also, note that the Women's Caucus will continue this conversation at its meeting on Saturday, November 21, 2015 from 9 to 11:30 AM.

2015 Atlanta, GA

**Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network Meeting Report**  
**Mary E. Hunt December 2015**

The Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network met on Friday, November 20, 2015, at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta, Georgia. The theme was "Be Creative, Make Change," a way to look at feminist liberation theologies and the arts.

More than eighty people from at least ten countries gathered. Participants included seasoned activists and scholars as well as graduate students from a wide range of institutions. We were happy to welcome a wonderful group of a dozen students who were studying our very theme with Professor Rebecca Davis at Presbyterian College in South Carolina (she had been a student of Dr. Katie Cannon). We even had a high school student so our future is bright! We all shared the unique artistic activities we are engaged in as we introduced ourselves. While it makes for a lengthy start to a meeting, the process of meeting one another and learning who is doing what in the field adds a rich dimension to the conversation.

You will find the video of the event on our web site at <http://www.waterwomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologians-network/>. Please feel free to link it to your own sites. Many people will use the video for teaching and discussion

We are grateful to our speakers:



- **Katie G. Cannon, Union Presbyterian Seminary: “Antecedents of Womanist Artistic Expressions”**

Dr. Cannon described her childhood experiences living under Jim/Jane Crow and now in a situation in which it is critically important to affirm that Black Lives Matter in the face of rampant racism. She gave each participant the beautiful gift of a color copy of her artwork, doodlings that emerge from her prayer. In a way that words might not convey fully, her artwork, with its unpredictable outcomes, expresses deep and often difficult feelings in vibrant colors and bold designs.

These brilliant, graphic images emerge from holy moments full of mystery and meaning. They are her ways to deal with the complexities of hate and faith, the challenges of “Squaring the Womanist Circle,” for which she has created an especially evocative image.

Katie’s work highlights the urgency of the current cultural morass, especially racism, in which U.S. society is mired. She demonstrated the power of creative artistic energy in the service of social change and personal survival. Happily, some of her images have been turned into wearable art. Information is forthcoming on where to procure the art.

- **Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, Seminary of the Southwest: "A Lot of the Way Trees Were Walking”**

Dr. Kittredge introduced her scholarly work in feminist biblical interpretation, but focused on her prayer, where she lets poetry flow. In her morning journaling, she expresses the images and symbols that emerge from her scholarship about the Gospel of Mark, work that is inspired by, among other scholars, the late Jane Schaberg.

Cynthia shared that poetry allows a freedom to play and experiment that is missing in exegesis and preaching. Her report on “the role of the imagination in reading and rereading scripture and about poetry as an instrument of interpretation” gave participants ideas for our own practices.

Like Dr. Cannon, Dr. Kittredge holds together both the analytic aspects and the artistic dimensions of religious studies to articulate a rich and complex message. Her book, *A Lot of the Way Trees Were Walking: Poems from the Gospel of Mark* (Wipf and Stock, 2015), is an example of how it is done.

- **Mónica Maher, Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences - Ecuador: “Feminist Liberation Theologies within the Museums of Quito, Ecuador”**

Dr. Maher works in Quito, Ecuador, in conjunction with the Foundation of the Museums of the City of Quito. She described how critical feminist religious principles could be applied in civic spaces, transforming museums into places of encounter.

Remarkable exhibits in the local Carmelite Convent Museum, for example, including one on Mariana de Jesus, a national heroine, provide springboards for discussion. Another exhibit on “Transgender Bodies: Distinct Bodies” echoes in a city where a number of trans people have been killed. Still another, at the Casa Ochun in Quito, is an opportunity to bring feminist liberation theology insights to the conversation.

Monica seeks to “represent the diversity of life-giving spiritualities of women’s communities in Quito, focusing on women’s mystical experiences and moral agency, while challenging neo/colonial frameworks of the very definition of the museum itself.” An exhibit on Teresa of Avila is the next site of this work. She and other feminists in Quito are finding myriad ways to stimulate conversations and bring their theo-political commitments to the tasks of social change.

- **Elizabeth Ursic, Mesa Community College: “Making Things Rite: The Importance of Ritual in Feminist Liberation Theologies”**

Dr. Ursic linked her current work with the efforts of feminist colleagues from at least four decades ago. She insisted on integrating the insights of feminist studies in religion, not simply in the academy but in the everyday worship experiences of religious people.

Elizabeth made reference to the 1993 Re-Imagining Conference in Minneapolis, MN, which was a watershed in the field. There, women discussed new language and imagery for the divine, new ethical and theological options, and engaged in new prayer, liturgy, and ritual. The virulent response from conservatives that resulted in threats against persons, loss of jobs and funding, etc. proved just how dangerous and frightening such changes can be to those who are invested in kyriarchal religious understandings.

In her book, *Women, Ritual, and Power: Placing Female Imagery of God in Christian Worship* (SUNY Press, 2015), Elizabeth describes how individual communities of various denominations embody female imagery of the divine. Liturgy/ritual professionals have an important role to play in bringing academic feminist religious insights to the lived religious experience of contemporary worshipers.

These four diverse and insightful presentations made for lively conversation in small groups. In the plenary session that followed, helpful, hard questions emerged about how intersectional justice struggles can be articulated in art, and whether these are a priority for colleagues. Storytelling as an art form was mentioned as a useful technique. Several people noted the signal importance of dealing with Islamophobia, as well as the urgency of the global refugee crisis. Still others talked about creative and changing pedagogy as necessary to bring feminist religious insights to fruition.

Conversation continued on Saturday morning in what is now becoming a tradition. The Women’s Caucus, as part of their rich offerings, looked at and expanded the work of the FLTN. This year their session was entitled “Cultivating Minds: New Directions in Feminist Pedagogy.” Mary E. Hunt made a report on the FLTN meeting. Papers were offered by:

--Kathryn Common, Boston University--*Forging Voice: Feminist Theology, Theopoetics and Film*

--Meredith Minister, Shenandoah University--*Trigger Warnings in the Feminist Religious Studies Classroom*

--Marsha Thrall, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary--*"What's Going On?" Using Music and Feminist Pedagogy to Bridge Racial and Class Divides between Congregations*

Mary Hunt and Elizabeth Ursic responded to the papers.

This is a marvelous opportunity to expand the discussion. It adds enormously to the FLTN meeting, which always seems far too short a time to consider the many issues raised. We are grateful for the collaboration of the Women's Caucus and hope to continue this format in 2016.

The next meeting of the FLTN will be held on Friday, November 18, 2016, at the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting in San Antonio, 4-6 PM. Please join us and please feel free to invite your colleagues and/or students to do the same. The topic will be **Intersectionality and Political Action**, a timely one shortly after the U.S. national elections. We will look at the kyriarchal structures that oppress and feminist theological resources that can be conducive of liberation. We hope to focus on concrete projects and groups that are engaged in these struggles. We seek speakers who will articulate those matters, and welcome your suggestions (please send to [mhunt@hers.com](mailto:mhunt@hers.com)).

All good wishes for the New Year. May it be a time when our commitments to peace and justice double, and our numbers increase as we bring feminist religious values to the work of social change.

**Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network Meeting Report 2016**  
**2016 San Antonio, TX**  
**Mary E. Hunt**  
**December 15, 2016**

The twentieth meeting of the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network convened at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature in San Antonio, Texas, on Friday, November 18, 2016 from 4-6 PM. Mary E. Hunt and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza presided. More than seventy participants from more than a dozen countries gathered to explore the theme of ***Intersectionality and Political Action***.

If ever the group needed to meet, this was the year, given the U.S. presidential election, the many ways in which oppression is playing out in the world, and the rise of nationalist movements in many regions. The FLTN meeting was a chance to hear from each person in the room about their struggle and/or political involvement. It was a time to thank one another for our work, and to realize that despite the dim global situation there are plenty of efforts underway to bring about justice.

You can watch and share the video of the meeting at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vZHGPiczAI&t=4004s>

We are grateful to our speakers who focused on kyriarchal structures that oppress and feminist theological resources/actions that are conducive of justice.

**Nami Kim, Associate Professor at Spelman College**, spoke about “*Survival at No One’s Expense: Forging an Intersectional Coalition*.” She described two recent book projects, one on “U.S. imperialism in Asia” and the second a feminist analysis of “gendered politics of the Korean Protestant right.” She brought insights from both to bear on the U.S. presidential election and its aftermath. Using Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s model of kyriarchy, she showed the connections between “sexism, homophobia, and Islamophobia” as they relate to the “hegemonic masculinity.” Dr. Kim pointed out that such analysis is needed now more than ever both in theory and activism.

**Judith Plaskow, Professor Emerita of Religious Studies at Manhattan College**, shared her insights on “*I’m here as a Jewish feminist*.” She described her anti-racism work through Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) and the importance of doing her work as a Jew since her commitment to justice flows from her religious values. She reported on JFREJ’s work on police accountability. She also related her experience at a meeting entitled the “We Won’t Wait Summit” which was focused on economic justice for women. These were opportunities to engage in meaningful solidarity actions. She concluded with an inspiring post-election statement from JFREJ that resonated with many participants: “We are grateful for our movements and our communities, and in this difficult moment we will show up for each other in ways we never have before.”

**Andrea Smith, Associate Professor at the University of California Riverside**, laid out an argument for moving “*Beyond Ethnographic Entrapment: Changing the Terms of the Debate*.” She rejected simply including people, for example Native People or people with disabilities, into the existing models. She proposed that we change the “logic of oppression.” She related how many Native American children are expelled from schools supposedly for unacceptable behavior, but probably because they are bored. These are the same schools that are geared to teach people to tolerate boredom in their jobs, thus creating the workforce for capitalism. Instead, she proposed that we teach people to expect fulfillment, to change the normative experience beginning with the educational system, and build what we think is appropriate. Anything less will be inadequate.

Discussion ensued in small groups and was reported in the plenary gathering. The conversations were a welcome chance to sit together as people from around the world and ponder the impact of the U.S. political situation that was on everyone’s minds. Issues included privilege and risk, the politics of empathy, the need for self-care, and the importance of local as well as national focus for action. The plight of refugees, the expected rollback of gains made in reproductive health, and LGBTIQ justice were all part of the mix.

We did not decide on a topic for next year. But several people made suggestions that converge on “Feminist Liberation Theologies: Resistance, Resilience, and Creativity” which is our current working title. We are happy to receive suggestions for speakers and issues in that area.

The conversation continued on Saturday November 19, 2016, when the Women's Caucus and the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network collaborated, as we have done for several years.

The theme was *Agitating Boundaries: Intersectionality and Political Action* chaired by Elizabeth Ursic who teaches religion at Mesa Community College. Mary E. Hunt reported on the FLTN meeting of the day before and responded to the papers; Nami Kim joined in the responses to the papers.

Three papers were offered:

1. **Julia Berger of the University of Kent and Maha Marouan from Pennsylvania State University** spoke about "Faith-Based and Feminist NGOs: Forging a Common Agenda." They focused on women's efforts at the United Nations, which many FLTN people could well join. Like Judith Plaskow, they were intent on building new coalitions of women for whom their faith commitments inform their justice work.
2. **Elaine Nogueira-Godsey of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio** shared her work on "Postcolonial Imaginations of a Feminist Liberation Methodology." Her experiences as a Brazilian scholar and activist who has lived for years in South Africa and is now newly arrived in the United States made for a unique perspective. Like Andrea Smith, Elaine was interested in creating new paradigms, relying helpfully on the work of Brazilian theologian Ivone Gebara.
3. **Evangeline Anderson Rajkumar of Lenoir-Rhyne University** reflected on "Busting and Blurring Boundaries: Coagulation of Bodies at the Site of Struggle." Her work on evangelical Christians was particularly relevant given the high percentage of those women who voted for Donald Trump. Like Nami Kim, she saw decolonializing and de-imperializing work as central to the feminist agenda. She asked what "evangelical" means given that some of the views that some evangelicals express would seem to run counter to values of love and justice as found in Christian scriptures.

Table discussion followed with college students, graduate students, professors, and activists sharing experiences and insights. The general impression was that this work is more necessary than ever given the current political situation. There was also a sense that we who engage in feminist liberation theologies are well positioned and have decades of experience analyzing and strategizing for change so the contemporary challenges are not brand new to us.

**The Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network will meet at the AAR/SBL in Boston, on Friday, November 17, 2017 from 4-6 PM at a place to be announced.** Meanwhile, feel free to post to the FLTN Google Group, [feministliberationtheologiansnetwork@googlegroups.com](mailto:feministliberationtheologiansnetwork@googlegroups.com) to share ideas, information, and actions relevant to our shared focus which is to bring feminist liberation theological insights to the work of social change.

Best wishes and thanks to all who were involved in these activities.

## **Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network 2017 Meeting Report**

**Mary E. Hunt**

**January 4, 2018**

In the midst of one of the most tumultuous political years in recent memory, the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) convened the twenty-first meeting of the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature in Boston, Massachusetts on Friday, November 17, 2017 from 4-6 PM. Mary E. Hunt and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza presided. More than seventy participants from more than ten countries gathered to explore the theme of *Resistance, Resilience, and Creativity*.

A year ago, when the group gathered in the aftermath of the U.S. presidential election we were in collective shock and horror at what had taken place. Now we have a U.S. president and administration that have moved far faster and more destructively than most could have imagined. We face an increasingly dangerous geo-political situation, an increasingly unjust economic system, an increasingly unsafe ecological situation, and an increasingly more racist, sexist, xenophobic social situation. The work of the FLTN remains important.

The meeting opened with the customary introduction by each person, this time describing a way in which the person resisted. We were delighted to have students, local activists, professors, ministers, and others in the diverse group. It is heartening to know that people look forward to this session as a place to discuss substantive issues and to network with colleagues who are engaged in similar struggles.

You can watch and share the video of the meeting [here](#).

Three speakers led off the conversation on resistance, resilience, and creativity:

### **Presenter: Christine Pae**

Title: "Feminist Spiritual Activism in the Militarized World."

Bio: Christine Pae is Associate Professor of Religion/Ethics and Chair of the Religion Department at Denison University, as well as an Episcopal priest.

Christine Pae spoke about spiritual activism both during the Korean War and now. She discussed women as sexualized labor in the service of American soldiers. She spelled out "survivor wisdom" including the connection between love and exploitation. Christine concluded with an image of "God filled with tears" as part of the politics of life in a militarized world.

### **Presenter: Elaine Wainwright**

Title: "What Sustains us for the Long Journey of Resistance, Resilience and Creativity?"

Bio: Elaine Wainwright is Professor Emerita of the University of Auckland where she spent 13 years as Head of the School of Theology. She is a Sister of Mercy.

Elaine Wainwright spoke of the women in the Gospel of Matthew drawing on her work in the new Wisdom Commentary series (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press). She lifted up the

Rohingya women immigrants as examples of contemporary women on a long journey of resistance and survival. She turned her major attention to matters of diversity, especially biodiversity as a foundation for creative, sustaining life. Elaine is increasingly focusing her own work on Earth studies, ecology in biblical studies: “Hear the cry of the Earth.”

**Presenter: Sharon Welch**

Title: “The Soul of Democracy”

Bio: Sharon D. Welch is the author of, *After the Protests Are Heard: An Ethic of Power, Professionalism and Risk* (NYU Press: forthcoming), and has written five books in the field of social ethics. She is currently an affiliated faculty member at Meadville Lombard Theological School, a Unitarian Universality faculty.

Sharon Welch argued that the soul of democracy is in peril given the current administration. She laid out authoritarian values, settings where people are offered false choices in terms of values or choices based on individual and not communal wellbeing. The tendency to conform and not create is reinforced. Sharon proposed the term “generative interdependence” to describe a fruitful way forward.

WATER and participants expressed gratitude for these provocative and useful presentations.

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Small groups met to discuss the presentations and other experiences of resistance, resilience, and creativity. Among the issues raised were the need for space and money to be creative. Collaboration between groups, for example the Faith Trust Institute and the Parliament of the World’s Religions, is a key way forward. One lovely image offered was that of earth functioning as the ground for a dancer—inviting the idea of opposition as traction for change. A sign of hope was the YES vote on marriage equality in Australia (editor’s note: that eventually became an overwhelming parliamentary victory).

Suggestions for the 2018 meeting were nearly unanimous on the theme of economics. People expressed interest in fundraising and the sustainability of movements as well as ways to talk about income inequality in diverse groups. Changes in the global economic order ground these local matters, all of which will form the focus on our 2018 meeting on Friday, November 16, 4-6 PM in Denver, Colorado at a location to be announced. Watch for more information on **Economics—Global and Local: A Feminist Liberation Theology Priority.**

As has become our custom, the conversation continued on Saturday, November 18, 2017 with the Women’s Caucus Session on “Rethinking Resistance and Resilience” presided over by Elaine Nogueira-Godsey. Papers were presented by Robert Drake, Princeton Theological Seminary; Colleen D. Hartung, Holy Wisdom Monastery; Michael Karlberg, Western Washington University; David Smith, Princeton Theological Seminary; Susan Willhauk, Atlantic School of Theology.

Each presenter referenced the FLTN presentations of the day before. This format allows for rich input from a variety of sources and ongoing discussion of the common theme. We look forward to continuing this process in 2018, with thanks to the Women’s Caucus leaders.

Please feel free to post to the FLTN Google Group:  
[feministliberationtheologiansnetwork@googlegroups.com](mailto:feministliberationtheologiansnetwork@googlegroups.com). Share ideas, information, and actions relevant to our common focus, which is to bring feminist liberation theological insights to the work of social change.

Please feel free to contact me ([mhunt@hers.com](mailto:mhunt@hers.com)) or WATER ([water@hers.com](mailto:water@hers.com)) to share suggestions of speakers and/or foci for our 2018 meeting. Once again, a warm word of thanks to our presenters and to all who made this meeting such a meaningful experience.

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**Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network 2018 Meeting Report**  
**Mary E. Hunt**  
**January 17, 2019**

For the twenty-second year in a row, the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) convened the working meeting of Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network at the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado on Friday, November 16, 2018 from 4-6 PM. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary E. Hunt presided at the session focused on **Economics: Global and Local Intertwined: A Feminist Liberation Theology Priority**.

The topic sprang from the last two sessions on intersectionality (2016) and on resistance, resilience, and creativity (2017), videos of which can be found at <https://www.waterwomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologians-network/>. We persist in our concern with the extraordinary precariousness of the global situation, especially as the Trump Administration in the United States destabilizes the world economic order. It is fruitful to have colleagues from many countries to reflect together on problems and potential solutions.

By way of introduction, more than fifty participants from nine countries named their own economic priorities. These range from concerns about students' food scarcity and rising student debt, to questions about how neo-liberal capitalism shapes everything from the theological job market to privatization of formerly government-run agencies. Students, faculty members, activists, religious professionals, and members of the press shared their insights into economic inequality.

Scholar/activists and longtime committed feminist liberation theologians Professor Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite of Chicago Theological Seminary and Professor Cynthia Moe-Lobeda of the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (Graduate Theological Union) offered challenging remarks to start a brisk discussion. Watch the video of these presentations at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5uH4xSCn\\_Y&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5uH4xSCn_Y&feature=youtu.be).

Susan laid out the parameters of global predatory capitalism: how the system can morph like a deadly virus creating the contradiction of "green billionaires," for example. She counseled the group to "follow the money," to see the real impact on real people of neo-liberal economic policies. She lifted up the impact on climate change, noting that 80% of those displaced by climate-related events are women. Susan advised critical attention to these matters concluding on a hopeful note by pointing to the recent election of a record number of women in the U.S. Congress. Since feminist liberation theologians have long developed contextual and praxis-based approaches to religion, she observed, we "don't quit" when it comes to working for change.

Cynthia underscored the fact that global capitalism is a human invention and as such it can be changed. She offered a "Feminist Liberation Ethical Framework for Building a New Economy" with emphasis on economics, ecology, and democracy. She urged the deprivatization of love as part of interstructured efforts to achieve gender, racial, and economic equity. The stakes are high, she claimed, but economics for life and not for profit is the "spirit-filled" work at hand.

Participants and WATER thanked Susan and Cynthia for their insights and suggestions.

Small group discussions followed. Participants talked about the California wild fires as an example of how differently people with resources and those without cope with disasters. Colleagues lifted up the real lives of people in the room who deal with student debt in a low-paying field. One person suggested the need to retire the notion of ‘independence’ entirely in favor of a more communal approach, perhaps replacing it with ‘interdependence’ or a similar concept.

There was consensus that we in FLTN have many resources to offer—including our circular power dynamics, our critical feminist analysis, and the training of many of our peers to facilitate hard conversations in diverse communities. Our connections across continents are a resource as we attempt to chart a more just economic future.

Next year’s topic flowed quite naturally from this one. There is an urgency to look at climate change from feminist liberation theological perspectives in order to better understand how and why economic inequity persists. We need to consider the state of our planet given the dire news of climate-related damage. Surely feminist theological insights can be brought to bear in a useful way.

**Please consider volunteering to make a short presentation and/or suggest other scholar/activists whose work you think we need to include. Thank you. Feel free to contact me at [mhunt@hers.com](mailto:mhunt@hers.com) for these and other related matters**

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FLTN continued its happy collaboration with the Women’s Caucus on Saturday, November 17, 2019 from 9-11:30 AM. The Caucus, as has been its custom in recent years, focused a session on the same theme as FLTN. This time it was Economics. Three presenters gave papers:

1. *Informationalization and the Algorithmic, Automated, Underconnected, Surveilled, Misogynistic Nature of Women's Disempowerment in the 21st Century: Cyberfeminist and Cyberwomanist Theological Responses* by Elonda Clay, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam
2. *Religion’s Response to World Economic Forum’s Ability: Working Hand in Hand to End Sexual Harassment and Violence* by Janice Poss, Claremont Graduate University
3. *Salim, Women, and Oikos: A Planetary Expansion of Family* by Jea Sophia Oh, West Chester University, Pennsylvania

Mary E. Hunt offered a short report of the FLTN meeting and a response to each of the papers in which it was clear that economics plays a pivotal role in establishing norms and behaviors and shaping outcomes.

**The FLTN will reconvene in San Diego at the AAR/SBL meeting in San Diego on November 22, 2019, 4-6 PM, place to be determined.** All are welcome. Please tell your students and colleagues, especially international ones, to mark their calendars now so they can plan travel accordingly.

Meanwhile, please feel free to use the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Google group to share information and ideas. Contact [feministliberationtheologiansnetwork@googlegroups.com](mailto:feministliberationtheologiansnetwork@googlegroups.com) to be added to the Google group. Once a member, feel free to post relevant information.

The video of this meeting can be found at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5uH4xSCn\\_Y&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5uH4xSCn_Y&feature=youtu.be). Use it in your teaching and research.

All good wishes and thanks to everyone who participated, especially to Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Cynthia Moe-Lobeda.

Please let me know ([mhunt@hers.com](mailto:mhunt@hers.com)) if you would like further information.

With hope for justice in 2019,

Mary E. Hunt  
Co-director, WATER

Following is the Call for Papers from our Women's Caucus colleagues for the 2019 AAR/SBL:

**Session #1: Creating and Expanding Public Spheres and Climate Change To be held Saturday, Nov. 23, 2019, 9-11:30 AM.**

The AAR/ SBL Women's Caucus, in collaboration with the Feminist Liberation Theologian's Network (FLTNT), invites papers asking questions about our role as feminist theologians and scholars of religion and educators' responsibilities to public spaces in times of anthropogenic climate change. In light of AAR/SBL 2019's theme, we are particularly interested in the commitment of scholars and academic institutions in relation to creating and expanding public spheres. How can feminist scholars use our experiences and skills to promote respectful discussions on difficult topics? How might these skills and experiences be used in communicating and bridging people's denial and/or unawareness of anthropogenic climate change? We particularly welcome papers engaging with questions related to how and why public spheres should be expanded to include the religious, gendered and racial experiences of minoritized and/or marginalized people around the globe (e.g. refugees, migrants, etc.). And, what would the next step in inclusivity in our own public spaces look like? Panelists from this Women's Caucus session need to attend the pre-conference FLTNT session on Friday afternoon, and a FLTNT representative will attend this Caucus session on

Saturday morning to continue the conversation. Panelists will include reflections on the FLTN session in their presentations as well as present their own work.

**Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network 2019 Meeting Report**  
**Mary E. Hunt**  
**January 28, 2020**

The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) convened the 23<sup>rd</sup> working meeting of Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network at the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in San Diego, CA on Friday, November 22, 2019. Mary E. Hunt presided at the session focused on **Worldwide Climate Change: Feminist Liberation Theological Perspectives**.

The topic sprang from the last two sessions on *Resistance, Resilience, and Creativity* (2017), and *Economics: Global and Local Intertwined* (2018), reports and videos of which can be found at <http://www.waterwomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologians-network/>. We persist in our concern with the extraordinary precariousness of the global situation, especially as the Trump Administration in the United States and its colleagues destabilize the world economic and social order. It is fruitful to have colleagues from many countries reflect together on problems and potential solutions, this year in the glaring light of climate change.

More than fifty-five colleagues from ten countries joined in the discussion following brief but always fascinating introductions of each one. Input from Australian scholar and editor Anne Elvey, Honorary Research Associate, University of Divinity and Adjunct Research Fellow, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia as well as from Brazilian/ American scholar Wanda Deifelt, professor at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa led the way. Coming from countries where fires and land misuse are rampant lent depth and context to the ensuing conversation. It is clear that climate change is a significant factor in justice-seeking efforts worldwide with special impact on the lives of people who are economically poor and marginalized, especially women and children.

Anne Elvey drew on her dual genres of poetry and analysis, her expertise both in scripture and politics, to offer "Some Reflections on Climate Change from an Australian Context." She situated Australia in the global climate change phenomenon in terms of continued coal mining, racist border/immigration policies, and the government's efforts to divide and conquer indigenous communities over business matters. "A new wave of genocide" is how the climate-related issues are playing out for indigenous people.

Dr. Elvey explained that Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's analysis of kyriarchy is a useful tool for dealing with concrete life situations. A Kurdish journalist described "The Kyriarchal System" as how asylum seekers and refugees are kept imprisoned. Dr. Elvey concluded, "...in Australia there can be no climate justice without a shift toward foregrounding the epistemologies, experience and sovereignty of Indigenous people.." With fires engulfing Oz at year's end, this was a timely and insightful contribution to our conversation.

Our second presenter was Brazilian/American theologian Professor Wanda Deifelt from Luther College. Her training, both as a Lutheran pastor and as a theologian with global reach in the ecumenical world, allowed her to look broadly at the matters at hand with particular focus on the Brazilian situation. She raised several salient points for our consideration in her paper, "How Colonialism and Neocolonialism Resulted in Climate Change."

Wanda described the origins of colonialism and the central role of religion in shaping it. She distinguished ‘coloniality’ as the way in which many eventually imbibe colonialism and appropriate it in their own approaches. She showed how this dynamic plays out in Brasil in the current political situation. She contrasted it with sustainability which is development that works in the present, with an eye toward the future.

Dr. Deifelt introduced the Quechua term “*buen vivir*” to describe how cultural, social, economic, and other concerns work together for the good of society and Earth. Clearly theologies that reinforce top down dualisms are not adequate, setting the stage for feminist and other liberation theologies to be useful. She concluded with a focus on intersectionality as the way forward for mutual empowerment. With the Amazon, sometimes called “the lungs of the universe,” under siege in Brasil, this was a timely reminder of what matters for the whole world.

Participants and WATER thank both Anne and Wanda for their excellent input.

This report and video from the sessions are available at:

<http://www.waterwomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologians-network/>.

We moved on to small group discussion with a focus on what resources of feminist liberation theologies are useful for activism and teaching, as well as how climate change is reshaping our common work. The advantage of being in a group of people from around the world for such a conversation cannot be overstated.

Among the issues raised by the small groups were:

1. The importance of listening to real people’s stories with a priority on the experiences of marginalized women
2. Analysis of intersectionality and kyriarchy; critical reading of texts
3. The arts as a vehicle for change
4. Prophecy as valued input
5. The need for movement chaplains, not with denominational focus but providing general support for those displaced and those engaged in activism
6. Relational skills to build networks
7. Liturgy resources—hymns, texts—that can be used with a wide variety of people for spiritual support and inspiration

The session concluded with hearty thanks and eagerness to **reconvene in Boston at the 2020 AAR/SBL Annual Meeting on Friday, November, 20, 2020, 4-6 PM**. In consultation with our Women’s Caucus colleagues (see below), the theme will be **“Feminist Liberation Theologies on the Ground: Acting When We are *in extremis*”**. All are welcome. Please tell your students and colleagues, especially international ones, to mark their calendars now so they can plan travel accordingly.

**Please consider volunteering to make a short presentation and/or suggest other scholar/activists whose work you think we need to include. Thank you. Feel free to contact me at [mhunt@hers.com](mailto:mhunt@hers.com) for these and other related matters. Thank you!**

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ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. Jill Annitto, Editorial Manager of Atla (<https://www.atla.com/>) which works with libraries and colleagues in the field to connect people and resources, attended the meeting. She is interested in connecting with FLTN folks who are working on and/or know of anthologies of interest. Contact her at [jannitto@atla.com](mailto:jannitto@atla.com) for more information.

2. Rosemary Radford Ruether, a longtime collaborator with this group and a prolific, influential pioneer feminist scholar, is living with the aftermath of a serious stroke. While she cannot speak and her mobility is limited, she seems to be in good spirits. Her daughter, Rebecca Ruether, indicated that financial help to procure additional physical therapy for Rosemary would be very welcome. Rebecca can be contacted and checks can be sent to her at: 1516 Esplanade #304, Redondo Beach, CA 90277.



3. Theresa Yugar has a TEDtalk up about Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz: [History's "worst" nun - Theresa A. Yugar | TED-Ed](https://www.ed.ted.com/.../history-s-worst-nun-theresa-a-yugar) ed.ted.com/.../history-s-worst-nun-theresa-a-yugar.

4. Suggested reading on climate change: *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Fall 2017, **Roundtable: Climate Change Is a Feminist Issue**, pp. 139-175.

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FLTN continued its fruitful collaboration with the Women's Caucus on Saturday, November 17, 2019 from 9-11:30 AM.

The Caucus, as has been its practice in recent years, focused a session on the same theme as FLTN. Four presenters gave papers:

1. Abby Mohaupt, Drew University and Jennifer Owens-Jofré, Seminary of the Southwest, "Theological Education in the Mobile Classroom: Working Toward Justice for Migrants and Climate Change Justice along the Border"
2. Rosalind Hinton, Tulane University, "Women Rising in Saint James Parish, Louisiana and Cancer Alley"
3. Julia Enxing, University of Dresden, "Ecological Literacy should be the foundation for religious education" (Heather Eaton): Re-visioning Teaching Systematic Theology"

Mary E. Hunt offered a short report of the FLTN meeting and a response to each of the papers followed by conversation among participants.

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Following is the Call for Papers from our Women's Caucus colleagues for the 2020 AAR/SBL. For questions/submissions please contact them directly c/o Elaine Nogueira-Godsey [nogueirelaine@gmail.com](mailto:nogueirelaine@gmail.com).



Women's Caucus and Feminist Liberation Theologians Network Session: “Re-engaging Praxis: A Call for Action”

In light of the AAR/SBL 2020 proposed theme, “more inward-looking and self-reflective,” the AAR/ SBL Women’s Caucus, in collaboration with the Feminist Liberation Theologians’ Network (FLTNT), invites papers responding to questions about centering the voices of those most affected by oppression and those on the ground attempting to stem the tide. As we witness various communities engaging in fascism, totalitarianism, and global environmental catastrophes, the question arises: “What might the feminist study of religion look like if these contexts are seriously engaged as knowledge-producing, and not merely as objects of research?” We invite research that explores the practical resources Feminist Liberation Theologies offer to combat the growing global backlash. What needs to be reimagined or reclaimed to advance a feminist global trend of shared responsibility, to make the personal political once again, and to develop models of successful political leadership?

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FLTNT, along with the Women’s Caucus co-sponsored a video presentation of Victoria Rue’s new play “Maryam: A Woman of Bethlehem” performed in Arabic with English subtitles. Dr. Rue, theatre director, author, playwright, priest based in Berkeley, California wrote and directed the play as part of her Fulbright research in the Fall of 2018. Elizabeth Ursic, Professor at Mesa Community College, responded. The moving play and subsequent discussion launched this work in the U.S. and to a global audience. FLTNT wishes Victoria well on this, recommends it for community use, and thanks her for bringing it to the AAR.

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Please feel free and encouraged to use the Feminist Liberation Theologians’ Google group to share information and ideas. If you are not receiving this group’s information and wish to, please contact [waterstaff@hers.com](mailto:waterstaff@hers.com).

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All good wishes and thanks to everyone who participated, to our speakers and presenters, and to our Women’s Caucus colleagues. Please let me know ([mhunt@hers.com](mailto:mhunt@hers.com)) if you would like further information.

May 2020 be a banner year for justice with peace,

Mary E. Hunt  
Co-director, WATER



## Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network 2020 Meeting Report Feminist Liberation Theologies on the Ground: Acting When We Are *in extremis*

Mary E. Hunt  
December 1, 2020



The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) convened the 24<sup>th</sup> working meeting of the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network by Zoom from the WATER office in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA, on Friday, November 20, 2020, 4-6 PM ET. Mary E. Hunt and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza co-chaired the session on "Feminist Liberation Theologies on the Ground: Acting When We Are *in extremis*." The Women's Caucus of the AAR/SBL collaborated, with Elizabeth Ursic bringing greetings from that group.

Typically, this meeting has been held in conjunction with the Annual Meetings of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature. But the Covid pandemic moved those meetings on-line. We followed suit but without a link to AAR/SBL so that FLTN participants would not have to pay to attend our meeting which has always been open to all.

More than ninety participants from twelve countries and more than sixteen states in the U.S. gathered at a liminal time in world history. Many expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be together especially since the in-person meeting was impossible. It was wonderful to have people who have never been to an FLTN meeting before join because technology made it possible.

Two years ago, FLTN looked at **Economics: Global and Local Intertwined: A Feminist Liberation Theology Priority**. As we discussed implications of economic injustice, it was obvious that climate change and related ecological matters were linked to resources. So, last year we looked at **Worldwide Climate Change: FLT Perspectives**. Then Covid hit. Now, it is clearer than ever that economics and global climate change play central roles in how the pandemic is unfolding. **Feminist Liberation Theologies on the Ground: Acting When We Are *in extremis*** is a broad formulation to explore what is happening around the world and how we can bring our unique theological and ethical efforts to the mix. Reports as well as video recordings of past meetings of all of these FLTN meetings can be found at <https://www.waterwomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologians-network/>.

Our speakers in 2020:

**Rita Nakashima Brock** is the first Asian American woman to earn a doctorate in theology. She is a Senior Vice President and Director of the Shay Moral Injury Center at Volunteers of America. A professor for 18 years, she was a fellow at the Harvard Divinity School Center for Values in Public Life. Her publications include the co-authored books, *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury After War* (2012) and *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire* (2008).

**Mary Condren** is a former Research Associate of Harvard Divinity School where she did the ThD in Religion, Gender and Culture. She is director of the non-profit educational company, WomanSpiritIreland, and a Research Fellow in the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, Trinity College Dublin. Her critical work concerns the role of violence and the discourses of sacrifice in contemporary politics. Her constructive work focuses on recuperating the indigenous female traditions of Old Europe in Ireland. Her book *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland* is a classic in the field.

**Mónica Maher** is based in Quito, Ecuador and works throughout Latin America facilitating workshops, speaking and teaching about women's rights and religion, non-violent action and trauma resiliency. She directs the Peacebuilding Program in Latin America of Friends Peace Teams, and teaches in the graduate program on Gender, Violence and Human Rights of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences in Ecuador. She holds a PhD from Union Theological Seminary (NYC) and an MDiv from Harvard University. Dr. Maher is an ordained UCC Minister and a Zen Sensei. She holds the distinction of having been the first WATER intern!

**Kathleen McPhillips** is a senior lecturer in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Newcastle in Australia. She is a sociologist of religion and gender and employs feminist, psychoanalytic and sociological frameworks to issues around gender and religion, particularly around institutional child sexual abuse in religious organizations. Kathleen has extensive experience in attending, reporting on, and analyzing the Catholic Church at the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse and has held numerous research grants. Her most recent publications are in *Child Abuse and Neglect*, *Feminist Theology*, *Journal of Australian Studies*, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, and *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*.

Summaries of their presentations follow. A video of this event can be found at <https://www.waterwomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologians-network/>. It contains the presentations in full.

### **Rita Nakashima Brock**

Rita Nakashima Brock spoke on the dangers of our society not recovering from latent moral injury, “when your love system collapses because of a moral failure” – yours or someone else’s. Without a recovery process, it is easy to slide into toxic anger, despair, cynicism, and more. Among her list of societal moral injuries were the pandemic, climate-change-induced disasters, the murder of George Floyd and “unveiling” of

systemic racism, and the shattering of our trust in institutions. Rita ended by calling for ways to begin to process this moral injury together. Volunteers of America has started the healing process with healthcare workers who were on the front lines from the beginning. Her closing words: “We are looking at the classic definition of an apocalypse.”

### Mary Condren

Mary Condren offered hope, critiquing the theology of sacrifice and recuperating both the indigenous traditions of Ireland and a theology of mercy. In doing so, it requires a reframing and renaming of words: from “altar” to “hearthstone,” “blood of sacrifice” to “dew of mercy,” “sacred” to “holy,” and “Goddess” and monotheism to “Cailleach: The Veiled or Mysterious One,” illustrated by the triple spiral, representing the cyclical turn of seasons and an indigenous version of the Holy Trinity. In the mindset of this reframing, Mary applies it to COVID times as a form of Wintertime. It is the time for hibernation, reflection, meditation. Activities must cease, so that new life can come into Earth with Spring. She concluded with a reading of the poem, “After a Winter’s Silence” by May Sarton.



*After a Winter’s Silence*  
by May Sarton

*Along the terrace wall  
Snowdrops have pushed through  
hard ice, making a pool.*

*Delicate stems now show  
White bells as though  
The force, the thrust to flower  
Were nothing at all.  
Who gives them the power?*

*After a winter’s silence  
I feel the shock of spring.*

*My breath warms like the sun,  
Melts ice, bursts into song,  
So when that inner one  
Gives life back the power  
To rise up and push through,  
There’s nothing to it.*

*We simply have to do it,  
As snowdrops know  
When snowdrops flower.*

### Mónica

### Maher

Mónica Maher, based in Quito, Ecuador, narrated the work her community has been doing in the wake of the pandemic and Hurricanes Eta and Lota. Mónica focused her remarks on two apocalyptic themes: salvation and imagination, to answer the question, “What have feminist liberation theologies to offer in such a context *in extremis*?” Mónica shared stories of neighbors saving neighbors, illustrating the slogan, “Only the people, save the people.” These tragedies have brought back interconnection to one another, also evident in the imaginative work of feminist liberation theologians.

Finding community during the pandemic has required creativity. It involves the delivery of food and seeds for gardens in neighboring communities. And it has entailed meeting via Zoom which expands the range of community like never before. Mónica Maher ended by saying, “We proclaim feminist justice as cognitive justice, decolonizing epistemologies to embrace *corazonar*, thinking with the heart, and *senti-pensar*, feeling-thinking...In this way of knowing and being and acting together, we can save ourselves and our planet.”

### **Kathleen McPhillips**

Kathleen McPhillips, taking up the term “apocalypse,” described the wildfires, made worse/possible by climate change, that ravaged Australia from June 2019 to May 2020. These fires destroyed 46 million acres and almost 500 people died as either a direct or indirect result. Thankfully, when the pandemic came to Australia, the government took it seriously and the public as a collective worked together to mitigate the impact with a state-wide government shut-down which, while disrupting life, has lessened the virus’ impact in comparison to the individualistic approach in the United States. In the work of feminist liberation theology, focus has gone toward stopping the rise of domestic violence and women taking the brunt of the pandemic consequences. Feminist theological groups have been able to meet online and gather for conferences, have planned a podcast, worked to get women’s voices back in church discussions, and recover “herstories” in the churches and outside, and to digitize records.

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Thanks to Zoom, we were able to move into small groups both for the customary introductions that we usually did in the larger group, and for discussion on the ways that feminist liberation theological work is helpful on the ground in our various settings.

Reflections on the groups were offered both in the chat and in the plenary session that followed. Among the ideas shared:

1. “Queering the Apocalypse” including rejecting some of the patently absurd ideas of the current U.S. Administration and seeing immigration tragedies as signs of horrendous times.
2. Searching for ways to recover from the “moral injury” that affects not just individuals but whole societies. The arts and beauty are one route to healing.
3. The importance of transnational community for moving on from the pandemic.
4. The possibility of Open Access resources, the democratization of resources. {Ed. Note, what WATER refers to as “Sharing because together we have enough.”}

5. The reality of white supremacy, global authoritarianism, and racism as founding ideologies that need constant attention to uproot.

6. The arts, especially music, were lifted up as common resources for FLT work, used to spark activism, connect groups of people, aid in healing, and more.



7. Hearing more from indigenous peoples and building on women's ancestral and indigenous wisdoms.

8. A wide interest in a celebration for the FLTN's 25-year anniversary next year.

9. A further look into academia's future and its potential collapse: its lack of accessibility and economic future.

10. A suggestion offered later is that FLTN colleagues recruit younger women and more international colleagues since the forum is now available virtually.

## SHARED RESOURCES

**Mónica Maher – Ecuador / Mireille D'Astous - Montreal, Canada:** Ivone Gebara's text on pandemic: <https://www.lautreparole.org/ethique-pandemie/> [Opened in Google Chrome, it will give you the option to translate the article into English up at the search bar.]

**Danielle Lynch – Australia:** I'm currently working on how song queers theology - here's a shameless plug for new my album, *Into Silence*:

<https://open.spotify.com/album/0ReCDQ0UGBheEDvGIubxXx?si=iUaYQCzOT4G5dCyyJBiXRA>

My friend and fellow music-as-theology advocate Maeve Heaney also just released a new album, *Strange Life: The Music of Doubtful Faith*:

<https://open.spotify.com/album/7lQQXfzymCrjs83whKW8As?si=Chr7fps8Tn-BJM6P5kEoyg>

**June Boyce-Tillman – UK:** The International Network for Music Spirituality and Wellbeing

[www.mswinternational.org](http://www.mswinternational.org)

**Colleen Hartung – Wisconsin, USA:** *Claiming Notability for Women Activists in Religion* (Women in Religion - Volume 1), Edited by Colleen Hartung (Atla Open Press)

<https://books.atla.com/atlapress/catalog/view/40/66/320-2>

**Ana Ester – Brazil:** Pandemic, isolation, and lockdown made me think about what I am calling a “Bionic Theology.” I published that in Portuguese. The theologian Claudio

Carvalhaes has talked about a “Theo/login” also. There is a lot to think from this interconnection between theology and virtuality.

**Kathleen McPhillips – Australia:** New books from Australian scholars:

-by feminist theologian and poet Anne Elvey: *Reading the Magnificat in Australia* (Sheffield Phoenix Press). Anne was an FLTN speaker in 2019.

-by Katharine Massam: *The Bridge Between* (ANU Press) - a history of Spanish Benedictine missionary women in Australia.

-by Kathleen McPhillips & Naomi Goldenberg: *The End of Religion: Feminist Reappraisals of the State* (Routledge) - examines in case study format the application of vestigial state theory to women, gender and violence.

**Mark Primavesi – UK:** Tara Brach and Elizabeth Lesser in discussion yesterday on Lesser’s new book *Cassandra Speaks: When Women Are the Storytellers, the Human Story Changes*: <https://youtu.be/mziEun7MA7k>

**Mónica Maher – Ecuador:** María Pilar Aquino is doing a lot of work on feminist peace building

**Mireille D'Astous – Montreal, Canada:** in response to a query about feminist economists <https://www.cidse.org/2020/11/09/what-if-the-economy-was-female/>

The session concluded with discussion of next steps. Next year’s meeting will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of FLTN. We will craft an agenda in light of this reality, perhaps reviewing the work and sketching some steps forward. **Suggestions for speakers and formats are welcome and needed.**

The Zoom format was very popular because it allowed many people who do not usually go to AAR/SBL to participate. Perhaps we will have one Zoom meeting/year and one hybrid, in-person and on-line meeting/year. This remains to be decided. Opinions are welcome along with specific suggestions for content.

The session ended with hearty thanks to the speakers and to Anali Martin for technical assistance at WATER. The tentative date for next year’s meeting is **Friday, November 19, 2021, 4-6 PM, in San Antonio, Texas** where the AAR/SBL is scheduled to convene. Stay tuned. As we learned this year, much can change between now and then.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Our dear and esteemed colleague **Rosemary Radford Ruether** remains at the Health Center at Pilgrim Place in Claremont, California following a debilitating stroke several



years ago. Cards or letters can be sent to her via her daughter, Rebecca Ruether at 1516 Esplanade #304, Redondo Beach, CA 90277. Some of us have sent financial contributions to help defray costs, so know that if you wish, such gifts are welcome.

2. Please feel free and encouraged to use the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Google group to share information and ideas. If you are not receiving this group's information and wish to, please contact [waterstaff@hers.com](mailto:waterstaff@hers.com).

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Thank you for your participation in FLTN. Please feel free to contact me ([mhunt@hers.com](mailto:mhunt@hers.com)) with ideas and suggestions.

We at WATER wish you a healthy year ahead.

Warmly,

Mary E. Hunt  
Co-director, WATER

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**Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network Report**  
**Zoom Meeting, November 12, 2021**  
**Mary E. Hunt**

Thank you to the many participants of this wonderful meeting. The following report is intended to capture the festive spirit of the gathering as well as the challenging presentations offered by three invited colleagues. At the end, there is a list of suggested next steps which emerged from the small group discussions and in the chat. A video of the meeting can be accessed at <https://www.waterwomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologians-network/>.

Future plans include both Zoom and in person meetings. An in-person meeting will be held, Covid-willing, at the next American Academy of Religion-Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Friday, November 18, 2022 in Denver, Colorado. We plan continued collaboration with the AAR/SBL Women's Caucus.

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The twenty-fifth anniversary meeting of the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network (FLTN) began with a land acknowledgement: "WATER is on indigenous land. Silver Spring, Maryland is on the traditional and contemporary land of the Piscataway and Anacostan peoples, the original stewards of this territory. We are committed to making clear the names of these lands and the community members from these nations who reside alongside us. We acknowledge the trauma that is deeply imbedded in the foundation of this country. We affirm the right of all people to bring their whole selves and their stories into this space." The group paused to reflect in silence on the many

people across the world on whose lands we sit for this meeting.

More than 60 people attended the virtual meeting from more than a dozen countries including Germany, Australia, Ireland, Ecuador, the Philippines, Brasil, Canada, and the United States among others. The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Network was something to celebrate for our persistence against myriad odds. The event had a festive feel even though in lieu of champagne we had one another; if we had met in person with bubbles some people could not have attended.

Mary E. Hunt from WATER hosted the meeting with technical assistance from Laura Carr-Pries, former WATER intern and now a graduate student at George Mason University living in Ottawa, Canada. While we love the usual in-person circle and the knee to knee small groups, we are grateful for Zoom in these liminal times. Typically, the meeting has been in person at the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting. But in order to circumvent the need for people to pay to attend AAR/SBL virtually so as to come to this gathering, WATER took on the hosting.

Once again, this meeting was held in collaboration with the AAR/SBL Women's Caucus. Several of their members were in attendance including their co-chair, Elaine Nogueira-Godsey, who was one of our presenters. In turn, Mary E. Hunt from FLTN responded to the three excellent papers presented at the Caucus session, "Re-Engaging Praxis: A Call to Action" at the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting. We are grateful for this longtime and collegial collaboration with the Caucus.

FLTN includes this annual meeting as well as a Google list that colleagues are urged to use throughout the year. It is sponsored by WATER which is supported by donors who want this work done. We at WATER believe in socializing resources. We keep our work simple, welcoming everyone without program fees. Our donors are very generous, so if you can donate please do because we need your support. If you cannot donate, you are just as welcome because we at WATER believe that if we share, among us there is enough.

## **AGENDA**

1. Brief overview of FLTN history
2. Three speakers will offer their reflections
3. Small groups will consider :
  - the impact of FLTN
  - what have you found personally useful
  - what do you think we should do moving forward
4. Closing Plenary to gather the group's wisdom

### **1. FLTN History in a Nutshell**

In 1995, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary E. Hunt convened a gathering of



theologians and activists at the Women's Ordination Conference's meeting "Discipleship of Equals: Breaking Bread, Doing Justice." The next year, 1996, we floated a proposal and invitation to (1) bring U.S.-Canadian people together, (2) link across racial-ethnic lines, (3) explore and connect with other such groups around the world, and (4) beginning from a Christian starting point, engage with colleagues from various religious traditions.

Twenty-five years later, we still have much work to do on those four lofty goals. But we rejoice in having produced some very exciting sessions and brought many colleagues together. An estimated 1000+ people (50 people on average at 25 meetings) have been involved though some meetings have been bigger. This number does not include people watching videos subsequent to events.

Participants put their personal history with FLTN in the Chat. People range from first time attenders to some who have been at 20+ meetings. One woman said she was at the first two meetings, while another said she was at all the meetings until 2006 then sporadically after that. One person described FLTN as "rippling and percolating, especially throughout the AAR/SBL annual meeting." She went on to say that "Liberation Theology (the AAR Unit) has hung on by its fingernails...but FLTN has been there, right at the beginning of the meeting and has fed, and I mean that is the deepest sense, the praxis dimensions so often missing in academic meetings."

A special welcome was extended to students from Professor Kirk J. Nolan's undergraduate course at Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina. Several years ago, he brought students to one of our in-person meetings and he said it had a deep impact on their lives. Wonderful!

FLTN participants have always been both scholars and activists: professors, students, ministers, rabbis, and other religious professionals. The various intersectional justice issues we have taken on include ecology, sexual and domestic violence, and anti-racism among others. Participants always include and value artists and musicians for their part in the work.

FLTN content has consistently been critical analysis and self-critical reflection. We have looked at economic, political, pedagogical, ecological, and related issues. We have deconstructed 'feminism,' 'liberation,' and 'theology' to a fare-thee well. FLTN has sought to bring diverse speakers and participants to reflect on intersectional concerns with attention to global involvement and implications. We have looked at the concrete ways people are engaged whether through successful educational programs, intersectional political work, or locally based action efforts before and during Covid. This meeting's three speakers began to assess what this means.

## **2. Speakers' Input**

**Traci West** is an activist-scholar who serves as the James W. Pearsall Professor of Christian Ethics and African American Studies at Drew University Theological School

in New Jersey in the U.S. Her teaching, research, and activism have focused on gender, racial, and sexual justice, especially related to gender violence which she spoke about at FLTN in 2014.

Traci has taught in community settings ranging from churches to a New Jersey women’s prison. She is an ordained minister as well as a scholar, pastor, and activist in the United Methodist Church where she works for full LGBTQIA+ inclusion and equality in that denomination.

Among her many publications are *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics* (1999) and *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women’s Lives Matter* (2006). Her most recent book, *Solidarity and Defiant Spirituality: Africana Lessons on Religion, Racism, and Ending Gender Violence* (2019) was the subject of a WATERtalk <https://www.waterwomensalliance.org/october-2020-watertalk-notes-traci-c-west/>.

Traci offered kind words about the Network and its leadership. FLTN is known for its “innovation, relevance, and capaciousness in a world context that too often shrinks, narrows, limits what we can know and imagine in relation to spiritual, intellectual, embodied, and political bonds of unfreedom.” She cited, as a case in point, that efforts to ban teaching of systemic white racism are “unfreedom”.

She used a poem from *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981), “The Welder” by Cherrie Moraga as an image of FLTN work. The welder takes the power into her own hands. FLTN has taken the power into our own hands by mapping meanings of feminist liberation, what is shared in common, providing context and specificity to reveal differences in common vision. Cross generational modes of conversation surface new and seasoned insights. Pioneers in activism and feminist studies in religion meet with newer leaders.

FLTN is intentionally transnational beyond the U.S.-centric character of much academic work in the U.S. She insisted on the need to include scholar activists from Africa. Black feminist work in religion is central to our common work

FLTN, she said, has unabashedly “claimed space for centering the urgency of the political moment.” It is immersed in particularity. It recognizes the need to de-colonize time, to lift up voices and paradigms that need to be remembered and honored. She asked about the repeated patterns among us that need deconstructing and how we create the tools to deconstruct class, race, and nation. Alliances can be fragile, superficial, and need more honest confrontation of differences.

She concluded that we are welders taking power into our own hands to reshape the future.

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**Kathleen McPhillips** is a senior lecturer in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Newcastle in Australia. She is a sociologist of religion and gender who employs feminist, psychoanalytic, and sociological frameworks to issues around gender and religion particularly around institutional child sexual abuse in religious organizations.

Kathleen has extensive experience in attending, reporting on, and analyzing the Catholic Church at the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse. She has held numerous research grants. Her most recent publications are in *Child Abuse and Neglect*, *Feminist Theology*, *Journal of Australian Studies*, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* and *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*.

She was part of a WATERtalk with WATER colleague Naomi Goldenberg (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCpcNPt23o8>) on their book entitled *The End of Religion: Feminist Reappraisals of the State*, a very provocative and insightful volume. Kath also spoke at FLTN last year. Her blend of social scientific studies with theology and religion and her social location in Australia mean we get solid insights.

Kathleen spoke of the FLTN as a networking community which has been helpful to her over the decades and now grounds her efforts to build similar community in her setting in Australia and Oceania.

In the 1980s, she was involved in Catholic student movements and learned her feminism in Catholic circles. Sydney Women-Church, Anglican women's groups, goddess groups, and others have developed feminist studies and practice of religion in Australia. She cited the late British/Canadian philosopher Grace Jantzen's foundational concept of the "feminist religious imaginary" as it is unfolding in that context.

Many feminist theologians from other parts of the world visited Australia and interacted with women there. Kath studied the Australian Women-Church movement for her doctoral research as a Catholic feminist and social justice worker. Her trips to the U.S. in 1993 for the Women-Church gathering in Albuquerque, NM, and her conversations with Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza at Harvard Divinity School gave her a glimpse of a wider network of which she was a part.

Her first FLTN meeting in Boston in 1999 deepened that sense of belonging. Then the 2005 *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* gathering in Boston gave her even more experience of it. She introduced her colleague Lee Miena Skye, the first feminist indigenous scholar of religion in Australia to her wider circle. Dr. Skye went on to become the first indigenous Australian woman to hold a post-doc position at Harvard Divinity School. Now women in Australia have their own network where they share their own work on their own terms.

Kath described FLTN as a warm and inviting if also challenging space. It is a venue in which to be connected with women around the world across many differences.

In her evaluation, the model of short talks on urgent issues and small group sharing works well. She observed that the annual meeting is but one moment in the life of FLTN. She sees FLTN as “deep root system travelling across expansive areas...a dynamic, moving, generous, safe space with multiple shoots across a range of projects and ideas” where activism on urgent issues by people in religious studies is the norm.

Kath is passing all of this on to graduate students and colleagues. FLTN, she concluded, nourishes our work, our spirits, our politics, our thinking to foster the “feminist religious imaginary” especially with vulnerable communities.

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**Elaine Nogueira-Godsey** is an assistant professor of theology, ecology, and race at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio in the U.S. She explores intersecting decolonial and ecofeminist perspective; she studies black, brown and indigenous women’s experiences of religion, gender, and sexuality especially as connected to climate change, environmental racism, food justice, and immigration.

Elaine is originally from Brasil and lived for 15 years in South Africa. She wrote her doctoral dissertation in South Africa on “The Ecofeminist Theology of Ivone Gebara”. She worked as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (ICRSA) where she co-coordinated the research project "Southern Knowledge" jointly hosted by the Network for Religion and Education project and ICRSA in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Cape Town.

She has long collaborated and is now co-chair of the Women’s Caucus team of the AAR/SBL which teams with FLTN.

Among her publications are “Tangible Actions Toward Solidarity: An Ecofeminist Analysis of Women's Participation in Food Justice” in *Valuing Lives, Healing Earth*, edited by Lilian Dube, et al (Teresia Hinga, Sarah E. Robinson-Bertoni and Theresa A. Yugar) and “Towards a Decological Praxis.” She is assistant editor for the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* (JSRNC). She is currently working on a book titled, *Rethinking Ecofeminism and Religion: A Decological Perspective*.

Elaine described her FLTN experience. In 2016, she had just arrived from South Africa; Donald Trump was newly elected, and she attended the FLTN session where she heard Nami Kim speak about “Survival at No One’s Expense.” Suddenly everything connected—we are part of systems in which some people survive at the expense of others. This should not be! At the related Caucus session where she mentioned that male liberation theologians resisted gender analysis because they claimed it would take focus from larger struggles, she was greeted with support for her insight.

In 2017, at the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* conference at Drew

University she discussed post-colonial praxis with Judith Plaskow, met Rebecca Alpert, Traci West, and others whose work she had read, and they were to become her friends and colleagues.

Later her thinking about “decolonial praxis,” a combination of ecological and postcolonial thinking and acting, was an effort to help people survive but not at the expense of others. Pedogeological methods to create spaces for compassion not guilt exemplify what this looks like in teaching.

Elaine’s suggestions for moving forward include cultivating dialogue practices that are postcolonial ways of creating “beloved community.” Students need to learn across differences, enter conversations with humility and openness. Intersectionality grounds dialogue among people from various cultures. These approaches produce love and kindness as well as analyses and critical reflection.

Elaine made clear that FLTN is important for its feminist, liberationist, and theological dimensions, but it is the Network aspect, like the Caucus, that matters most where friendship and mentoring are valued.

### **3. Small Group Discussion**

Small group discussions ensued with people meeting one another and sharing ideas for the FLTN going forward based on

- the impact of FLTN
- what have you found personally useful
- what do you think we should do moving forward

### **4. Closing Plenary to Gather the Group’s Wisdom**

These are among the many concrete suggestions that emerged:

1. Focus on the work of indigenous women in countries as diverse as Ecuador and Australia, not to mention the U.S. and Canada
2. Use Zoom with translation to include presentations in other languages, for example, indigenous feminist movements in Guatemala and Bolivia
3. Deconstruct the religions of empire
4. Include more African and Caribbean women in Network
5. Meet more than once a year given the urgency of this work
6. Connect movements such as climate, peace, feminist, and others

7. Appreciate the non-consumerist aspects of FLTNTN
8. Confront white supremacy that is destroying rather than building the beloved community
9. See Eastern Europe as akin to the Global South in its marginalization
10. Convene a small group to plan programs including people from many parts of the world setting the agenda
11. Connect with groups like the Maternal Gift Economy, Goddess scholars, and the The Association for the Study of Women and Mythology
12. Nourish the nourishers

### **Next Steps**

WATER is deeply grateful to our speakers and to Laura Carr-Pries for technical help.

It is clear that after 25 years FLTNTN has accomplished a good deal but that the work is not finished. To that end, we propose:

1. FLTNTN will meet twice in 2022. *The in-person meeting (assuming that this is possible) will be at the AAR/SBL, TENTATIVELY scheduled for Friday, November 18, 2022, 4-6 PM MT in Denver, Colorado, USA.*

*The FLTNTN Zoom meeting will be in May 2022 with time and Zoom link to be sent later. We recognize that there is no ideal time for everyone, but we will endeavor to find a good compromise.*

In addition, the AAR/SBL Women's Caucus session in which we collaborate will probably be on Saturday morning the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2022, but this remains to be confirmed. They plan to discuss the book honoring Rosemary Radford Ruether entitled *Valuing Lives, Healing Earth: Religion, Gender, and Life on Earth*, edited by Theresa A. Yugar, Sarah E. Robinson, Lilian Dube, Teresia Mbari Hinga, published in Louvain, Belgium by Peeters Publishers, 2021. This will help to inform our focus for the coming year.

2. Please use the Google list to post relevant information to colleagues. [feministliberationtheologiansnetwork+msgappr@googlegroups.com](mailto:feministliberationtheologiansnetwork+msgappr@googlegroups.com) Those who are on the list are welcome and able to post.
3. Please signal your willingness to be part of a small planning group of people from

various parts of the world with an email to [mhunt@hers.com](mailto:mhunt@hers.com). Thank you.

Every good wish for health and productive work in the coming year. Please be in touch with us at WATER ([water@hers.com](mailto:water@hers.com)) with suggestions and ideas. The FLTN needs and appreciates your input.

Attachment: FLTN Brief Chronology, 1995-2020

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## **Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network Program Announcements and Report of 2022 Meeting**

Mary E. Hunt  
March 6, 2023

### **Announcements:**

Our theme for 2023 will be similar to the AAR theme—La Labor de Nuestras Manos—but with specific focus on the work of women and non-binary people. We will consider **The Work is Never Done—Feminism and Fairness in a Global Economy**. Our sessions will be collaborative and interactive with an eye toward bringing feminist religious/spiritual resources to bear on concrete social realities.

**FLTN will convene on Zoom on Wednesday, May 10, 2023**, 7 AM in Sydney, 3 PM in Washington/New York, 8 PM in Dublin/London, and 9 PM in Rome/Frankfurt. This will be a chance to begin to explore our theme.

**The annual in-person meeting in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature gathering will take place on Friday, November 17, 2023, 4-6 PM in San Antonio, TX** with place to be announced.

We will explore both the economic and social/spiritual aspects of work done by those on the margins. Meeting in Texas, a state which has shown explicit hostility to women, non-binary people, and immigrants, makes a compelling backdrop for this discussion and a springboard for action.

RSVP for both FLTN meetings to [waterstaff@hers.com](mailto:waterstaff@hers.com) so we can continue our planning. Thank you. We look forward to your active presence. If you are working on these issues in your field, please let us know as we plan our programs. Thanks!

We continue to do this work in grateful collaboration with the AAR/SBL Women's Caucus. They will offer a session: "Feminist Liberation Theologians and La Labor de Nuestras Manos" with date and time to be announced. See their Call for Papers

on their website: <https://womenscaucusaar.wixsite.com/womenscaucusaarsbl/2023-call-for-papers> .

**Report:**

*Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network Report of 2022  
Meeting held Friday, November 18, 2022, 4-6 PM  
Denver Convention Center, Denver, Colorado*

The video of the 2022 FLTN meeting can be accessed at:

FLTN 2022 Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvklQXkjkjE>

FLTN 2022 Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddmXG81NwYQ>

Twenty-five colleagues from more than six countries joined in person for the 26<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network in Denver, Colorado sponsored in happy collaboration with the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature's Women's Caucus.

We began with the usual round of introductions, delighting in the fact that after a Covid-induced hiatus we could be back in person.

The focus of the meeting was the legacy of Rosemary Radford Ruether for Feminist Liberation Theology. Rosemary's daughters Becky and Mimi sent a note from the family:

*"Greetings to the American Academy of Religion. We are grateful to Mary and the many others who have shared tributes, remembrances, and images of Rosemary. Along with her scholarship and activism, we are reminded of her originality, humor, and the many people she worked with and touched throughout the world. Rosemary leaves a legacy through her written work and through all of you -- colleagues, educators, students, students of students, and friends. Thank you and all the best from the Ruether Family."*

We heard remarks from several of Rosemary's colleagues and then engaged in a mapping exercise to name and prioritize Rosemary's contributions. Our goal was to have



input into the shaping of Rosemary's legacy since she was one of us. We considered which of her works were influential on us, and what incomplete work on her desk we might take on going forward. The map is incomplete of course, but the wide ranging parameters of Rosemary's work now give way to the many, varied, creative, and effective ways in which her methodology is lived out around the world.

Following are the speakers, all of whom had personal connections with Rosemary, with links to their remarks:

1. [Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite](#), President Emerita of Chicago Theological Seminary, read and added to by [Tracy McEwan](#), a recent PhD from the University of Newcastle, Australia.
2. [Teresia Hinga](#) from Kenya, Professor of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University, read by [Rosalind Hinton](#), independent scholar, oral historian, and non-profit consultant.
3. [Lisa Isherwood](#), a scholar who works at University of Wales, Trinity St. David, read by [Elizabeth Ursic](#), Co-chair of the AAR Women's Caucus and Professor of Religious Studies at Mesa Community College in Arizona.
4. [Elizabeth Green](#), a Baptist minister in Italy, feminist theologian and member of the Italian Association on Women Theologians, read by Kath McPhillips who is senior lecturer in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Newcastle in Australia.

The Rosemary Radford Ruether Mapping Process questions can be found here: <https://www.waterwomensalliance.org/fltn-rrr-mapping-3/>

Rosalind Hinton kindly joined Mary E. Hunt in analyzing the data. It is a small sample, but the general contours are as follows:

1. *Top areas of influence*

- Feminist Liberation Theology
- Ecofeminism
- Israel/Palestine
- Deconstructing dualisms
- Catholic feminism and women-church

2. *Books/articles of greatest influence*

- Sexism and God-talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*
- America-Amerikka: Elect Nation and Imperial Violence*
- Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*

*--Women-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities*

--“Can a Male Savior Save Women?”

--“Augustine’s Penis”

3. *Impact and Scope in a few words for an undergraduate audience*

--Have you ever wanted to be so free, so authentic, so prophetic and so vibrantly full of life that everything you do becomes your life work? Let’s meet Rosemary Radford Ruether.

--She changed the face of the Roman Catholic Church and feminism.

--She taught that social systems don’t have to be oppressive.

--She challenged patriarchal and colonial systems, institutions and Catholicism.

--She was a pioneer; she always said yes to me; she taught me how to mentor others.

4. *Rosemary Radford Ruether’s contribution to global feminist studies in religion:*

--A massive contribution to women and church globally

--List of countries where she visited and people she touched reads like a map of the world with special emphasis on developing countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa

5. *Unfinished work of Rosemary’s desk that others will tackle:*

--Feminist Catholic social teachings

--Church/state theory and vestigial state

--Trauma and sexual abuse

--LGBTIQA+

--Climate change, immigration, and refugees

--Critique of interfaith dialogue

--Right-wing counterrevolutions in Christianity

--Synodality—pro or con?

--#MeToo Movement, Arab Spring

--Rising global feminist consciousness and agency

-- Transnational feminist ethics

This mapping is by no means definitive and this report only highlights a fraction of it. But it is enough to give feminist scholars in religion a way to begin to think

globally of Rosemary's work and to situate our own work in the unfinished business on her desk.

For vintage (6/24/68) viewing of Rosemary along with Mary Daly and Sydney Callahan on a U.S. TV program, see "Firing Line" with William F. Buckley, "The Rib Uncaged: Women and the Church." Link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxdBLDmBT6k>

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In reciprocal collaboration with the Women's Caucus, Mary E. Hunt responded to the book honoring Rosemary Radford Ruether entitled *Valuing Lives, Healing Earth: Religion, Gender, and Life on Earth*, edited by Theresa A. Yugar, Sarah E. Robinson, Lilian Dube, Teresia Mbari Hinga, published in Louvain, Belgium by Peeters Publishers, 2021. My response will be found on the Women's Caucus website.

Special thanks to Bethany Davey and Nicole Guthrie, graduate students at METHESCO in Ohio, for gracious help with technical aspects of the meeting.

Mark your calendar for FLTN 2023:  
Zoom Meeting, May 10, 2023 3 PM ET  
In-person meeting, San Antonio, TX November 17, 2023, 4-6 PM