

Leader's Guide for
Following the Path: The Women of Color Scholars Program
DVD #6202
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This leader's guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the DVD *Following the Path: The Women of Color Scholars Program*. The suggested guideline is suitable for one 2-hour session or two 1-hour sessions. You may use this study for a young adult or adult study in a local church or academic setting.

Materials Needed

- Women of Color Scholars DVD
- DVD player and monitor

Recommended Books

African-American Women's Theological Perspective: Townes, Emilie M. *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993. (Available from cokesbury.com.)

Asian Women's Theological Perspective: Kwok Pui-Lan. *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology*. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2000. (Available from cokesbury.com.)

Latina Women's Theological Perspective: Isasi-Diaz, Ada Maria. *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996. (Available from cokesbury.com.)

Preparation

- Preview the DVD.
- Review one or more of the recommended books.
- Be ready to discuss racial/ethnic and gender inclusiveness, the church, and theological education.

1. Introduction. Share the session goals and program history:

Session Goals

- To promote the scholarship of women of color in academia and church.
- To learn about issues around women of color scholars.
- To explore ways to support women of color scholars as United Methodists.

Program History

- This program was envisioned by black clergywomen at their consultation in 1987—sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.
- Forty women have participated in the program during the last 18 years and 23 graduates have their PhDs or ThDs in religious studies.
- Four graduates are teaching in United Methodist seminaries: Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta; Drew University, The Theological School,

Madison, N.J., Gammon Theological Seminary, Atlanta; and Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill.

- For more information: Please check <http://www.gbhem.org/woc/>

2. Watch the DVD. Ask these entry questions:

- Would you share your own personal experiences of engagement with women of color scholars in an academic or a church setting?
- What makes women of color scholars' situation a unique case in theological education?

3. Discuss the DVD

Explore the characters and identify issues:

- Who are the characters involved in the DVD?
- What are the main issues being raised in the film? What kind of elements should be considered when we deal with women of color scholars?
- Racial issues in academia: What kinds of issues evolve when academia is in a racially transitional community? How are they handled?

Share theological understandings of the Women of Color Scholars Program:

- The liberalism and socialism in the late 18th and 19th centuries raised the consciousness that class, race, and gender are social constructs.
- This understanding propelled women's claim to be a cultural agency and to be subjects for theology.
- In late 1970s and early 1980s feminist theology became diversified with African American Womanist theology, Hispanic Mujerista theology, and Asian feminist theology.
- Racial/ethnic women's theology was developed as a grassroots political movement challenging North American and European hegemony of theology.

Introduce racial/ethnic women's theological perspectives. Select one of the recommended books as an introduction to sharing a different theological understanding.

Asian Feminist Theology by Kwok Pui-Lan

- Kwok argues that the hybridity and the multi-religious context of Asia do not confine Christian theology within Christian community only.
- Kwok insists that Asian Christian feminist theologians should bring multi-religious and diverse cultural experiences in as they reconstruct theology.
- Researching Asian-American women's ministry and theology demands careful consideration of the impact of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shamanism as it relates to sexism, community, family, morality, and ecclesiology.
- Kwok claims that Asian women feel more comfortable with both male and female images of the divine due to religiously pluralistic contexts in Asia that contain feminine images of the divine from prehistoric times. Female images of the divine abound in Korean Shamanism also.

- Kwok Pui-Lan argues that the struggle for emancipation of Asian women is a communal praxis for them. Women, along with Asian men, struggled for political independence from colonization and self-autonomy from Western influence.
- Asian women also struggle against the traditional cultural female virtues of self-sacrifice, obedience, and subservience in socio-cultural contexts.
- For Korean women, the concept of community is essential because their social role is based on social relationship such as mother, wife, daughter, or sister.
- Because they are community oriented, theological issues for Korean feminist theologians are the reunification of North and South Korea, Korean women enslavement as sex workers by the Japanese military during the Second World War, exploitation of women workers, women-church movement, and advocacy for Korean slave workers in Japan.
- Kwok asserts global racism, sexism, and their unique cultural contexts need to be incorporated in doing theology for Asian women.
- Kwok criticizes the feminist movement in America because it only addresses issues from a middle-class Caucasian women's perspective. She also criticizes the use of racial discourses, such as using abolitionism and the Civil Rights movement and the Black Power movement, to justify Caucasian women's racial and class privileges.
- She insists that Caucasian feminist theology is inadequate to address racism, colonialism, and economic exploitation that Asian women deal with, in addition to sexism.

Mujerista Theology by Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz

- The term *mujerista* is for Latinas who live under sexism, ethnic prejudice, and economic oppression in the United States.
- A *mujerista* is someone who makes a preferential option for Latina women.
- *Mujerista* theology is a theology from the perspective of Latina women's experiences in the United States.
- *Mujerista* theology explains Latina women's faith and its role in their struggle in liberation.
- Goals of *mujerista* theology: to create the voices of Latina women in public and political spaces, to develop a theological method that captures Latina women as its subject, and to challenge absolutizing of traditional understandings of theology that excludes experiences of Latina women.
- *Mujerista* theology as a liberative praxis is about to bring a radical change in the life of Latina women by consciousness raising.
- By using *mujerista* theology Latina women learn to value who they are, what they think and what they do.
- *Mujerista* theology points out the reality of social, political, and cultural oppressive structures.
- *Mujerista* theology assists Latinas to define their own preferred future by indicating internalized oppression.
- *Mujerista* theology takes commitment to justice and peace of a Hispanic community seriously.

- The racially and culturally mixed reality of Hispanics provides the theological locus to mujerista theology for its embracing of diversity as virtue.
- Liberation is the criterion for ethical decisions and difference is at the core of mujerista theology.
- Morality of mujerista theology evolves around solidarity with the oppressed and social justice.
- The lived experience of Latina women, the shared experience, is the source of mujerista theology. Latina women are the agents of mujerista theology.

A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering by Emilie M. Townes

- Emilie M. Townes is a womanist ethicist. *A Troubling in My Soul* is a collection of writings of womanist scholars.
- Alice Walker used the term and concept of womanist for the first time in her 1983 essay collection *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*.
- Womanist means African-American feminist. The concept of womanist allows African-American women to be the subject of their history, culture, and religion.
- Womanist considers the wholeness of African-American community and wellbeing of men and women.
- African-American women religious scholars use the term womanist to differentiate themselves from African-American male theologians and Caucasian feminists. Womanist theology rejects the gender insensitivity in black theology and racial and cultural inattentiveness in feminist theology.
- Womanist theology uses African-American women's experiences, folk tales, and slave narratives as sources of its theological perspectives. Nurturing and dialogical characteristics of women is an important source for womanist theology. By using them womanist theology seeks to establish social, cultural, political, and religious justice.
- Womanist theology connects black history and African-American women's struggles for liberation to affirm women's leadership in African-American community through Christian faith.
- Womanist theology affirms the authenticity of African-American women's experiences. Townes uses African-American women's experiences as a source for understanding God, suffering, and ethnics.
- Womanist theology reveals African-American women's liberating roles in African-American history in building and maintaining African-American community.
- Womanist theology provides women's voices to black theology that often presents male-centered perspectives.
- Womanist theology embraces self-worth of African-American women.
- Womanist theology points out the unique issues that only African-American women have to confront. Racism, classism, homophobia, and sexism do not have a place in womanist theology.

4. Closing. Ask these questions:

- What did you learn from this DVD?

- To what extent do you believe that faculty representing the marginalized can train seminarians for the church and the world?
- When we look at the racial ethnic composition of seminary students how does this program assist seminaries in light of the need of training a more diverse student body?
- What role do the local church, educational institutions, and the general church play in ensuring the success of this program?