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Becoming Scholars and Advocates

Teresa Chavez Saucedo

San Francisco Theological Seminary

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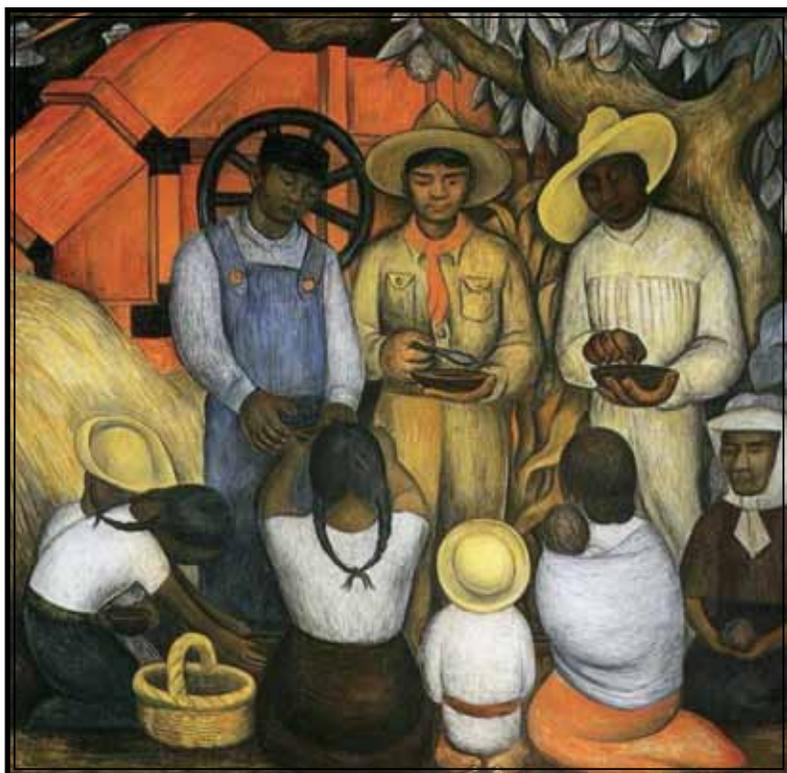
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Honoring Professor Ismael García

INSIGHTS

The Faculty Journal of Austin Seminary



FALL 2012

Donelson • Campbell • Greenway • González
Boursier • Chávez Saucedo • Todd • Armendáriz

Insights

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Becoming Scholars and Advocates

TERESA CHÁVEZ SAUCEDA

Several years ago, I walked into a meeting at the World Council of Churches offices in Geneva, Switzerland, and saw someone who looked familiar. Indeed, it turned out to be a fellow alum from Austin Seminary, Moses Yesudoss. It was one of those wonderful moments of recognition and re-connection. He had only been there for one year while I was there—one of the few MATS students, and had gone back to India.

I found out that he had also gone on to do a PhD in ethics and was working as an advocate for justice for the Dahlit in India. I had gone from Austin to do my PhD in religion and society at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley and was working as Associate for Racial Justice for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Our work had brought us both to this meeting in Geneva, a follow-up to the Global Conference on racism a few years earlier.

We commented on the similar paths our studies and ministry had taken, and how our time at Austin had helped us on this journey. “You know,” Moses said, “there was one class that helped more than anything else in my doctoral studies, do you remember that class on justice we took with Ismael?”

“Of course, yes, yes—it made a huge difference for me too!”

Of course, part of what we shared and found nurtured in that class was our shared passion for justice. And to be honest, I don’t remember much of what we read in that course on justice theory. What I remember is Ismael—week after week, as we discussed another theory—asking, But what is your question? In that course, he taught us critical skills and helped equip us to become scholars and advocates.

As a student, I always felt that Ismael expected a lot, but he also cared a lot. While a student, I had the privilege of going on a January-term study trip to Central America, with Ismael as our faculty advisor. Our days were full, and often emotionally challenging as well. Every evening we gathered to debrief, no matter how

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The Reverend Dr. Teresa Chávez Saucedá (MDiv’88), serves as chaplain at the UC, Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, California. She has been an advocate, author, and teacher in racial justice and Latina/o theology for more than thirty years, including serving as the former associate for Racial Justice and Advocacy in the PC(USA). She earned the PhD from the Graduate Theological Union after receiving her MDiv from Austin Seminary.

our criticism of the ideology of unity and the celebration of a plurality of moral values should not lead us to neglect structures of solidarity and mutuality. It also allowed him to acknowledge that the church, quite literally a gathering of strangers, can only fulfill God's purposes through interdependence and mutual accountability. Thank you, Dr. Garcia, for reminding us that failure to confront personal shortcomings is to deny that God works in the hearts of men and women. Thank you, also, for reminding us that failure to confront issues of social justice alienates believers from their worldly responsibilities, facilitates theology's submission to the secular dogma of privatized religion, and, perhaps worst of all, traps Christian ethics in the cage of moral ecclesiocentrism, a space wherein a domesticated and anemic church must necessarily fail to realize its call to be a servant in the process of creating a more inclusive and loving world. Godspeed. We wish you nothing but the best. ☸

Scholars and Advocates

Continued from page 31

late! What did you see? What did you hear? What did you feel? How does this help you understand God? Your faith? And even when your body was so tired you didn't think you could think, the conversation was rich; the experience, transforming.

As a colleague, I value the fact that he demands even more of himself than he does his students! His groundbreaking work in *Dignidad: Ethics Through Hispanic Eyes* is an invaluable contribution to the body of U.S. Latino theology that I have used in my own writing and teaching.

As a friend, I value his integrity and his humor. My husband and I remember great meals and conversations with him and his family, late into the night, rich with laughter. And we treasure the black and white photos he took and printed of Leo's graduation from the LBJ School of Public Affairs. Another talent and gift he shared with us! ☸