

Crossing Shores and Horizons

Asian and Asian American Transnational Feminist Theologies

EDITED BY BOYUNG LEE, KRISTINE CHONG,
LAURA MARIKO CHEIFETZ, AND NAMI KIM

FOREWORD BY MARY F. FOSKETT

WJK WESTMINSTER
JOHN KNOX PRESS
LOUISVILLE • KENTUCKY

Contents

<i>Foreword by Mary F. Foskett</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix

Introduction: Boyung Lee with kristine chong, Laura Mariko Cheifetz, Nami Kim	1
--	---

SECTION ONE: TRAILBLAZERS OF TRANSFORMATION

1. Jin Young Choi, "Becoming a Woman Warrior: The Life and Legacy of Gale A. Yee"	21
2. Sumlut Ban Htang, "Telling Otherwise: Celebrating Kwok Pui-lan's Transnational Theological Assemblage"	31
3. Grace Y. Kao, "Celebrating Trailblazer Rita Nakashima Brock"	43
4. AHyun Lee, "'You Can Follow Me Now': Celebrating Dr. Jung Ha Kim's Way of Leading Together"	54
5. kristine chong, "Echolocations of Queer Futurity: Dialogues with Trailblazer, Translator, and Teacher Su Yon Pak"	66

SECTION TWO: COLLECTIVE HEALING AND COMMUNAL WISDOM

6. Wong Wai Ching Angela, "Living with the Memory of Pain"	79
7. Septemmy E. Lakawa, "Unencrypting Racism and Decoding Resistance: An Indonesian, Feminist, Eclectic Narrative of Healing"	92

8. Eunbee Ham, "Sacred Misfit: Pastors as Midwives of Resilience and Resistance" 108
9. Sandhya Rani Jha, "We Are Each Other's: Belonging, Hospitality, and the Struggle to Create a Functioning Democracy" 119

SECTION THREE: REIMAGINING THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSES

10. B. Yuki Schwartz, "Sacred Cross(dress)ings: The Theological Peri-Anthropology of the Ornamental Monk" 135
11. Min-Ah Cho, "Embracing Silence: Sharing Struggles and Fostering Transformation for Women of Color" 148
12. Haruka Umetsu Cho, "Solidarity on the Margins: Reading Min Jin Lee, *Pachinko*" 159
13. Mihee Kim-Kort, "Unfaithful: Reading *Dictée* and *DMZ Colony* as Devotional Practice" 170

SECTION FOUR: WEAVING NEW WORLDS

14. Lama Htoi San Lu, "Dreaming Peace without a Militarized Face: Toward a Transpacific Feminist Hermeneutic of Co-Thriving" 187
15. Kayko Driedger Hesslein, "Visiting the Daughter-Land" 196
16. Christine J. Hong, "Remaking Altars: Ancestral Connections as Decolonial Praxis" 204
17. Laura Mariko Cheifetz, "Stewarding the Future of Asian/American Transnational Feminist Theologies" 216

Afterword: Nami Kim 224

Notes 227

List of Contributors 257

Index 261

“Crossing Shores and Horizons honors forty years of Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry’s (PANAAWTM) rigorous, transnational scholarship as a living genealogy of memory, testimony, and collective imagining. Tracing the lineage from foremothers to a new generation, this volume holds tribute and rigorous critique, relationship and insight, as inseparable practices. It is decolonial world-making in practice-feminist theology that moves across borders, generations, and forms of belonging. This book doesn’t just document a movement—it embodies one.”

—Wonhee Anne Joh, Harry R. Kendall Professor of Christian Theology and Postcolonial Studies, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

“Crossing Shores and Horizons is a timely and compelling volume that brings together the voices of generations of Asian and Asian American feminist theologians, practitioners, and religious leaders. The essays recount and bear witness to the power of community, liberative praxis, and theological wisdom that has emerged from the four decades of gatherings of PANAAWTM. Equal parts oral history, constructive theology, and poetics of religious practice, this book embodies an intersectional and intergenerational faithful response to the current sociopolitical and religious environment.”

—Frank M. Yamada, Executive Director, Association of Theological Schools

“This is the collection we have been waiting for from PANAAWTM, and it is well worth the wait. Spanning the growth of Asian and Asian American transnational feminist thought and ministry over the past forty years, it combines oral interviews; uses transnational feminist theology to explore and analyze communal and global issues; examines art, literature, and Christian theology via intersectional practical applications of transnational feminist theology; and looks at future interdisciplinary directions by engaging interreligious dialogue, peace studies, and political science. This a powerful tour de force collection that is well worth the read and reflection and a significant addition to our contemporary conversations in the academy, the church, and communities.”

—Emilie M. Townes, Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of Religion and Black Studies, Boston University School of Theology

“An invaluable volume, this book is interdisciplinary and intergenerational in scope, as well as transnational and intersectional in its emphasis. Featuring interviews with—and hence reflections by—several influential pioneers of Asian American feminist theology alongside contributions from a new generation of feminist scholars of Asian ancestry, this book both preserves the field’s history and inspires its future.”

—Tat-siong Benny Liew, Professor, Class of 1956 Chair in New Testament Studies, College of the Holy Cross

*“There are books that arrive at just the right moment. Such is *Crossing Shores and Horizons*. The editors and contributors remind readers of the significance of intergenerational presence, representation, mentoring, memory, and creativity as gifts to religious communities, the academy, and grassroots engagement. This*

volume offers a glimpse of what might be possible when liberation-minded theologians, scholars, activists, and faith leaders engage in boundary-crossing work to imagine a world that values and centers the lived experiences and contributions of women and nonbinary persons of Asian descent.”

—Angela D. Sims, President, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School

“Boyung Lee, kristine chong, Laura Mariko Cheifetz, and Nami Kim pull generations together to look back to see forward. *Crossing Shores and Horizons* honors ancestors, elders, and emerging voices who together decolonize theological imagination and generatively imagine a more liberative future. For any reader wrestling with faith, belonging, and justice across cultures, they offer a model of communal wisdom and hope . . . an anthology that should be read and an example that should be followed across our communities.”

—Patrick B. Reyes, author of *Pedagogy of the Ancestors*
and President, Auburn Theological Seminary

“Just when too many gender justice-seeking Christians are sinking into polarized isolation and political despair, *Crossing Shores and Horizons* energizes us with theological abundance, innovation, and edgy insights on transnational connectedness. Through Asian and Asian American contexts and practices, these essays teach complex communal histories, intellectual biographies, Scriptures, and literary texts, gifting us with transformative feminist theological vision for our racist world.”

—Traci C. West, Professor Emerit of Christian Ethics
and African American Studies, Drew Theological School

“Some books inform. Some books challenge. *Crossing Shores and Horizons* does both—and then asks us to become different teachers because of it.

Asian and Asian American transnational feminist theologians have been expanding the theological imagination for decades, reminding us that borders are never merely lines on maps. They live in our histories, our languages, our classrooms, and our theologies. This remarkable collection invites all of us into the demanding and joyful work of learning across differences with intellectual rigor, moral courage, and deep humanity.

As I read these essays, I imagined students lingering over them long after class had ended—asking better questions, listening more carefully, and discovering that faithful theological inquiry is enriched by voices too often pushed to the margins. This volume is more than an important scholarly contribution. It is a pedagogical companion for educators who believe classrooms can become places where curiosity displaces certainty, difference becomes a teacher, and learning prepares us to cultivate a more truthful, more generous, and more just world.”

—Nancy Lynne Westfield, Director, Wabash Center
for Teaching and Learning in Religion

“Our shared journey of truth-seeking and manifesting God’s teachings and will for the world requires all of us to listen to and learn from one another’s wisdom

and experiences. *Crossing Shores and Horizons* invites us to consider the impact and gift of faith, intersectionality, theology, and Christian woman-ess through the lenses of Asian and Pacific Island women in theological education and praxis. Women of color have a powerful word from God about lived-out inclusion, welcome, and power, and we are determined to make our voices heard in a world that needs us. These learned sisters offer needed dimensions to our ongoing struggle with being people overcoming racism, xenophobia, inter-ethnic struggle, heterosexism, transphobia, classism, ageism, and sexism/misogyny. For those of us seeking fullness and flourishing for all, *Crossing Shores and Horizons* invites us to listen and wrestle with perspectives and voices that many Christian theologians and ministers are taught to ignore.”

—M. Garlinda Burton, United Methodist deaconess, former executive of the denomination’s General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, and resource development director for the General Commission on Religion and Race

“PANAAWTM’s story, from its founding to its fortieth anniversary and beyond, is a powerful, poignant, promising chapter in feminist studies in religion. Wonderful essays about the founding foremothers ground contemporary international, intercultural, activist scholarship that is shaping religious discourse in many traditions. The volume offers a bountiful banquet of issues and challenges setting off intellectual fireworks. I commend this exciting must-read to religious studies colleagues and students. *Ad multos annos*, PANAAWTM!”

—Mary E. Hunt, Codirector, Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)

“This volume is indispensable for anyone engaging theology today. Forty years ago, the foremothers of PANAAWTM began a different form of academic organization—one that is communal rather than hierarchical, collaborative rather than competitive, and unbound by borders between nations or between academia, ministry, and advocacy. The results continue to be astounding. This book is a glorious collective testimony to the life-giving possibilities of transnational feminist religious thought. It is creative, rigorous, and surprising at every turn. The contributors to this text—and all the women of PANAAWTM—are leading the way for theology in the twenty-first century.”

—Shannon Craigo-Snell, Professor Emerit of Theology, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

“This innovative compilation of articles represents a wealth of wisdom transcending a narrow understanding of theology and relevant to scholars and practitioners from diverse fields concerned with human well-being, community, and meaning-making. Here you will find exciting and inspiring scholarship from well-established as well as emerging voices wrestling with intersectional issues that have significance for both our global relationships and our daily lives. This impressive work is interdisciplinary in scope and creative in content. It is a book you need to have in your library.”

—Christy Newton, Executive Director, Disciples Seminary Foundation

Foreword

MARY F. FOSKETT

I first encountered the Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry (PANAAWTM) in 1987 when I was a first-year MDiv student at Union Theological Seminary in New York. None of us could know then that PANAAWTM would grow into a transnational network and be going strong forty years later and counting. Nor could we have envisioned the publication of this volume, PANAAWTM's fifth book. In 1987, the network was still known by its founding name, Asian Women Theologians (AWT). Under the mentorship of Letty Russell and Shannon Clarkson, AWT was led by a group of pioneering young scholars that included Kwok Pui-lan, Rita Nakashima Brock, Nantawan Boonprasat Lewis, and others. Chung Hyun Kyung, a Union doctoral student in theology, had invited me to attend a meeting. I remained involved with AWT throughout my time as a student at Union. Years later, after working outside of theological circles, I found my way back to further graduate study and to PANAAWTM. While some members could be found at every annual meeting, many of us attended meetings on and off through the years, as our schedules permitted.

I belong to what I think of as the 1.5 generation in PANAAWTM, owning a longer view than many but being neither one of the network's foremothers nor one among those generations who would come to be directly mentored by them. Nonetheless, I count myself as one who has been shaped, challenged, and nurtured by PANAAWTM. Those of us in the 1.5 generation have grown in and alongside this dynamic network. Along the way, we have been witnesses to the expanding circles and generations of theological work and religious leadership that have grown to include transnational perspectives and voices and not only Christian reflection but also wisdom borne of the Asian and Asian American experience of multiple religious belonging.

This latest PANAAWTM publication, *Crossing Shores and Horizons*, is a testament to who the network has been and who it is becoming. The voices of

five PANAAWTM foremothers that form the opening section of the volume, the contributions that give shape to its subsequent sections, and the able work of its four coeditors speak to what I have found to be most sustaining about PANAAWTM. The network has birthed a dynamic community that provides space in which to cultivate, generate, and support the feminist intellectual and spiritual formation of women and nonbinary persons of Asian descent, across multiple identities and positionalities, as scholars, teachers, ministers, writers, and community or religious leaders. This collective intergenerational, diasporic, and transnational work, and the relationships that have been forged over more than four decades, have had a transformational impact on feminist theological and religious studies discourse. This work has modeled and encouraged feminist praxis in religious and community leadership, and many relationships formed through the years have enriched the lives of PANAAWTM participants.

The opening chapters set the tone for this volume, underscoring the courage, intellectual firepower, wisdom, and impact of PANAAWTM foremothers. Based on oral histories, they reveal the relational formations, feminist commitments, and configurations of solidarity that helped to generate the powerfully embodied knowledge for which each figure is known. These foremothers' legacies of expansive vision, liberative praxis, and communal joy are taken up as an inheritance by the contributors to the volume, who speak from a place of profound inner freedom cultivated over the course of more than forty years of PANAAWTM. Whether writing on healing and wisdom, expanding the circle and reach of theological discourse and engagement, or envisioning new worlds in a time when we are confronted by so much that threatens human, animal, and planetary annihilation, the authors blaze new Asian, Asian diasporic, and transnational feminist trails through religious, theological, geopolitical, theopoetic, postcolonial, and organizational topographies.

Led by a spirit of freedom and feminist commitment to liberation, the way forward for PANAAWTM is far from set in stone. Taking the long view, I see how much PANAAWTM, ever responsive and self-reflexive, has shifted and changed through the years. Expanding and moving in ways that are neither linear nor neat, PANAAWTM today is not what AWT was; PANAAWTM tomorrow, growing into its new iteration as a 501(c)3, will not be what it is today. Guided by a new generation, PANAAWTM will be what it will be. And that is as it should be.

Acknowledgments

This book exists because of a community.

We begin with profound gratitude to the contributors whose scholarship, courage, and imagination animate these pages. Your essays do more than advance theological argument; they carry memory, struggle, tenderness, and hope. Through your work, new vistas open, and new possibilities for transnational feminist theology come into view. It is an honor to labor alongside you.

We are especially grateful to Dr. Stacy Davis, our editor at Westminster John Knox Press, whose wise and steady guidance shepherded this project from proposal to publication. Her guidance and unwavering encouragement strengthened both the clarity and integrity of this volume. We also thank the wider team at Westminster John Knox Press whose careful and often unseen labor helped bring this anthology into the world.

Our sincere appreciation goes to First Presbyterian Church of Fort Worth, Texas, whose generous support made this work possible. We are likewise thankful to APARRI (Asian Pacific American Religions Research Initiative) for funding our “Voices of Resilience: Documenting the Foremothers of Asian American Feminist Theologies” oral history project. Undertaken as part of PANAAWTM’s fortieth anniversary commemoration, that project provided living testimony and historical grounding that became foundational for section 1 of this volume.

Above all, we offer our deepest gratitude to the foremothers of PANAAWTM. They gave their time, intellect, speaking fees, royalties, and immeasurable energy to build a community where none had existed. Through mentoring, organizing, scholarship, and steadfast refusal to be silenced by patriarchy, racism, colonialism, or homophobia, they created space for generations of Asian and Asian American feminist theologians to flourish. We stand because they stood. This book is one small testament to their enduring courage, faith, and love.

Introduction^{*}

BOYUNG LEE WITH KRISTINE CHONG,

LAURA MARIKO CHEIFETZ, NAMI KIM

This book explores how Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theologies have shaped, challenged, and transformed knowledge production in theological education and ministerial praxis over the past four decades. PANAAWTM¹ has been instrumental in shaping transnational feminist theologies by offering a transformative platform for women and nonbinary people of Asian heritage to articulate their experiences, challenge dominant theological paradigms, and reimagine faith through liberative feminist practices.² This collective endeavor is a testament to what is possible when Asian and Asian/American feminist theologians and faith leaders gather and cocreate Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theologies for and with future generations.

In this introduction, we trace PANAAWTM's historical development and thematic shifts since its founding in the 1980s, highlighting its critical contributions to Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theologies. Through

^{*} This introduction is a revised and expanded version of Boyung Lee's article "PANAAWTM Continues to Live! A History and the Future of Transnational Asian/American Feminist Theologies," originally published in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 41, no. 2 (2025): 91–103, and reprinted here with permission from Indiana University Press.

a chronological and thematic analysis, we examine how PANAAWTM has advanced theological thought while fostering vital networks of mentorship and activism that continue to shape feminist theological scholarship.³ PANAAWTM has also formed faith leaders, including congregational pastors, chaplains, and spiritual care practitioners, providing Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theological frameworks to ministry, spiritual formation, and community care. Furthermore, as PANAAWTM members hold leadership roles in various institutions, PANAAWTM engages in networking, field building, and systems change work. Hence, we highlight the features of PANAAWTM's leadership and communitarian praxis interlinked with liberative theological knowledge (re)production.

As PANAAWTM marked its fortieth conference in 2025, the milestone marker offers a timely opportunity to assess its enduring impact on transnational feminist theologies and practices of ministry and leadership. This book is critical as it addresses the ongoing challenges faced by women and nonbinary people of Asian heritage in navigating the complex intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, citizenship/migration, and culture. In an era when transnational feminist theologies are increasingly vital, PANAAWTM exemplifies the importance of evolving theological practices in response to shifting social, political, and religious landscapes.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF ASIAN AND ASIAN/ AMERICAN FEMINIST THEOLOGIES (1980s)

To understand PANAAWTM's significance, it is necessary to situate its formation within the broader context of the 1980s, a decade marked by profound social and political shifts for women of color in the United States. While the feminist movement was advancing gender equality and women's rights, it largely centered on White women's experiences, neglecting the distinct challenges faced by women of color.⁴ In theological institutions, Asian and Asian/American women faced a double bind of gendered and racialized exclusion.⁵ In response, a group of pioneering Asian and Asian/American women gathered in 1984, supported by the late Dr. Letty Russell and Shannon Clarkson, recognizing the urgent need for solidarity and theological engagement.⁶ Their goal was not only to challenge patriarchal structures within their religious communities but also to resist racism, cultural alienation, and minoritization within predominantly white theological institutions in the United States. Out of this collective vision and action, PANAAWTM was born.⁷

A defining moment in PANAAWTM's early history was its first official conference in 1985. More than just a meeting, it was a declaration of presence. For many of the women involved, it was the first time they encountered others who shared their experiences of minoritization and who were similarly committed to reimagining theology from their perspectives. This gathering was pivotal in

solidifying PANAAWTM as a grassroots movement, setting the stage for the development of Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theological discourse.⁸

From its inception, PANAAWTM's work was deeply rooted in transnational feminism, liberation, and early postcolonial feminist theologies, even before postcolonial theory had gained widespread recognition in theological discourse. Transnational feminist perspectives helped members to connect their experiences as Asian and Asian/American women to broader global struggles for justice, while liberation and postcolonial feminist theologies provided tools to interrogate the lingering impacts of colonialism on their religious traditions and academic contexts.⁹ Engaging with these theologies, PANAAWTM members sought to construct frameworks that were inclusive, justice-oriented, and reflective of cultural hybridity and diasporic realities.

One of PANAAWTM's most significant contributions during this period—and one that continues today—was its emphasis on embodied knowledge as a theological framework. In contrast to dominant theological paradigms privileging abstraction, PANAAWTM centered lived experiences of migration, hybridity, and cultural negotiation.¹⁰ The 1986 conference, "An Ocean with Many Shores," reaffirmed these commitments to transnational connection and theology grounded in real-life struggles.¹¹ The organization also embraced the hybrid identities of its members, naming itself a collective of "Asian and Asian American Women Theologians" and challenging rigid theological and cultural categories. This self-designation reflected both the shared struggles of Asian and Asian/American women and their distinct positionalities within a diasporic community, navigating multiple cultural and national contexts.¹² Through this evolving engagement, PANAAWTM pioneered new ways of doing theology—intertwining it with identity, historical memory, and praxis.

Embodied knowledge shaped not only PANAAWTM's theological framework but also its organizational praxis. The group developed a distinctive leadership model grounded in communitarian decision-making, rejecting hierarchical norms in favor of relationality, shared responsibility, and collective wisdom.¹³ Since its founding, PANAAWTM has intentionally resisted rigid hierarchical structures and has prioritized communal and feminist leadership principles of shared power, and this approach has remained central as the organization formalized into a nonprofit.

One of the most enduring manifestations of this communitarian approach, PANAAWTM's long-standing commitment to mentorship, emerged from these beginning years. PANAAWTM understood mentorship not merely as professional development but as a relational, intergenerational, and theological practice.¹⁴ PANAAWTM's mentoring is intergenerational, collaborative, and aims to be reciprocal, with senior members—many of whom were the first Asian and Asian/American women in their respective theological fields—guiding and learning alongside younger scholars and practitioners. Unlike traditional mentorship models that reinforce hierarchical dynamics, PANAAWTM

fosters accessible learning and creative growth. This feminist praxis of mentoring not only nurtures emerging leaders but also advances its justice-oriented, transnational, and postcolonial feminist theological endeavor. As a result, PANAAWTM has become a vital space for theological imagination, alternative knowledge production, and spiritually rooted activism.

ADVOCACY, LIBERATION THEOLOGY, AND THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT (1990s)

The 1990s marked a period of significant expansion for PANAAWTM as it deepened its theological engagement and further established itself in the broader theological landscape. During this decade, members articulated theological perspectives that more explicitly challenged dominant frameworks, drawing from liberation theology, feminist theology, and postcolonial theory. While liberation theology, with its emphasis on justice for the oppressed, remained central, PANAAWTM widened its commitments. Recognizing the global dimensions of oppression and the enduring legacies of colonial Christianity, members increasingly incorporated postcolonial feminist critiques into their theological work.

This era also witnessed the emergence of key theological voices, particularly the founding members, who helped shape Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theological discourse and seeded the foundation for the organization's collective voice and future direction. Equally important was the intentional mentoring of a new generation of Asian and Asian/American theologians. The 1990s solidified PANAAWTM's role as both a theological movement and a space for critical intergenerational mentorship, ensuring that emerging scholars and ministers could carry forward its vision of justice, liberation, and theological transformation.

PANAAWTM's formal commitment to doctoral student mentoring began in 1996, when the annual conference at the Episcopal Divinity School hosted the organization's first doctoral seminar. Although modest in scale, this initial effort created an intentional space for doctoral students to share their emerging research, receive feedback, and find solidarity in a community where their experiences as Asian and Asian/American women were not peripheral but central. The 1996 seminar revealed both the urgency of structured support and the depth of intellectual and emotional need among doctoral students who, in their home institutions, were often isolated, lacked mentors of Asian descent, and navigated academic environments that did not fully recognize or affirm their cultural or scholarly identities.

Building on the momentum of 1996, PANAAWTM significantly expanded its mentoring model the following year. In 1997, the organization held its first full-day doctoral seminar, a major programmatic development to support student members. Participants arrived a day before the opening-night panel to devote an entire day to doctoral work and communal support. Students who

were drafting dissertation proposals or working on chapters submitted their materials in advance and received in-depth, critical feedback from established PANAAWTM theologians and scholars. The seminar combined rigorous academic engagement with conversations about navigating doctoral programs at various stages, discerning one's scholarly voice, and sustaining research grounded in cultural heritage and lived experience.

The 1997 seminar also addressed the reality that most Asian and Asian/American doctoral students were enrolled in institutions without any Asian or Asian/American faculty, leaving them without mentors who understood their cultural histories, social locations, or methodological commitments. As a result, the seminar emphasized the importance of thriving through mutual support, an ethic that is a defining feature of PANAAWTM's culture. Over time, as the number of doctoral students and early-career scholars grew, the seminar eventually outgrew its original format, which the community interpreted as a sign of transformative impact. The core vision of culturally grounded and intergenerational mentoring has remained constant.

The 1997 conference was also the first to feature an opening-night panel open to the public, representing a significant shift from earlier conferences, where all events were limited to PANAAWTM participants. Several factors contributed to this development. Traditionally, conferences had been hosted by a PANAAWTM faculty member at her own institution or with institutional support. In 1996, however, several conference participants from Emory University and the greater Atlanta area found the PANAAWTM community and conference experience profoundly life-giving, and they invited the organization to bring the 1997 conference to Emory. This was notable because the Candler School of Theology at the time had no Asian or Asian/American faculty, and thus no point person, to advocate for institutional support. PANAAWTM's Faculty Advisory Committee worked closely with Atlanta-based participants and negotiated with Emory to host the gathering. To introduce PANAAWTM's scholarship to the Emory community and to engage the wider theological and religious studies networks in Atlanta, PANAAWTM organized a public opening panel that was hosted by the institution. The event was a resounding success and established a tradition that continues to this day, with each conference beginning with a public panel that highlights the theological contributions of Asian and Asian/American feminist scholars to local colleagues and communities.

The 1997 gathering was also pivotal in heightening the community's awareness of PANAAWTM's explicitly transnational character. Differences in the experiences and needs of Asian/American doctoral students and international students from Asia had always existed within the community, but the growing size of the doctoral cohort revealed these dynamics in fuller, more explicit ways. During the doctoral seminar, participants named distinct cultural expectations, institutional challenges, linguistic pressures, and social realities that shaped their academic journeys. At times, these differences generated tension, yet the conversations that ensued proved deeply generative. As participants shared stories of

migration, colonial histories, racialization, gendered marginalization, and academic struggle, they developed a clearer understanding of the complex, multifaceted, and interconnected nature of their identities as women of Asian heritage. In this sense, the 1997 conference marked a moment when PANAAWTM's transnational theological imagination came into sharper focus, shaping its future direction as a community rooted in multiple homelands, diasporic narratives, and global feminist commitments.

GLOBALIZATION, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM (2000s)

In the 2000s, PANAAWTM responded to the forces of globalization and US militarism, particularly in Asia and the Pacific, by expanding its reach and deepening its engagement. Recognizing how these forces shaped the lived experiences of Asian and Asian/American women across transpacific contexts, PANAAWTM critically examined the impacts of migration, displacement, and global economic structures on Asian, Asian/American, and Pacific Islander women, crafting theological responses that were both contextually grounded and globally attuned.¹⁵ Given the increasing brutalities and impunities of US military presence in Asia and the Pacific, panels included discussions about the ways in which Asian and Pacific Islander women experienced sexual and gendered violence perpetuated by US soldiers. These conversations were central to the eighteenth PANAAWTM Conference (2003), "Building Bridges: Texts, Interpretation, and Crossing Cultures for Pacific and Asian North American Women," which explored how scriptural interpretation and cultural crossing shaped theological discourse. Similarly, the nineteenth PANAAWTM Conference (2004), "Embodying the Spirit: Culture, Justice, Wholeness," emphasized the cultural and spiritual wholeness of women navigating involuntary migration and displacement.

At the same time, PANAAWTM played a key role in institutional and scholarly advancements that further established Asian and Asian/American feminist theological and religious studies discourse.¹⁶ In 2002, several PANAAWTM members helped organize the first Consultation on Asian North American Theologies at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) annual meeting, a pivotal moment in the recognition of Asian North American theological and religious studies scholarship. Additionally, PANAAWTM leaders were instrumental in launching initiatives such as the Asian Pacific American Religions Research Initiative (APARRI), further expanding the organization's impact on Asian/American religious studies.

As the organization expanded its reach, PANAAWTM also strengthened its partnerships with national and transnational theological networks, including the Institute for Leadership Development and Study of Pacific and Asian North American Religion (PANA) at the Pacific School of Religion, the Congress of

Asian Theologians, and the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). These collaborations reinforced PANAAWTM's commitment to transnational feminist theological engagement and its role in global justice movements.

As intersectionality gained wider recognition in feminist theological discourse, PANAAWTM continued to highlight how racism, sexism, classism, ableism, orientalism, and imperialism simultaneously shaped the realities of Asian and Asian/American women. The organization deepened its engagement with transnational feminist perspectives, situating Asian and Asian/American women's struggles within broader global injustices. This trajectory aligns with Nami Kim and W. Anne Joh's argument that Asian/American feminist theologians have moved beyond responding solely to Western feminist theology and now engage broader transnational and postcolonial critiques.¹⁷ This shift was evident in the themes of the twenty-third PANAAWTM Conference (2008), "For Such a Time as This: Empire, Globalization, and the Church," which examined how the global structures of empire intersected with theological work. The following year, the twenty-fourth PANAAWTM Conference (2009), "Freeing Creation: Hope and Labor in Asian and Asian North American Feminist Theology," expanded this focus to include environmental justice, recognizing the disproportionate impact of climate crises on marginalized women globally.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, EVOLVING INTERRELIGIOUS PRAXIS, AND COLLECTIVE WISDOM IN ACTION (2010s)

The 2010s marked a decade of intensified engagement with social movements, expanded interreligious commitments, and a renewed emphasis on mentorship and communal leadership. In response to evolving global and domestic struggles for justice, PANAAWTM continued to convene activist, ministerial, and academic spaces where Asian and Asian/American women could engage pressing issues through feminist, postcolonial, and transnational lenses.

Building on its long-standing commitment to justice and solidarity, PANAAWTM aligned itself with pivotal social movements, including Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, and eco-justice activism.¹⁸ These movements underscored the interconnected nature of racial, gendered, colonial, and environmental struggles, energizing PANAAWTM's commitment to coalition building with fellow anti-racist, feminist, and decolonial movements. For many PANAAWTM members, their experiences of multiplicative oppression resonated deeply with the struggles faced by other women of color in the United States and globally. The twenty-ninth PANAAWTM Conference (2014), "Politics of Solidarity among Women of Color Scholars and Ministers," directly addressed this growing commitment to intersectional justice by fostering cross-racial and interreligious dialogues on activism and theology.

As PANAAWTM deepened its engagement with anti-racist theological work, it also confronted the ways in which Asian and Asian/American feminist

theologians have historically been positioned as auxiliary rather than integral to feminist theological discourse. This marginalization underscored the need for cross-racial coalition building to disrupt dominant racial hierarchies in theological spaces and to center the voices of Asian and Asian/American women as active contributors to feminist and decolonial theological conversations.¹⁹ As it challenged exclusionary frameworks, the organization affirmed its role in amplifying feminist voices of people of color and resisting theological complicity in structural oppressions.

Another key development in this time was the growing intentionality of interreligious engagement within PANAAWTM. While religious plurality has always been a lived reality for many members, the 2010s saw a more explicit commitment to interreligious attention and praxis. This included broadening theological discussions beyond Christian frameworks and ensuring that voices from multiple religious and spiritual traditions were fully honored as speakers, contributors, and collaborators. The thirty-third PANAAWTM Conference (2018), “Embodied Selves: Interreligious Engagements,” reflected this shift by focusing on the role of interreligious collaboration in feminist theological discourse. Recognizing the role of religious traditions in both perpetuating and resisting systemic oppression, PANAAWTM embraced interreligious engagement as essential to its theological praxis, particularly in addressing shared concerns such as racial justice, gender equity, and ecological sustainability.

Many PANAAWTM members navigating multireligious identities in their personal and professional lives brought perspectives that expanded theological discourse and strengthened relational solidarity across religious traditions and spiritual practices. The organization’s commitment to interreligious praxis also reflected its transnational reach, as members connected with such traditions as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Islam across global contexts. PANAAWTM’s conferences and gatherings encouraged reflection on how Asian and Asian/American women’s interreligious experiences could contribute to more inclusive and justice-oriented theological conversations. While progress was made in moving beyond Christian-centric language and structures, PANAAWTM continues to wrestle with how to more inclusively and expansively reflect the multireligious realities of its members and commitments.²⁰

Relational leadership and intergenerational accompaniment—long central to PANAAWTM’s mission—expanded in scope and intentionality during the 2010s. As members continued to shape academic, ministerial, and activist spaces, the organization deepened its commitment to equipping emerging leaders with the theological, practical, and institutional tools needed to thrive. A key focus during this period was supporting master’s students pursuing PhD /ThD programs through organized mentorship on doctoral program admissions, research, and professional development. The twenty-seventh PANAAWTM Conference (2012), “Abundant Life and Unjust Prosperity,” reflected this investment in nurturing new theological voices to critique economic inequalities and power dynamics across religious and secular contexts.

Additionally, PANAAWTM expanded its mentoring initiatives for early-career faculty, providing guidance on writing, publishing, and navigating tenure/non-tenure tracks to strengthen the presence of Asian and Asian/American women in theological education. The importance of mentorship in ministry and community leadership was also emphasized, particularly in supporting women in churches, chaplaincy, and grassroots organizations. The thirty-second PANAAWTM Conference (2017), “When Women Lead,” underscored the need for theological depth alongside practical leadership skills, recognizing that future leaders must be prepared to navigate complex social and institutional realities. Through intergenerational mentorship, PANAAWTM continued to cultivate leadership that is not solely about professional advancement but deeply rooted in communal support, theological imagination, and justice-orienting engagement. Fostering relationships between emerging and established scholars, clergy, and activists, PANAAWTM’s legacy of feminist leadership is one grounded in solidarity, resilience, and the evolving wisdom of collective praxis.

RESILIENCE, ADAPTATION, AND NEW DIRECTIONS (2020s)

In 2019, PANAAWTM took a significant step toward long-term sustainability by transitioning from a grassroots collective to a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. This transition formalized the organization’s structure in pursuit of financial and institutional stability to support its expanding programs and future mission while remaining committed to its grassroots ethos.

As the 2020s unfolded, PANAAWTM demonstrated resilience and adaptability in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the alarming rise in anti-Asian violence and racism. The pandemic not only created a public health crisis but also exacerbated existing racial, gender, and economic inequities, intensifying the urgency of PANAAWTM’s work in addressing the intersections of race, gender, class, and health. Recognizing these challenges, the organization embraced a strategic shift to virtual platforms, ensuring that members remained connected and engaged. Initially born out of necessity, this pivot has evolved into a long-term strategy, enabling PANAAWTM to continue and reimagine its transnational engagement.

Virtual spaces became vital for theological reflection, dialogue, and collective healing, particularly in response to the surge of anti-Asian violence. Between March 2020 and March 2022, Stop AAPI [Asian American and Pacific Islander] Hate reported more than eleven thousand incidents of anti-Asian hate crimes, with nearly 62 percent of victims being women²¹—a reality that deeply impacted PANAAWTM members. In response to these crises, including the 2021 Atlanta spa shootings that claimed the lives of eight people, six of whom were Chinese and Korean women body-care spa workers, PANAAWTM organized online gatherings such as the public forum “Cross-Racial Solidarity at Times Like These.” These events

offered spaces for collective mourning, care, and solidarity, affirming the necessity of organizations like PANAAWTM to support community members during times of isolation and trauma.

Beyond creating healing spaces, PANAAWTM leveraged digital platforms to expand its mentoring and leadership programs, significantly increasing participation. Colleagues from Asia were able to join more accessibly, enhancing cross-border collaboration and amplifying diverse perspectives within global theological conversations.²² This strategic expansion was reflected in events like the PBS documentary discussion on Asian Americans featuring producer Renee Tajima-Peña and a 2021 webinar session introducing Asian Women's Theological Networks. These initiatives strengthened transnational feminist theological dialogue and reinforced PANAAWTM's role as a bridge builder among feminist theological communities across Asia and North America. Thematic emphases of recent conferences further illustrate this evolving strategy. For instance, the 2023 conference, "Rising and Rooting: Flourishing Communities," explored themes of resilience and solidarity, highlighting the ways Asian and Asian/American women sustain flourishing communities amid systemic challenges.²³ PANAAWTM's growth is also evident in the increasing size and diversity of its gatherings. The 2025 conference, marking the organization's fortieth anniversary, was its largest to date, with 114 registered participants and 15 local volunteers. Attendees included students, academics, ministers, spiritual care practitioners, and institutional leaders, with strong representation from doctoral and master's programs across North America and Asia. Participants identified with over a dozen different ethnic and national origins, including Burmese, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Malaysian, Palestinian, Singaporean, and Vietnamese heritages, as well as biracial Asian identities and Asian adoptees. This abundant diversity—ethnically, linguistically, and vocationally—demonstrates PANAAWTM's continued relevance and expansion as a transnational feminist theological community. Compared to its first conference in 1985, which gathered a small number of pioneering Asian and Asian/American women theologians, this growth represents a significant accomplishment in both depth and reach.²⁴

Recognizing the importance of this expanded reach, PANAAWTM committed to alternating between virtual and in-person conferences post-pandemic. This hybrid model promotes continued cross-border solidarity and theological engagement and reflects the organization's adaptability to evolving challenges. By strategically leveraging both in-person and digital platforms, PANAAWTM has positioned itself to sustain its mission and extend its influence in new and innovative ways.

PANAAWTM's resilience in the face of a global pandemic and rising gendered and racial violence exemplifies its enduring commitment to centering minoritized voices, fostering healing, and advancing justice. It also signals a long-term vision for engaging global issues through theological innovation, collaborative networks, and expansive leadership.

PANAAWTM'S THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS REFLECTED IN ITS COLLECTIVE PUBLICATIONS

PANAAWTM's contributions to Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theologies are clearly reflected in its collective publications, marking significant developments in the organization's theological and scholarly engagements. These anthologies document evolving methodological approaches, theological inquiries, and activist commitments, shaping discourses within theology and religious studies while providing critical resources for scholars, students, and practitioners. By facilitating multivocal engagement and transnational dialogues, these works advance intersectional, transnational, postcolonial, decolonial, and feminist perspectives, widening the landscape of theological scholarship.

Published in celebration of PANAAWTM's twentieth anniversary, *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology* (Westminster John Knox, 2007) is a foundational effort to amplify the religious and theological voices of Asian and Asian/American women. Centering lived experience as a vital source of theological insight, the volume challenges dominant paradigms that have marginalized non-White and non-Western epistemologies. Exploring themes of race, gender, sexuality, migration, colonialism, and faith, it illustrates how culturally grounded spiritual practices and community experiences shape theological reflection and create a space for Asian and Asian/American feminist theologies and religious studies.

A decade later, *Leading Wisdom: Asian and Asian North American Women Leaders* (Westminster John Knox, 2017), published for PANAAWTM's thirtieth anniversary, examined leadership as a site of agency, resistance, and transformation within diasporic and transnational contexts. Through personal narratives and scholarly analyses, contributors address the racial, gendered, and cultural barriers Asian and Asian/American women face and the leadership models they have cultivated in response. By highlighting relational and feminist wisdom traditions, the anthology expands theological discourse on leadership beyond hierarchical and institutional frameworks.

Asian and Asian American Women in Theology and Religion: Embodying Knowledge (2020), published in commemoration of PANAAWTM's thirty-fifth anniversary, deepens the focus on lived experience and embodied ways of knowing. Through personal narratives, ethnographic accounts, and collective reflections, contributors examine how social location shapes theological articulations. The volume embraces multireligious, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary approaches, engaging shifting identities and emerging paradigms in Asian and Asian/American feminist theologies.

The most recent publication, *Embodying Antiracist Christianity: Asian American Theological Resources for Just Racial Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), responds to the rise in anti-Asian racism, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, by critically interrogating theological, biblical, and ecclesial structures that reinforce racial injustice. Situating anti-Asian racism within broader frameworks

of anti-Black racism and settler colonialism, the volume calls for a critical reexamination of theological doctrines, church leadership structures, and biblical hermeneutics that have historically upheld racial and gendered oppression. This work reflects PANAAWTM's anti-racist, intersectional, and justice-driven theological commitments.

These publications collectively illustrate PANAAWTM's role in reshaping contemporary religious and theological thought by broadening the scope of feminist, postcolonial, and transnational theological discourse. Through them, PANAAWTM continues to foster transformative approaches to theology and religious studies that engage both scholarly inquiry and lived experience.

SHAPING PANAAWTM'S FUTURE: VISION, LEGACY, AND TRAJECTORIES

As PANAAWTM has marked its fortieth anniversary, the organization finds itself at a pivotal moment to reflect on its contributions and envision its future trajectory. Over the decades, PANAAWTM has become a central force in theological knowledge production, leadership development, and social justice advocacy, with influence spanning academic and religious spaces. Moving forward, the organization has the opportunity to expand its transnational engagements, deepen solidarity with minoritized communities, and reimagine theological education and praxis to address contemporary global challenges.

We hope this book plays a role in moving forward this work and bridging gaps between the academy and religious communities, particularly within the context of Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theological praxis. As a central hub of Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theological thought, PANAAWTM has deep connections to both academic and ecclesiastical settings, making it ideally positioned to foster dialogue and collaboration between the two spheres, and more.²⁵ This book critically reflects on the contributions of Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theologies, documenting and analyzing its significant impact on theological education and ministerial practices while also identifying innovative pathways for future development. By ensuring that the theological insights generated within the academy are translated into transformative practices within the church and spiritual communities, this book addresses a crucial need for more inclusive, just, and relevant theological resources. The book is especially critical as it addresses the ongoing challenges faced by women and nonbinary people of Asian heritage in navigating the complex intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, citizenship/migration, and culture.

The four coeditors come from different walks of life but share a common bond: we have all been mentored and nurtured by PANAAWTM. Contributors are individuals engaged in ministry and/or theological education as chaplains, pastors, activists, community workers, and scholar-teachers who are confronting

systemic barriers within faith communities and higher education. The book offers resources essential for tackling the pervasive culture of White dominance in denominations, theological schools, and universities, as well as the internal struggles within ethnic-specific and pan-ethnic communities regarding gender and sexual identities.

This book is divided into four sections. Following our introduction, section I, “Trailblazers of Transformation,” documents the foundational narratives of key trailblazing figures in PANAAWTM’s history and formation, also known as foremothers, and their contributions to Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theologies. Chapters in this section are based on oral history interviews conducted by the authors. Through personal, creative, and diverse approaches to biographical sketches and reflections, the five chapters engage in oral traditions rooted in feminist theo-poetics.

Jin Young Choi writes a tribute to the life and legacy of Gale A. Yee, a third-generation Chinese American and feminist biblical scholar. Choi traces Yee’s autobiographical journey through personal reflection, institutional history, and theological insight, giving special attention to Yee’s feminist and Asian/American consciousness, role in pioneering minoritized biblical criticism, and unwavering commitment to justice. Highlighting Yee’s vulnerability and embodiment of inner freedom, Choi reflects on how Yee’s legacy challenges future generations to persevere with courage, joy, and communal solidarity.

Sumlut Ban Htang reflects on the trailblazing arcs of Kwok Pui-lan’s critical postcolonial feminist theological imagination in the fields of theology, religions, and faith communities of Asian heritage and beyond. Noting Kwok’s focus on Asian women’s agency, spirituality, postcolonial biblical studies and theology, interreligious engagement, and planetary solidarity, Htang makes connections between Kwok’s scholarship and her lifelong engagement with grassroots movements that have paved the path for a transnational prophetic assemblage that is cross-cultural/national, multivocal, multidirectional, and heterogeneous in nature. Htang demonstrates how Kwok embodies liberative praxis and makes space for resilient, interwoven stories from the margins.

Grace Y. Kao writes about Rita Nakashima Brock, a founding foremother of PANAAWTM, world-renowned feminist theologian, award-winning author, organizational founder, movement chaplain, and public voice. Culling from Brock’s extensive and rich backstory, Kao articulates five crucial aspects of Brock’s professional life and legacy: her unlikely path to embracing Christianity, the decisive difference mentors made in her life, her commitment to social activism and alleviating suffering, her involvement in feminist networks, and her resilient and pioneering spirit that creates pathways for others to succeed. Excerpting Brock’s stories, Kao poignantly illustrates the active, expansive, and boundary-crossing landscapes of Brock’s journey.

AHyun Lee tunes into the soundscape of Jung Ha Kim’s leadership. Kim is a founding foremother of PANAAWTM, feminist scholar-practitioner, sociologist, activist, researcher, and community research organizer who has shaped

Korean/Korean-American women's leadership across academic, ecclesial, and transnational contexts. Lee uses audio grammar to explore key vignettes that demonstrate Kim's example of how audible agency, turn-taking leadership, and mix-over mic design cultivate durable, justice-oriented community-making.

kristine chong engages in an intergenerational dialogue and translation of Su Yon Pak's journey and texts across time, shared lineages, and PANAAWTM community. The chapter is guided by Pak's experiences as a daughter, immigrant, educator, administrator, spiritual director, and leading voice in the field of chaplaincy education and interreligious spiritual formation. Weaving in and interpolating Pak's voice and writings, chong writes letters and channels queer futurities through immersing in echolocate histories, hauntings, lineages, kinship, outings, and transgenerational care practices.

Section 2 of this book, "Collective Healing and Communal Wisdom," explores how Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theologies take shape within communities living under conditions of trauma, precarity, and ongoing structural harm. Moving beyond individualistic models of healing, the chapters foreground communal practices of remembrance, care, survival, and relational belonging. Healing is not framed as closure or resolution but as a sustained, shared practice through which communities resist erasure, nurture resilience, and generate wisdom amid histories of colonialism, racism, migration, gendered oppression, ecological crisis, and political violence.

Within these contexts, care emerges not as heroic intervention but as a disciplined, communal practice embedded in ordinary life. In a world experienced by many as an "apocalypse now," marked by ecological devastation, political instability, and social fragmentation, healing often takes the form of repetitive, unglamorous, and largely invisible labor: cultivation, maintenance, accompaniment, and attentiveness. Challenging theological frameworks that privilege extraordinary action, this section highlights the moral and spiritual significance of everyday practices that sustain life. Care, reframed as a shared discipline rooted in situated knowledge and collective responsibility, becomes a practice of endurance that resists burnout, disposability, and despair.

Wong Wai Ching Angela's chapter centers on remembering as a theological practice of resistance in contexts where pain is rendered unspeakable and forgetting is politically enforced. Drawing from East Asian histories shaped by colonialism, authoritarian governance, and intergenerational trauma, Wong argues that collective remembrance of pain, through gatherings, oral histories, and mutual accompaniment, functions as a communal spiritual practice that resists erasure, sustains sanity, and keeps hope alive. Remembering, in this account, is inseparable from healing, as it creates space for shared meaning-making and orients communities toward resurrection and renewed life even when conditions of oppression persist.

Septemmy E. Lakawa's chapter turns to Indonesian women's embodied narratives of racism, trauma, and resistance to reimagine healing as an intercultural feminist theological practice. By "unencrypting" racism, naming forms of

othering that are normalized, silenced, or rendered invisible, Lakawa reveals how women's practices of hospitality, storytelling, and resistance encode collective wisdom for healing that is relational, contextual, and transnational. Healing, in her account, emerges not from erasing difference or conflict but from confronting hidden structures of violence and cultivating communal practices of care across religious and cultural boundaries.

The lived terrain of ministry comes into focus through Eunbee Ham's exploration of Asian and Asian North American women pastors who experience vocational misalignment, constraint, and dissonance. Through the concept of "sacred misfit," Ham reframes survival within inhospitable institutional contexts as a site of theological insight rather than personal failure. Drawing from narratives of pastors navigating racialized, gendered, and cultural marginalization, her chapter highlights how spiritual rhythms, improvisation, boundary setting, and relational networks function as practices of resilience and resistance. Unresolved tension, endurance, and survival are named as sacred dimensions of ministry that generate communal wisdom for sustaining life and vocation in contexts not designed for one's flourishing.

The section concludes with Sandhya Rani Jha's chapter, which extends the conversation on collective healing to questions of communal belonging and democratic life. Drawing on Asian/American feminist theological insights and grounded narratives of cross-cultural community building, Jha argues that democracy depends on relational practices of hospitality, mutual recognition, and shared decision-making across difference. Her chapter demonstrates that collective healing is inseparable from cultivating communities capable of sustaining justice, solidarity, and shared life.

Taken together, these chapters show that communal wisdom is forged not through resolution of crisis but through sustained practices of remembrance, ordinary care, embodied resistance, vocational endurance, and relational belonging. They offer transnational feminist theological resources for communities seeking not only to endure ongoing crises but to sustain life, meaning, and hope in their midst.

Section 3, "Reimagining Theological Discourses," explores innovative theological frameworks, methods, and concepts that challenge traditional paradigms and discourses. It engages with Asian and Asian/American studies, literature, and experiences, examining the intricate intersections of race, gender, sexuality, colonialism, and class within theological and cultural contexts. By broadening the horizon of theological conversation, the four chapters in this section offer fresh perspectives for understanding and engaging theological anthropology, theology of attentive listening, theological imagination, and theological aesthetics in a world that is becoming more interconnected yet polarized and fractured.

B. Yuki Schwartz brings Anne Anlin Cheng's concept of "perihumans" into conversation with two historical figures: Saint Marinos, a medieval monk assigned female at birth, and Flora Belle Jan, a "Chinese flapper" involved in the University of Chicago Survey of Race Relations on the US West Coast. Schwartz

shows how Saint Marinos's story reveals an *imago Dei* that is contingent upon dress and ornament, and the joy derived from the interplay between identity and appearance, which leads to the creation of a theological figure. Calling this figure the "Ornamental Monk," Schwartz constructs a "theological perianthropology," a framework that examines how "thingified" people reveal the divine not in a fixed identity but in the space that exists in the interplay between identity and ornamental coverings.

Min-Ah Cho's chapter examines the transformative potential of silence among women of color through Christian contemplative traditions. Drawing from Gospel narratives of women disciples at Jesus's empty tomb and contemporary experiences of racialized women, Cho challenges assumptions that equate silence with powerlessness and instead proposes that chosen silence can serve as both spiritual practice and political resistance. Arguing for a theology of attentive listening, Cho offers an alternative to belligerent speech, which often distorts authentic experience within oppressive frameworks.

Haruka Umetsu Cho's chapter examines Min Jin Lee's 2017 novel *Pachinko* as a literary case study for reimagining theological liberation and solidarity in East Asian and Asian American contexts. Umetsu Cho argues that rather than framing liberation as linear escape from suffering or solidarity as static allyship, *Pachinko* illuminates liberation within fragile, ephemeral moments of human relationships. Drawing on Rey Chow's analysis of ethnicity and labor in capitalism and Cheryl Kirk-Duggan's rereading of the exodus saga, Umetsu Cho further explores how a literary work can model a constructive theological vision grounded in shared endurance and precarious solidarities.

Reading the works of Korean American poets Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (*Dic-tée*) and Don Mee Choi (*DMZ Colony*), Mihee Kim-Kort's chapter theologizes how Lisa Lowe's frame of "unfaithfulness" is a way to enact alternative forms of belonging. In attending to Cha and Choi's translational politics as a critique of colonialism, American military occupation, and American orientalism and expansionism but also their practices of possession and memory, Kim-Kort considers how these works demonstrate the possibility of another kind of devotion. With what she calls a theo-aesthetics of embodiment, Kim-Kort offers a way to think about how these texts can open up our theological imagination toward a belonging beyond traditional notions of faithfulness.

The last part of this volume, Section 4, "Weaving New Worlds," envisions future directions of Asian and Asian/American transnational feminist theologies in response to global challenges, with an emphasis on creativity, innovation, and speculative theology. Lama Htoi San Lu's chapter addresses challenges in constructing a transpacific feminist theology in the contexts of the United States and Burma/Myanmar, which simultaneously exists as a capitalist democracy and a military dictatorial regime. Theological and moral responsibilities have emerged to address the perpetual violence, silence, and death. Employing multidisciplinary approaches such as transnational, postcolonial, feminist, and womanist lenses, she reads 1 Kings 3:16–28, particularly attending to the two

nameless women, who are prostitutes and mothers and considered as the minor characters within the narrative. Developing a transpacific feminist hermeneutic of co-thriving, this chapter offers fresh perspectives and nuances from the biblical story, critically examining the interlocking nature of oppression as well as the way divine wisdom embodies and manifests within the margins that may lead to a pathway to peace without a militarized face.

Kayko Driedger Hesslein's chapter contributes to the discourse on Asian belonging and identity through the lens of interfaith dynamics, as experienced by a half-Japanese Christian mother of mostly European-descent Jewish children. Introducing the experiences of a mother-in-diaspora, complementing the predominant "daughter of immigrant" narratives found in Asian feminist theology, this chapter complicates the historical and contemporary power dynamics between Christianity and Judaism by highlighting the nuanced intersectionality of ethnic and religious identities. This chapter builds a foundation for future work on "relying on the stranger," especially when the "strange" community is foreign to the self but a site of belonging for one's own children, emphasizing the fluid and multifaceted nature of familial and religious relationships constantly emerging in diaspora contexts.

Christine J. Hong's chapter discusses Christian ancestor veneration as a way to re-ground Christianity in a Korean diasporic environment. Moving away from the negative stereotypes associated with syncretism emphasized by many streams of theological thought, she considers how Christianity, interpreted through ancestor veneration and folk magic practices, might embrace both embodied Christian theologies and *Mugyo* in authentic and holistic ways. This essay wrestles with the decolonial practice and commitment of both/and in Asian/American spirituality and specifically Korean American Christianity and *Mugyo*.

Laura Mariko Cheifetz's chapter discusses stewardship as an organizing principle for the future of Asian/American transnational feminist theologies. Rather than using global challenges, history, stories, and customs as extractive resources for developing future directions for theologies, the chapter engages in the idea of stewarding creative resistance, stories, histories, and cultural ways of being as worthy of careful stewardship in the course of nurturing a rich foundation for the flourishing of the theological ground.

SECTION ONE TRAILBLAZERS OF TRANSFORMATION

Chapter 1

Becoming a Woman Warrior

The Life and Legacy of Gale A. Yee

JIN YOUNG CHOI

IN TRACING THE LEGACY OF GALE A. YEE

As PANAAWTM celebrates its fortieth anniversary in 2025, it is a privilege to reflect on the life and legacy of Dr. Gale A. Yee (余蓮秀)—one of our foremothers and a trailblazing Asian American feminist biblical scholar.¹ Gale is the Nancy W. King Professor Emerita of Biblical Studies at Episcopal Divinity School (EDS), where she taught from 1998 to 2017. Prior to her time at EDS, she served as a professor at the University of St. Thomas. She earned her PhD in Theology and Old Testament from the University of St. Michael's College at the Toronto School of Theology in 1985. She received an honorary Doctor of Divinity (DD) degree from Virginia Theological Seminary in 2020.

Over the course of her distinguished career, Gale has authored six books, edited or coedited ten volumes, and published more than sixty articles across edited collections, scholarly journals, and biblical commentaries. In 2019, she made history as the first Asian American and the first woman of color to serve as president of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL).² Since 1998, she has also served as a dedicated faculty advisor for PANAAWTM.

While I have engaged deeply with Gale's scholarly work in both research and teaching, I have also had the unique privilege of exploring the personal dimensions of her life and contributions. I have nominated her for mentorship awards, written tributes in her honor, and authored an academic essay that centers her groundbreaking scholarship and her influence within the guild.³ Given the availability of her autobiographical writings, I do not seek to duplicate that content here.⁴

Instead, this reflection marks a different kind of tribute, honoring her legacy within PANAAWTM and beyond. I aim to remember Gale not only for her scholarly contributions but also for her character, ingenuity, and enduring commitment. Our shared vocation as biblical scholars, historians, and literary and cultural critics compels us to attend not only to the biblical texts and their histories but also to the contexts in which they are interpreted and lived.

In this particular context of PANAAWTM, I engage the living text of Gale A. Yee, a respected and embodied human being whose "herstory" has shaped our field and community. Even before the launch of the Oral [Her]story Project, PANAAWTM itself has functioned as a living archive, preserving the memories and legacies of our foremothers. Through this project, we seek not only to recollect and record these memories but to restore, honor, and pass them on to future generations. In this spirit, I approach Gale's legacy within a web of multifaceted contexts: the culture that shaped her, the academic society she contributed to, and the communities she has nurtured.

FORMATIVE YEARS

Gale A. Yee's early life offers a lens for understanding the depth and direction of her later scholarly work. I have always been struck by how vividly she recalls her upbringing, which was shaped by poverty, racism, and resilience. These early encounters with inequality did not simply inform her worldview, but they forged the intellectual and moral commitments that have marked her legacy.

Gale was born in 1949 in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the Jewish Hospital, to second-generation Chinese American parents. Soon after her birth, her father enlisted in the Navy, and her mother brought her to Chicago. In the urban slums of the city, Gale spent her formative years in a diverse but economically marginalized neighborhood. She grew up alongside Black and Puerto Rican children. There was little thought of identity labels in that space. They were simply kids trying to survive in a world that offered them few comforts and fewer guarantees.

The apartment building she called home was more a constant reminder of systemic neglect than a haven. Gale has described it as teeming with cockroaches and mice. One particular memory she recounts is of her father taking the children out for a drive then returning home and letting them remove their shoes before turning on the lights, triggering the cockroaches to scatter so they could be killed. This story vividly illustrates the daily reality of working-class families of color living under the weight of structural poverty.

After ten years, her family moved into a predominantly white neighborhood. That move might have felt like progress, but it quickly revealed the deep-rooted racial dynamics of the 1960s in America. White flight and redlining transitioned the neighborhood quickly to becoming another segregated space. Thus, the surrounding social reality in which Gale lived remained fraught.

Gale was the eldest of twelve children, a position that carried significant responsibility, especially as the eldest daughter. In many ways, this role demanded the cultivation of leadership, endurance, and care—qualities that would later characterize both her scholarship and her mentorship.

These early experiences, rooted in a stark awareness of racial and economic injustice, laid the groundwork for Gale's critical engagement with the Bible and biblical interpretation. Her formative years offered not only a firsthand education in inequality but also a source of empathy and resistance. They shaped how she would later read biblical texts—not from the center of power but from the margins, in solidarity with those who suffer under empire, patriarchy, and economic oppression.

COURAGE TO LEAVE AND MOVE FORWARD

The burdens Gale carried as the eldest of twelve children in a resource-deprived household were heavy and unrelenting. From an early age, she longed to step beyond the confines of her environment, out of a desire to find a path forward. At sixteen, she began volunteering at Little Company of Mary Hospital, which drew her to medicine as a means to escape the weight of familial responsibility and economic hardship. By eighteen, she left home for good and enrolled in Loyola University's premed program as a new start to her own life.

However, she soon made the bold decision to shift her academic path from premed to English, perhaps because of the influence of her high school English teacher, whose impassioned reading of poetry had once mesmerized her in the classroom. She embraced a different kind of vocation, one that engaged the imagination, language, and meaning-making.

After finishing her MA in New Testament at Loyola University of Chicago, Gale went on to earn her doctoral degree in New Testament studies at the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto. But her scholarly journey did not stop there. During her graduate studies, she participated in the Parables Project, a collaborative endeavor that unexpectedly drew her deeper into Jewish literature. It awakened in her the same intellectual spark she had felt years earlier during that poetry class. This discovery prompted yet another shift—this time from the New Testament to the Hebrew Bible, a move that would prove foundational to her career as a biblical scholar.

Gale's capacity to shift course—intellectually, spiritually, and professionally—was never driven by fear or indecision but by an openness to change and growth. That same courage extended into her religious journey. Raised Catholic, she remained

committed to her faith well into her adult life, even during her early years teaching at the Episcopal Divinity School in Boston. However, the unfolding of the Catholic clergy sex abuse scandal in 1985 deeply unsettled her, prompting critical reflection on the church's institutional failures.

Gale chose to walk toward a more inclusive and life-affirming spiritual home. She embraced the Episcopal Church, where she found a theological space that, in her words, reflected "the full humanity of all persons who worship within it." She brought with her the richness of Catholic tradition, the discipline of historical scholarship, and the poetic sensibility that had long shaped her inner life.

These evolving commitments profoundly influenced her scholarly approach. During a time when historical criticism dominated the field of biblical studies, Gale brought cultural contexts with critical questions to the table. Her interpretations, grounded in lived experience and cultural critique, resisted abstraction and instead asked: Whose voices are missing? Whose stories are suppressed? Who is reading, and from where?

In each turn, Gale showed that personal, intellectual, and spiritual growth sometimes requires a change in direction. Her earlier life tells a story not of leaving things behind but of carrying them forward, that is, transformed and repurposed for the journey ahead.

FEMINISM, ASIAN AMERICANNESSE, AND THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

Gender or ethnicity alone does not automatically lead to feminist insight or racial awareness. This was certainly true for Gale. Her feminist and Asian American consciousness did not emerge solely from her personal background but rather through engagement with communities, institutions, and movements that challenged her—and others—to think critically about identity, power, and justice.

For Gale, this dual awakening took shape in the 1990s, at a time when discursive and institutional transformations were gaining momentum. It was in these overlapping contexts that she began to develop a deeper awareness of what it meant to be both a feminist and an Asian American scholar within the academy, the church, and society at large.

This awakening was not isolated; it was historically situated. In the decades prior, the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the women's liberation movements of the 1960s through the 1980s had already begun reshaping the political and cultural landscape of North America. Women's studies programs were emerging in universities. Only by the 1970s had feminist theology become a distinct field, thanks to the pioneering work of theologians such as Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether. In the late 1970s, Phyllis Trible brought feminist critique into the field of biblical studies, laying the groundwork for what would become a vital area of scholarship.

However, the broader field of biblical studies, particularly within the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)—the oldest and largest academic guild in the discipline—was slow to integrate these shifts. Institutional structures lagged behind the realities of an increasingly diverse academic community. It was not until the 1990s that the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession (CSWP) and the Committee on Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession (CUREMP) were formed within the SBL to begin addressing these gaps.

Gale was actively involved in both initiatives. In CSWP, she was one of the few members of Asian descent; in CUREMP, she was the only woman among a group of racially marginalized scholars. She also participated in the Ethnic Chinese Biblical Colloquium (ECBC), where she remained one of the only women in a predominantly male space at that time. These overlapping experiences reflect the complex intersections of race, gender, and power that Gale would later explore in her scholarship.

Importantly, Gale's intellectual background in English literature, especially her exposure to critical theory, made her particularly receptive to feminist, Marxist, and postcolonial criticisms and more. As she turned toward feminist criticism in the 1980s, she was not only ready but eager to contribute. From 1987 to 1995, she served as chair of SBL's Women in the Biblical World section, helping to shape one of the first sustained platforms for feminist work in the guild.

Yet it was not institutional roles alone that nurtured her identity as an Asian American feminist scholar. Her racial and cultural consciousness crystallized through community, especially through her relationships with other women of color in theological studies, including those whom she met through PANAAWTM. These connections did more than offer sisterhood and support. They helped her see herself more clearly within the broader matrix of marginality, agency, and power.

Gale's emergence as a feminist and Asian American biblical scholar is a story of relational formation that unfolded not in isolation but through critical engagement with communities and institutional transformation.⁵ Her journey shows how racial and feminist consciousness are cultivated through intentional practice, mutual support, and a willingness to confront oppression both within and beyond the academy.

CRITICAL ENCOUNTERS AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Gale A. Yee had already established herself as a tenured professor and an emerging leader in feminist biblical scholarship around the mid-1990s. Yet she remained open to new challenges that would stretch her thinking and deepen her commitments. In 1994, an unexpected invitation became a pivotal turning point for her relationship with PANAAWTM.

Asian feminist theologian Kwok Pui-lan, then teaching at EDS, invited Gale to an AAR session on the politics of identity. That gathering prompted Gale to

reflect more critically on how her Asian American identity intersected with her academic work. The session also introduced her to a growing network of Asian American women scholars in religion, including Rita Nakashima Brock, a theologian based in Minnesota; Mary Foskett, a biblical scholar and Asian American adoptee; and Jung Ha Kim, a sociologist—all of whom she had not encountered through SBL.

Following that meeting, Rita invited Gale to join the 50 Years of Asian America project. As Gale later reflected in our interview, she began to get “more involved in Asian America, which [she] really didn’t know.” This honest admission speaks to how racial and ethnic identity are not always automatic sources of connection or awareness but can become powerful points of engagement through relationship and learning.

The turning point came in 1998, when Gale attended her first PANAAWTM meeting in Toronto. At that gathering, Pui-lan was searching for a qualified graduate student to direct a new program in Studies in Feminist Liberation Theologies at EDS. Though Gale was already a tenured full professor at the University of St. Thomas, she applied—not as a fallback but as a deliberate move toward challenge and growth. Her explanation was refreshingly direct: “Well, I think I just wanted a new challenge.”

While she had previously served as director of women’s studies for a five-college consortium in Minnesota, she found that position limiting within a predominantly White institutional framework. By contrast, EDS, committed to anti-racist, anti-oppressive education, offered the kind of justice-oriented academic environment where she could make a more meaningful impact. After completing her initial two-year contract at EDS, Gale “hit the ground,” in her own words, and was soon appointed tenured full professor. It was during this time that her deep engagement with PANAAWTM truly began to flourish.

In 1999, she hit the ground again, this time by organizing the PANAAWTM meeting at Stony Point, New York. That same year, PANAAWTM received a Wabash grant through EDS, transforming the institution into a hub for theological education by and for Asian and Asian North American women. Seven PANAAWTM faculty gathered at EDS to develop resources and curricula that would challenge dominant paradigms in theology and biblical studies.

Gale played a central role in organizing subsequent PANAAWTM conferences, including major gatherings at EDS in 2002 and 2010, and later, even after her retirement, at Chapman University in 2018. Her commitment to collaboration, community, and knowledge production has remained steadfast throughout the decades.

As a longtime board member and mentor within PANAAWTM, Gale has supported countless Asian and Asian American students and scholars. Her mentorship transcended racial, generational, and gender boundaries. She has nurtured early-career faculty and students of color across multiple lines of identity. Her profound impact as a mentor was formally recognized by SBL’s CSWP in 2016, and again by CUREMP in 2021.

Her journey through PANAAWTM and EDS demonstrates a consistent ethic: to say yes to challenge, to move toward communities that resist marginalization, and to build spaces where others can thrive. Gale did not merely take on new roles. As she embraced changes, she helped transform the institutions and people around her.

STRENGTH IN VULNERABILITY

Dr. Gale A. Yee is widely recognized as one of the most accomplished scholars in the field of biblical studies. Yet, what many, including myself, admire even more than her scholarship is her profound courage to speak openly about her vulnerability, particularly in spaces where strength is often expected to mask struggle.

In 2023, Gale was invited to speak at the CUREMP luncheon during the SBL annual meeting, alongside two other former SBL presidents of color. There, she shared with rare honesty her experience of serving as the first Asian American and first woman of color president of SBL. Despite her well-earned sense of pride in her scholarship and qualifications, she revealed to the room that she struggled with imposter syndrome, the feeling that she had been chosen not solely for her merits but to fulfill a DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) narrative.

What made this confession so powerful was her refusal to treat it as a private shame. Instead, she identified this feeling as the result of internalized oppression, a psychological consequence of navigating a White-dominated academy and society for decades. By naming it, she not only resisted its power over her but helped others in the room, particularly the emerging scholars and students of color who may have felt similarly alone in their doubts.

Even more moving than her speech was what followed. I saw her sitting at a lunch table with younger scholars of color, offering advice, encouragement, and presence. That scene in which a former SBL president choose to sit with students and listen to them demonstrated generous leadership. Gale later confessed she had little memory of the event, having been hospitalized shortly afterward with transient global amnesia, a sudden and temporary loss of memory likely brought on by the physical and emotional stress of the moment.

Many would be reluctant to share such an episode, but Gale was not. In her view, this was not something to be hidden or seen as a personal failing. Instead, it was a part of her story, a reminder that resilience includes vulnerability and that healing and strength can emerge precisely from moments of weakness. Her openness about both her inner doubts and her health challenges has inspired many minoritized scholars to accept their own humanity and to find courage and community in the midst of professional and personal uncertainty.

Now retired (though not really!), Gale continues to live out her commitment to service and justice. At Pilgrim Place, a progressive retirement community in Claremont, California, she has been actively involved in multiple committees, including those focused on communications and the library. She also received training at and serves with the city's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). In January 2025, she provided direct aid to people displaced by the devastating Los Angeles fires.

Her professional engagement has not waned either. Gale remains active in writing, teaching, and speaking, always grounded in the same values that have defined her career: integrity and a deep commitment to those on the margins. Whether mentoring a young scholar, assisting a fire victim, or writing a new piece of scholarship, she continues to live a life marked by presence and principled leadership.

GALE'S VISION FOR PANAAWTM'S FUTURE

As PANAAWTM grows into its fifth decade, Gale expresses both confidence in its future and awareness of future challenges. She trusts that the organization is in good hands, led by the very generations she and other foremothers have mentored and supported. She continues to have their back and finds hope in the new energy and digital connectivity the organization has embraced through webinars, social media, and shared resources. Yet Gale is not one to be content with surface-level progress. Even as she celebrates these leadership and technological developments, she pushes for a deeper, more intentional vision that engages political realities and economic disparities within and beyond Asian and Asian American communities.

First, Gale urges PANAAWTM members, particularly those in the United States, to become more directly involved in national political issues, just as their counterparts in Asian countries are engaged in their own regional contexts. Her concern is particularly focused on the interwoven threats of anti-Asian racism, white supremacy, and Christian nationalism, which she identifies as intensifying under the Trump administration and persisting into the present.

While she does not dictate a specific course of action for the organization, she models what this political engagement can look like—local protests, letter writing to senators, and participation in grassroots activism. In her view, scholars and religious leaders must not only interpret the world but also be part of transforming it. Her call is not just for intersectional reflection but for intersectional action rooted in the real consequences these ideologies have on people's lives.

Second, Gale challenges PANAAWTM to take poverty seriously, especially within Asian and Asian American communities. This concern grows from both her own experience growing up in poverty and her scholarly commitment to liberationist frameworks. She stresses that talking about intersectionality is no longer enough if we fail to confront the actual material conditions that shape the

lives of working-class and poor Asian Americans and immigrants. She reminds us that class diversity within Asian communities is often overlooked in the push to speak about identity and that theological and academic work must address the economic injustices many in our communities face.

In addition to her call to political engagement and attention to poverty among Asian Americans, Gale urges us to rethink identity beyond the model minority myth. She holds a unique position among PANAAWTM's elders: she is a third-generation Asian American, born and raised in the United States, with English as her first language and a professional career forged entirely within American institutions. Her self-understanding complicates the often-binary framing of Asian Americans as either "model minorities" or "perpetual foreigners."⁶ "I am not a model minority. I never was," she says. "But I do feel that I'm a perpetual foreigner."

This nuanced distinction reflects her recognition of both relative privilege and enduring exclusion. She resists being read through the lens of the model minority stereotype, not because she is disconnected from Asian American identity but because her experience challenges simplistic categorization. At the same time, she critiques how Asian Americans themselves have sometimes co-opted the model minority myth to gain proximity to Whiteness, distancing themselves from Black communities and reinforcing anti-Blackness. Her position calls for critical reflection on how racial constructions are not only imposed but also internalized and reproduced, even within our own communities.

As PANAAWTM looks to the future, it welcomes new generations of scholars, pastors, practitioners, and activists, many of whom may not identify or relate to their minoritized race/ethnicity or gender as their predecessors did yet are conscious of the complexities and complicatedness of their belonging in America. Gale's insights, as a third-generation descendant of Chinese immigrants, offer a necessary reminder. Asian American communities are not homogeneous, and any lasting movement must be capacious enough to hold complexity while remaining committed to justice.

Her insistence on solidarity across racial and class lines is not just political, but it is theological, ethical, and personal. It reflects a vision of PANAAWTM not simply as a historical organization but as a living, evolving community, responsible to the most vulnerable among us and accountable to a larger moral horizon.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION

Gale A. Yee has offered so much practical wisdom to the next generation of PANAAWTM. But what stays with me most deeply is her call to persevere in our theological journeys, even as we face intensifying personal, institutional, and political challenges. When I reflect on my own path, I recognize that I have been walking along a trail Gale helped to blaze. At SBL, for instance, she was a

founding member of the Asian and Asian American Hermeneutics group. Two decades later, I cochaired its steering committee. She served as general editor of the *Semeia* series; I later joined its editorial board. While Gale was pioneering minoritized criticism in the 1980s and building frameworks for Asian American biblical interpretation in the 1990s, I stepped into those same conversations as they continued to unfold.

Yet, as she laments, historical criticism remains dominant while minoritized criticism still struggles to make a real impact within the guild. She knows that the persistence of Whiteness in biblical scholarship is not merely about race—it is also about power, complicity, and silence, especially around issues like the Palestinian struggle. In my experience, some of the most courageous voices come from women of color, transnational feminists, and scholars from the Global South, who take risks to stand with the oppressed.

Gale has never hesitated to speak uncomfortable truths. She has never spoken to please White audiences, and she understands the risks that emerging scholars, especially those who are Asian, Black, Latinx, queer, or otherwise marginalized, must navigate. Her commitment has always been one of solidarity and fierce support.

What I have ultimately learned from Gale is that the opposite of fear is not boldness but inner freedom. It is this freedom that gives us the strength to persevere. There is one image of Gale that captures this for me: her dancing. Whether at a PANAAWTM conference or a celebratory gathering at the SBL meeting, when she dances, there is a visible joy, a release, a freedom of the body that resists despair. In the midst of precarious lives and uncertain futures, her movement reminds us that liberation is not only a goal for our communities. It is something we can live, feel, and embody, here and now.

Gale teaches us not only to speak truth but to move through the world with courage, compassion, and joy. And in doing so, she reminds us that our struggles are not the whole story and that we can still dance, still breathe, still dream, even as we fight. As PANAAWTM enters its next chapter, we carry forward not only Gale's scholarship but her spirit of freedom, resilience, humility, and humor. That spirit will continue to guide us through every step, every risk, and every movement of dancing together.