



RACIAL ETHNIC MULTICULTURAL NETWORK CONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 3-6, 2010
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Living in a Post-Racial Society? Race, Ethnicity, Diversity and Empowerment in Clinical Pastoral Education

REM was a wonderful time for learning and building community! I valued the diverse worship reflections that we shared and was challenged by Professor Miguel A. De. La Torre when he stated, "To be a US Hispanic is to constantly live on the border. Regardless of where a Hispanic lives, they live on the borderland." He described our current circumstances as each multicultural group lives in its own cul-de-sac. He invites us to move into community.

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Learning from a round table community

REM 2010 ushered in an innovative space where participants could engage in inter-ethnic and inter-cultural sharing through break out group sessions. I called them "round table" talks. The passionate voices expressed through REM presenters, Dr. Namsoon Kang and Dr. Miguel A De La Torre, were echoed, communed, and critiqued in these talks. Dr. Kang called this kind of space "holistic presence," where individuals engage in a face-to face dialogue. There were moments participants sat still in pure silence. We yielded to the unspeakable pains and awkwardness of trying to name our journeys in facing the harsh realities of United States immigration history, as well as the global displacement that confronted our immigrant neighbors in struggling with issues of national identity, language, ethnicity, citizenship, law, and human rights. I wrestled with the inadequacy in our understanding of what it meant to "claim one's identity" in our current model of clinical pastoral education methodology. Both presenters embodied marginalized qualities and experiences in their unique contexts *and* demonstrated both powerful courage and resiliency of human spirits that chose to speak the unspeakable. They brought to REM the fullness of themselves as well as integrity and dignity in what they believed.

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Living in Post-Racial Society: A Reflection on REM Invitational

I was opportune to be in the group that was facilitated by Brenda Jackson, from Trinity Hospital, Chicago. As I reminisce my experience of the REM Invitational in San Antonio, I hear Brenda asking the group members to give the reasons of being at REM and then what was stirring in them as they listened to the speakers. My reasons for attending the invitational were two-fold: as a tradition and for revival/renewal. The invitational has always been my place of reconnecting to God, re-evaluating my ministry and relationships and reclaiming who I was and becoming.

But I had some ontological and epistemological questioning as I went through the conference. Engaging the topic was important for me ontologically. I think Dr. Torre, Dr. Kang and Dr. Copeland vehemently theologized, and philosophized ontologically the event and its purpose. The questions were "what does



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it mean to live in post-racial society” or “Is there anything like post-racial?” Post-racial society—does it mean that there is equilibrium, equality and shared power in race relationship in America; or does it refer to the shift in thoughts and actions in race relationship now. I agree with Dr, Copeland that rather post-racial; it is better to say post-racist society although there are individuals, communities and systems within our society that are still racist. However, it is not as powerful as the KK. We have come a long way but need to go more miles. We celebrate the headway made thus far yet there is need for growth; there are growing edges that need to be addressed.

As Dr. Torre indicated until we treat the strangers among us with dignity and justice, we’re far away from the kingdom of God. He was challenging and vocal about system policies that have adversely affected Hispanic immigrants/immigrants as a whole. He brought scripture alive as he talked about the cross-border plight and immigration. For him the marginalized needs a center and alliances with other marginalized people within the society. Dr. Torre does not see hope for post-racial society with system policies geared toward continual marginalization of others.

I also think Dr. Kang’s concept of identity beyond identity of clinical pastoral care-giver was renowned. It was a place of challenge for me. It is where the care giver pushes the envelope to go beyond what may seem himself/herself, the stereotypes and biases. As I become aware of my multiple identities—African, Baptist, black, exile, heterosexual, male etc., I admit that I am not bound by any of them, neither does one of them identifies me wholly. I am me and it’s me the human that is in relationship with others. Because of this concept I’m obliged to cross racial/ethnic boundary; I can intentionally engage others and plant seed of hope, compassion and change. As hope is created, solidarity is built. And when solidarity is built then I can gladly say with Paul Celan, “I am you when I am I.”

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When Rev. Dr. Copeland said, "I do not want to have to disappear to be with you and I do not want you to have to disappear to be with me." I claimed my "Aha" moment. The beauty of REM should be that each of us can bring our whole selves to the table and truly celebrate those spaces that are unique. This year we had opportunity to share in an authentic worship experiences in addition Jewish, Muslim and Christian traditions as well as an intentional time of Sacred Devotion where people came and honored their tradition in ways that were true to them. The presenters represented various cultures and perspectives. I appreciate the work of the REM Elders and plan to be a part of REM's future. REM is relevant, necessary and I am thrilled to be a part of the Network.

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The REM Conference offered me great inspiration for thought and reflection. I was particularly appreciative of the opportunity to meet and converse with other ACPE students and supervisors. This opportunity offered me a variety of different perspectives from those going through and those who have already gone through “the process” of CPE. Over the three days of the conference, I felt as if something was happening inside me as I engaged both the plenary speakers and the CPE Supervisors and students of color. The engagement deepened my own sense of learning theologically, personality wise and educationally. Moreover, learning about the limited presence of African Americans in the history of ACPE and the profound absence of African Americans in the current make-up of ACPE had a profound effect on me and my relationship to the whole CPE process. It connected me to the past accomplishments of African Americans in ACPE and caused in me a deeper appreciation and commitment to the CPE process in particular and ACPE in general. It invoked inside of me feelings of cultural pride and honor, noble obligation, responsibility and spiritual fervor. It allowed me to look at myself in my current process with the thoughts of those who have successfully completed this process before me; to look at the future with the sense of those who will come behind me; and to continue to challenge myself, in prayer and practice, to be the best student, teacher and provider of pastoral care that I can be. I am profoundly grateful for my experience at the REM 2010 conference.

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1. How has your ministry been informed by the REM Invitational Conference?

I would first like to say that it was an honor for me to attend a conference of such. When my Chaplain Manager Steve Miller began to encourage me to try to go to this conference I wasn't too excited about attending. As time began to transpire, the other chaplain residents began to encourage me to think about attending. So I consulted with my wife that I thought it was a good idea that I attend the conference. I really didn't think that I would be approved to attend because I thought that maybe I inquired too late. As time progressed on my Director Dr. Gale Kennebrew-Williams informed me that I was approved, I was excited about the attending.

First of all, the conference was an absolute awesome experience for me. When we first arrived at the hotel the service and hospitality was magnificent. The rooms were breathtaking and the view from the window was a reflective moment. I felt like I needed this time for me to recapture some more edge in the areas of my ministry and self-awareness within my life. REM has made a great influence within my life and my ministry practice. I began to be in awe of the different ethnicity backgrounds of different cultural beliefs, traditions, worship styles, dress codes, and stories about Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) experiences.

It is my desire to make the best of this opportunity and don't take it lightly, but open up my spirit and allow God to purge me in every way possible. When I first came to CPE I had a lot of things going on within myself. I needed a way to vent and relieve myself from old hurts and pains that no one knew anything about. It was my secret and the Lord's. My peers and supervisors have made that possible for me without judging and criticizing me. I can say I'm not where I use to be,



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and certainty not where I'm going. I'm more open to others and their ways of interpreting God. I'm not this critical and judgmental individual anymore. I can except people the way that God has created them. I'm learning how to respect belief systems of others.

This experience has taught me the importance of the love of God and that God is certain and distinct. He made us all different, and through that we must gain the spirit of respect and sensitivity. Multicultural is an artwork that comes from nobody except the creator--God. I'm learning how to relate and how to include myself within other cultures. I wish to educate myself in the interest of many cultures of society. It is important to me that my ministry becomes greater at being universal in every dimension. I want the mainstream way of thinking. If I can become universal in my message, then my ministry can impact the nations for the kingdom of God. Christ was universal in his message, and that's why his ministry touches the masses. I want to become more focused on the ultimate cause, which is humanity. This conference touched my life and my ministry in a positive way.

2. A critical reflection on the various aspects of the conference from the standpoint of its contributions to your CPE experience.

First, I would like to say that I enjoy the worship service. It was a great experience; the experience was kind of different. It was different because I was not familiar to the style of music or worship style, that's what so awesome about God. God is a spirit and they that worship him it must be in spirit and truth. I truly felt the spirit of truth in the hearts of the worship service. God doesn't look on the outward appearance but the heart, and that's what I felt in the worship service.

Professor Miguel A. DeLatorre I thought delivered an awesome lecture. He was anointed and he spoke with much clarity and understanding. He impacted my life when he said, "we Christians must reach out to help other cultures, because we say we love God in whom we don't see, but we see our brothers everyday and not reach out to help each other." I thought that was good because we must serve each other with the love of God. Christ didn't come to be minister to, but to minister. Until we learn ministry is people and people is ministry then we miss the message of God's love.

We must enter dialogue with each other. When I dialogue, I learn about your humanity and not your color. When we use color, we lose people. We can lose people by identifying them by their color. I must learn and know you by your individuality, personality, and your character. This is showing respect to humanity.

I thought the breakout groups were awesome because they gave everyone the opportunity to view their points. One of the guys in the group setting said that we view each other as aliens, but in God's eyesight, we are all humanity. When I think about that, we are all in God's view the same color, which is humanity, and that is love. Love doesn't have a color. We are the apple of God's eye--the elect, the redeemed, and the beloved. That's the way God views his creation. The love of God is when we are transparent with each other. We must understand that relationship is essential if I'm going to understand your cultural background. I must first understand that you are human before I understand your culture. Relationship requires mutuality. If there is a



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breakdown, it is because there is a lack of intimacy in the relationship. How can I relate to your humanity? There must be a restoring in relationship that requires mutuality. Mutuality is the antidote that destroys and kills racism, and it is the healing of humanity.

So this system requires self-awareness and the spirit of listening and sharing. Each and every one of us has a story. If I can share my story, then you can understand my culture. Transparency is a powerful weapon against racism. How are we relating? What is my language saying to you? If you can understand my language, then you can respect my space of time. My sacred space is who I am, and when you enter into my space, you're entering into a new world which is my culture. My culture deserves respect if you're willing to become transparent. If not, then it is a disrespect of my sacred space. This is who I am. I am more than just a man with titles, but I am a human that deserves respect to its fullest dimension. Discrimination is a demoniac force that has dominated our society. How can we as a nation destroy this disease? I must first stop the judging attitude and respect others' abilities and talents. The bible said male nor female we are all one in Christ Jesus. If I judge you, then there is something that's insecure within myself. So I wonder if I see a reflection of likeness of myself within my brother.

In conclusion, the conference made a great impact in opening my eyes to self awareness, equality, social justice and seeing that God is not a God of color but of humanity.

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The Racial Ethnic Multicultural Network Invitational 2010 was exhilarating. The conference prompted attendees to examine the plight of racial/ethnic minorities. Professor Miguel A. De La Torre, Professor Namsoon Kang, and The Reverend Doctor Claudette Copeland keenly integrated scholarly research and genuine passion. In accord with Clinical Pastoral Education, the conference fostered a communal environment conducive for action-reflection learning. It was refreshing being immersed in a setting where diversity was celebrated versus merely tolerated. I look forward to future conferences highlighting proven techniques to becoming a Board Certified Chaplain (*by the Association of Professional Chaplains*) and Certified ACPE Supervisor.

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The theme of the 23rd REM Network Conference was "Living in a Post-Racial Society? Race, Ethnicity, Diversity and Empowerment in Clinical Pastoral Education," issues of critical importance to me, which is why I attended the conference.



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Wednesday, February 3

The conference tables opened at 5:30 p.m. and were manned by staff from ACPE National headquarters in Decatur, Georgia. The doors to the ballroom opened at 6:30 for the opening of the Welcome Reception. Tables were set – four to table – candles – centerpieces – a welcoming atmosphere. Finger foods were set in the center, chips, salsa, and veggie sticks, cheese dip, stuffed jalapenos and roasted veggies on a stick was the fare for the night. Greetings were made by Rev. Dr. Teresa Snorton who challenged us “to stretch beyond our present and with courage reach toward the future.” And the Rev. Dr. Harry E. Simmons, Chair of the Racial, Ethnic Multicultural Network and Co-Chair, 2010 REM Planning Committee said, “we are God’s people standing on the edge of desire seeking depth, clearer understanding, and more meaningful dialogue.” I found Dr. Simmons to be truly charismatic, and with an open heart and mind vision for the future of REM. Last but not least Deitra Scott, currently on the nursing faculty at Prairie View A & M University, presented us with “Health Hilarities,” making jokes about Racism, the Health Industry, patients, herself, and was fun in general. This night’s event was over by about 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, February 4th

The day began with a continental breakfast at the hotel and an interfaith Prayer Service led by Rabbi Allison Bergman Vann on staff at Temple Beth-el, the only female rabbi serving a congregation in San Antonio. The service consisted of music (guitar), song and reading of scripture. The theme was *Prayers for the day beginning with awakening to remembering our departed family.*

Plenary 1: The Rev. Miguel A. De La Torre, PhD. The focus of his academic pursuit has been social and political ethics within contemporary U.S. thought, specifically how religion affects race, class, and gender oppression. He is an ordained Southern Baptist Minister. He has written several books. He spoke about his parents escape from Cuba (Cuba Crisis) when he was a small child and the difficulty of the transition by his parents, and their eventual residency and U.S. citizenship. He offered that his parents were never reconciled or forgave the circumstances or government responsible for their exodus. These experiences may have strongly influenced his work and the perceptions he espouses in his teaching, lecturing and writing. The consensus by the REM participants in my group was that the speech did not offer solutions, but created division, created protagonist/victim labeling, and justified many of the actions of illegal immigrants. Dr. De La Torre acknowledged he does not offer or know the solution to the issues he raises. Dr. De La Torre’s - Website is www.raceandreligion.com.

Plenary II: Dr. Namsoon Kang is Associate Professor of World Christianity and Religions at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University. She has published three books on feminist theological discourses in Korean and a number of articles in English, her most recent being “Toward Healing and Reconciliation Regardless.” The title of her talk was “Toward a Trans-Racial/Ethnic and Hybrid-Cultural Society: Creating a New Subject hood.” I took a lot of notes from her talk but think these few quotes: “I forget everything and meet as if for the first time, commit to the new, we politicize the marginalized group to challenge the mainstream hegemonic power, providing spaces for the marginalized group to claim their voices and experiences as legitimate.”

Dr. Kang’s school Website is: www.brite.tcu.edu. I think I read somewhere in the Bible, “Judge Not” – justice by man will never prevail in this world and we are not to worry for “Justice Belongs to God.”



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After the Plenary we attended our breakout groups where we were given questions to dialog with others about.

Dr. De La Torres questions were;

1. How are Hispanics living on the borders in your state, your city, your neighborhood?
2. What steps can we take to welcome the “alien within our midst?”
3. Is the call for restitution, rather than hospitality too radical? What would restitution look like? What do we lose?
4. How can we become ontologically Hispanic? How have some Hispanics become ontologically white?

Dr. Kangs were:

1. What is the word/phrase/issue that you think is important in the presentation today? What are the issues that you would like to highlight, if someone asks you to summarize it? Write it down on a piece of paper and share it with the group.
2. How can race, ethnicity, gender, class or sexuality be read as more than attributes in the context of clinical pastoral care? How do these social markers for you or your client/s function in your exercise of clinical pastoral care?

For the most part the questions were not addressed by the group, as each participant had so much they wanted to share of their own personal experience. At 4 o'clock the two plenary speakers answered questions from the audience.

Beginning at 5:30 a Cultural Excursion – “Get Out and See San Antonio.” Bus arrived to take people to the River walk, eateries, and other sites. All in all it was an informative day and I met several people from Texas at the conference.

Friday, February 5

The day for me began with attending a denominational/faith group breakfast with the Lutherans present. After announcements, the second plenary with Rev. De La Torre began, was followed by the Breakout discussion groups.

The discussion was centered on seeking diversity, a la Steven Colbert. The questions were:

1. How do we imitate Colbert’s methodology of diversity in our institutions? In our churches? Among friends? In our lives?
2. What steps can we take to move beyond paternalism toward partnership?
3. What actions can we take to include a diversity that challenges our power in our institutions? In our churches?
4. To include voices that are presently silent is to rearrange our structures. Are we willing to do this? What are our fears in moving in this direction? What makes the status quo so attractive?

The fourth Plenary was given by Dr. Kang, at the end of her talk she spoke of the “Identity of the Pastoral Caregiver”, as 1) a boundary crosser, 2) a person of multiple identity – identity beyond identity,



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3) a multilingual speaker of values, world views, and engaging in compassionate dialog with others, 4) a person without a passport of power, ownership, control, having boundaries and transcending boundaries, 5) a seed planter – seeds of compassion, change, hope, not a fruit gatherer 5) a hope creator – a creator of hope beyond hope. Hope – the struggle itself – expanding to broader groups of humanity. Her presentation ended with a quote of Paul Celan, “I am you when I am I.” Translated from the German: Itch bin du, wenn Ich Ich bin

In the evening a Banquet was held. The welcome was by Dr. Harry Simmons. He introduced George P. Polk, by way of video, who was a founder of REM, to those of us who did not know of him. Dance and Music was offered by members of New Creation Fellowship in San Antonio, TX. The keynote address and closing prayer were given by Rev. Dr. Claudette Copeland, Co-founder and pastor of New Creation Fellowship. The banquet was followed by a social gathering in the Presidential Suite of Dr. Simmons. Personally, I found the dialogue among those I met informative, creative and uplifting

Saturday, February 6

I attended the Business Meeting and election of REM officers for 2010. The Closing Worship Service was co coordinated by Bicri Hernandez de Singh. The highlight of the closing worship service was the Rondalla de las Americas, an all Hispanic Acoustic Guitar group consisting of 13 male Hispanic players and six female singers, from a local Baptist Seminary in San Antonio, singing Alabare a Mi Señor, No Hay Dios and the 23rd Psalm.

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The 2010 REM Invitational was the first conference that I have attended in any capacity with the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education since becoming a Resident Chaplain. The event was educational, enlightening, and empowering for me as a front end baby boomer who witnessed the oppression of not only Black women, but all women all over the world. When I saw the theme; “Living in a Post-Racial Society? Race, Ethnicity, Diversity and Empowerment in Clinical Pastoral Education,” I knew I had to be in San Antonio for the event. I did not arrive until Thursday, but immediately I noticed how friendly and helpful everyone was, especially since I had to find a breakout group because I was not there in time for the first Plenary.

Plenary II and Plenary IV by Dr. Namsoon Kang, PhD was powerful as she told her story about leaving Germany and her tenure as an Asian woman and professor. She introduced us, or me to new concepts and how we are becoming people of multiple identities, identity beyond identity as we continue to evolve. Dr. Kang also gave us something to think about and talk about in our breakout groups when she stated that sometimes “the questions that we ask can be more profound than the answers.”

As a Pentecostal Evangelist, we are very familiar with Acts 2:38 in our denomination. However, when Dr. Miguel A. De La Torre took us through several chapters of Acts, and explained how different marginalized groups were added to the church at different times throughout the book of Acts, it was enlightening and I looked at Acts in a different way. The professor also gave us a different slant on the



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story of Jonah, and I found it so interesting that I was blessed to purchase the last copy of *Liberating Jonah, Forming An Ethics of Reconciliation*. I was so impressed with Dr. Torre's presentation that I also bought *Reading the Bible from the Margins*, even though I said that I was not going to buy any books at the conference.

I even ran into an old classmate from Christian Theological Seminary who had left Indianapolis and moved to Delaware. We were very surprised and happy to see each other at the REM Conference. I met many new people and contacts at the 2010 conference, and I am looking forward to seeing them again at the REM Conference in Richmond, Virginia in 2011.

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In a recent blockbuster movie entitled, *Avatar*, human beings initially invade the home of the Avatars. Although the initial mission was to invade, filch and exploit, the primary human character discovered his own humanity and ended up integrating, sharing and becoming inextricably connected to the Avatars. During one poignant moment in the film, a female Avatar declared, "I see you" to the human would-be invader. This declaration served as an acme in the film in that it marked the point where the would-be human invader had grown to become a sojourner. This human character interacted with the Avatars in such a manner that his previous "they" language had genuinely morphed into "we" language. As a first-time participant in the 2010 REM Invitational, I optimistically observed the potential for this same sort of "we-ness." I contend that the Racial Ethnic and Multicultural (REM) Invitational has the potential to become a place and space that cultivates true "vision" and authentic unity.

During my interactions with people of diverse cultures, ethnicities, and religions, I heard the reverberation of the same chorus line, "I should not have to disappear for you to see me." As REM participants tacitly yet unambiguously reiterated this chorus, I continued to hear verses in different languages, with distinguishable cadences and with various perspectives sing a song together. Admittedly, there were a few notes possibly sang too sharply or a few which were hummed too flatly; however, if the choir continues to practice, the song will begin to fondly resonate in the ears of all who continue to sing. After all, I am neither demanding that you sing the same verse in the same way that I sing, nor should you command me to sing my verse exactly like you; however, it would be a marvelous feat if we would give ear and respect to our respective verses and sing the chorus line together: "I should not have to disappear for you to see me."

Further, I thought, the 2010 REM Invitational may sound like a "sounding brass and clanging cymbal" to some; however, I encountered such an abundant dose of love that is sure to carefully bring us in tune. The problem is that we have often feigned unity with an apparently disingenuous smile and a perfunctory auto-tuned experience. Nonetheless, a real smile can't be feigned and a song worth hearing won't be auto-tuned. The encounter which produces a true smile must be authentically experienced and a song which stands the test of time must be carefully produced with the cooperation of willing, dedicated participants.



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As revealed in the movie Avatar, I believe that one can intend to exploit but end up enlightened. Like the human protagonist in Avatar, REM participants can be transformed from invaders to integrated beings. I further believe that the REM Invitational provides a space for us to genuinely “see” one another and likewise fosters an environment where a complicated melody can or has the potential to resound as a healing symphony.

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A Charter of Compassion

The invitation made by Executive Director Teresa Snorton for in-sights and reflections on this year’s REM Conference brought me back to the Orlando Summit. Two disturbing healthcare episodes made me expose a need for a universal code called compassion. Another invitation was called by Teresa Snorton last summer for an Interfaith Prayer Service in Washington DC. ‘We Believe Together – HealthCare For All’. This gave me a strong voice to resonate the advocacy of healthcare with the spirituality of compassion.

Health Care Reform evolved into The Debate. The Debate swirled into The Divide. The Liberals separated from the Conservatives causing a deep chasm in the Two-party political system of the country, until a third force of electorate shined through this crack from Virginia to Massachusetts. The fault line of The Debate pervaded through a divide between a Catholic Bishop and a Catholic Politician.

Why is there such an unprecedented divide about the health care reform? Not one of the pundits and proponents of the reform is wanting of initiative and perspective befitting of statesmanship. Where do the gravity of apathy and urgency get stuck? Why do economics and politics tend to bury the debate into the deep? A year ago I surmised a crisis of compassion among the weakest link to our village of care – the unorganized ‘illegal, undocumented migrants.’ Today, the crisis encompasses those at the very center of our villages.

‘The Charter of Compassion’ was launched by Karen Armstrong. The Movement continues to expand the circle of Compassion, moving from the circle of family towards that of tribes, nations, continents and on to every shore. She invited everyone to revive the Golden Rule: *“We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just and a peaceful global community.”*

What’s it all about, alfie? (this song by Burt Bacharach puts questions I did ask about the health care reform, the debate, and the divide.) Underneath the crisis of financials and the economy is the crisis of



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ethics and morality. The song sings it all: *“And if only fools are kind, alfie. Then I guess it’s wise to be fool. And if life belongs only to the strong, alfie. What will you lend on an old Golden Rule?”*

My CPE journey moved from Orlando, from a crisis of compassion towards San Antonio REM Conference, towards a charter of compassion.

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The Gathering

I will not soon forget REM Invitational 2010. It has made a major impact on me and my CPE experience. First of all, it has made me more aware of other cultures. I was challenged to not overlook people who are marginalized, such as immigrants in this country. As a result of REM, I have become more sensitive to a general lack of appreciation for contributions made by women that exists around the world. I have gained more of an appreciation for other religions by experiencing some of the traditions and learning about some of the practices.

I met other residents from all around the country. I was so happy about this and I did not understand why. After the first day, it came to me. They were all my age! At my CPE center there are only two other people my age. It was refreshing to meet other people my age that had similar interests and goals. It was encouraging to me. We shared stories about being on-call. We shared about what it was like to be in group at our centers. I realized how much of a blessing CPE has been in my life. I realized that I have grown so much since I started in August. I appreciated my supervisors, peers, and my work in CPE a lot more after coming back from REM.

Before going to REM, I wondered what supervisory CPE was like. REM was the perfect place to go to learn about it. I also met supervisors from all around the country. I realized that every supervisor is different because they have their own journey. I learned that supervisory CPE is hard work because one comes to terms with who they are personally, theologically, and professionally. I also learned, however, that there are people who can help you along that journey. I was interested in supervisory CPE before I went to REM but it seemed like a far-fetched dream and virtually impossible for me. However, my thinking about this changed when I met so many supervisors of color. I already knew one African American supervisor but I met about 30 others and I said to myself, “This is not easy, but it can be done!”

During the group session before I was to leave for REM, I shared what REM was about with my group. My supervisor told me that REM is a great opportunity for networking and challenged me to get out of my comfort zone and meet and talk to people. I did exactly what he told me. I met so many people; it’s been hard to keep in touch with all of them. It was such a blessing to be able to go. I am very grateful for the scholarship provided to me by the Southeast Region. It afforded me the opportunity to experience something priceless. To me, REM was a sacred gathering. A gathering of souls had come to



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be renewed and uplifted, who had come to receive encouragement for their journey. My journey is all the richer because I attended REM Invitational 2010.

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From the moment I arrived at the airport in San Antonio, I felt confirmation in my heart that I was going to gain a lot from this conference. While waiting at the airport for the shuttle to the Omni Hotel, other Resident chaplains were waiting as well. An African American female from Newark, Delaware, another African American female from around Dallas, and an African American male from Washington D.C. We all began to share where we're from, where we are in the CPE program, some of our goals, and talk about the weather. When we boarded the shuttle, we met two African American CPE supervisors who immediately introduced themselves. The entire group on the shuttle began to share CPE experiences that are more often than not unique to minorities. I was thinking this is great! We haven't even gotten to the hotel yet and I'm already meeting other residents, CPE Supervisors, and learning about their experiences, laughing, not feeling like I have to do mental editing, and having fun. Immediately from the time at the airport and beyond two of these Resident Chaplains and I were together throughout the majority of the conference. We discussed Dr. Namsoon Kang and Dr. Miguel De La Torre's presentations in our group of three and in our break-out group sessions.

Dr. Namsoon Kang:

I was glad to see an Asian female Professor and Theologian present in this conference. I was extremely impressed by Dr. Kang's numerous accomplishments. Reverend Yoke Lye Kwong provided me the opportunity to research Dr. Namsoon's background. I was astounded and impressed by the number of books and articles she has written, positions she has held and currently holds, and being a distinguished Professor and Theologian. The fact that I have been training, growing, and receiving valuable guidance from Reverend Yoke Lye Kwong an Asian female CPE supervisor for the last year and a half has fostered my profound respect, admiration, and openness to learn from Dr. Kang. In my opinion, Dr. Kang's approach was a holistic, humanistic approach. Dr. Kang's words "overcoming the tyranny of binarism: we-they; self-other; reason-emotion; theory-action; spirit-body; men-women; white-color." In other words humanity doesn't see itself as one, but always in groupings. To actually accomplish a "post-racial society" humanity needs to overcome this tyranny of separation. Dr. Kang provided in-depth reasons for this separation and things humanity can do in the journey to overcome this separation mindset. I don't believe on this side of eternity until Jesus returns that humanity will ever live in a "post-racial society." I believe when Jesus splits the sky we will still be striving to attain oneness. Oneness is a state of heart and mind, not the outward color of one's skin. Also, I believe there will still be the existence of different races/ethnicities/gender in the Heavenly Kingdom of God throughout eternity. In Revelation chapter 7 v. 9, 10 it says ⁹ "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands," ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" God loves diversity. Diversity/differences have never been the problem. The problem with race relations comes from



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humankind turning away from God's idea in our hearts and minds. Do I embrace, love, and respect someone of a different race as an extension of myself, or do I harbor disdain for that person simply because they're different. By God's grace, I'm growing. I do believe those of us who are talked about in Revelation 7 (By God's grace I plan to be in that number) will have that heart and mind change, hence a Post-Racial Society.

Dr. Miguel A. De La Torre:

I really appreciated the authentic honesty and straight approach of Dr. De La Torre's presentations in this conference. I found myself trying not to shout Amen back at him while he was presenting, but I did it anyway. I felt validated and affirmed in my anger as an African American woman about injustice towards African Americans and other minority groups. Dr. De La Torre presented significant Hispanic history in this country (as the United States) and before a Euro American government formed the United States. He talked about how the Euro Americans took over significant amounts of land where Latin Americans/Hispanics resided in the formation of this country's borders. He also discussed the Euro American (United States) influence in the banana industry (banana republic) within the borders of Mexico/Latin America. How this industry has caused oppression, imprisonment, war, and death of countless Latin Americans/Hispanics.

One of the topics discussed in my breakout group session after Dr. De La Torre's presentation was whether or not "color blindness" exist. Is the statement "I don't see color, I just see the person" possible? My verbalized opinion was/is no. It's not possible for someone not to see one's color (racial/ethnic group). This statement has been verbalized to me a few times in the past. This statement frustrated me because I felt like the individuals were lying to me and themselves. Not seeing my color is not seeing me. I am an African American woman and I'm happy to be such, so please don't tell me you don't see me. I believe when people say this, it's another one of the "politically correct" statements which they have adapted, and I believe a precious few actually believe they don't see color. Another thing I appreciated about Dr. De La Torre is his willingness to say he's angry. I was so happy to hear him say this in response to inquiries about his approach. He was professional and pastoral in his response, yet straight to the point. I have had the awesome privilege of hearing this well known and accomplished Professor/Theologian admit his anger concerning racial injustice as well as journeying under the tutelage of my CPE Supervisor Reverend Yoke Lye Kwong who has used her anger for injustice as fuel to be an agent for change.

Overall, attending the REM Invitational allowed me to experience the conscious effort and growth in diversified pastoral care to those whom we serve and one another in ACPE. I pray that future REM Invitational conferences will continue to allow those who are positive pastoral agents of change in the racial, ethnic, and multicultural realm to share their history, knowledge, wisdom, and experiences, so we can be living, human, documents to one another instead of harshly rejecting differences. Ultimately, we are all a part of this beautiful diversified human family.



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Also, I want to thank Reverend Yoke Lye Kwong, Dr. Harry Simmons, and Reverend Vickie Johnson for the opportunity to attend the REM Invitational, without you it would not have been possible.

Lieutenant Sherri L. Headen is a Resident Chaplain at Howard Regional Health System, Kokomo, IN.

During the winter of 2010, I received a scholarship to attend the 23rd REM network conference that was held in San Antonio, Texas, from February 3-6, 2010. As a third time attendee, I waited with great anticipation to see what nuggets I would take away from this conference.

The conference proved to be enlightening and was filled with: education, breakout group discussions, interfaith services, and cultural excursions. The theme of the conference was: "Living in a Post-Racial Society? Race, Ethnicity, Diversity and Empowerment in Clinical Pastoral Education." I had an opportunity to reunite with past acquaintances and network with new ones. Each speaker brought to the conference his/her diverse flavor.

The conference opened with the first plenary speaker, theologian Rev. Miguel A. De La Torre, PhD. Dr. De La Torre spoke from his heart as he shared his personal journey from Cuba to America. As he shared his pain, I sensed deep anger and a harsh tone with which he spoke. I listened with empathy to his experience as I myself traveled from the Caribbean island of Jamaica to the U.S. The words that stood out for me from his speech were: "My Jesus knows my pain living in a foreign land." I felt comfort knowing that he was able to name his feeling of pain. I too have felt pain as I have been marginalized as well as experienced sexism and racism. However, not to negate my feelings, I would like to name my coping mechanism, which is found in the words of the song: "Through it all, I have learned to trust in Jesus, I have learned to depend upon His words."

The highlight for me at the conference was the banquet and the thought-provoking words that were shared by the Rev. Dr. Claudette Anderson Copeland. Rev. Copeland started out by saying, "I don't want to disappear in order not to be with you. I want to bring to the table all that I have – freedom in my plate. I don't want to erase myself to be with you or you to erase yourself to be with me." As she made her delivery in an even tone, I was captivated by the content of her speech. She then went on to say, "We should be rich with diversity and learn from our Asian and Appalachian brothers and sisters. As we become more aware of race - that will add value to our uniqueness." She reminded us that "Terrible and wonderful things have happened to us all." For example, in her reference to Antoine Boison, she pointed out that "Alongside his madness was ministry making use of a flow in a "world of private parts" for all of us where grace and peace belong." Rev. Copeland further mentioned Boison's crisis—"the death of his mother, his disquieted affair and his sickness." "Crisis is what matters most," she adds, "when a person's faith is hanging in the balance." I agreed with her as she made reference to inner-personal relationships and the inner world. She then exclaimed ["To anything I say, must matter to the inner parts"]!

Alluding to Frederick Buckner, Rev. Copeland spoke about "telling the truth." She continued to say, "Tell it to the private parts; address ourselves to emptiness and fullness as well, because terrible and



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wonderful things have happened to us.” She then made a shift in her speech when she commented, “Thoughts mean more than images.”

For me, the meat of her message arose when she addressed CPE. Learning that she herself had gone through the experience of clinical pastoral education and was a former member of ACPE, I believe she was more than qualified to share the information she did. Her rhetorical questions to us were: “CPE, do we exist in a post racial church? If not post racial, perhaps post racist?” Rev. Copeland was careful to explain, “Racist implies to the way power is denied.” She then cautioned, “If it is not post racial perhaps it could be post white.” Rev. Copeland then carefully explained, “CPE operates in a post racial church.” Her questions to us were: “Do we want a post racial society? Is post racial what we really want?” Without giving us an opportunity to respond, Rev. Copeland encouraged us to “Push to see if racial blindness is from an outside source.” However, she reminded us “Created possibilities bring forth change for better or for worse.” She closed by saying “As we continue to contend with issues, we should ask what we synthesize from our private parts?” What healthy things can I teach or learn from people I don’t want to be around?” She then pointed out “Race in America has formed, deformed or/and insulated us from seeing others.” “So what is the question for us?” she asks. Rev. Copeland then commented that “For too long we have felt there has been none because of the ‘Silence of Opportunity’.” “However for things to be born” she added, “the walls between religion and illusion must be broken down.”

As I left the conference, I realized that continuing in CPE my challenge remains “What contribution can I make to break down the walls between religion and illusion?”

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The 2010 Racial Ethnic Multicultural Network (REM) Conference was an enlightening opportunity that empowered me to explore cultures beyond my own to understand the practice of spiritual care. Prior to the REM Conference, I had not been exposed to worship from a multicultural setting; nor had I experienced spiritual care through the eyes of the Hispanic population. Through attending the conference, I was able to draw a parallel to my ministry with “Race, Ethnicity, Diversity and Empowerment in Clinical Pastoral Education.

The most memorable and touching experience of REM was attending the Interfaith Prayer Service, led by Rabbi Allison Bergman Vann. This was the first time I had ever been exposed to a Jewish worship experience. I found this to be a deeply moving and spiritually refreshing connection. I was amazed at the movement of the psalms and the liturgy. I found that as we read and sang the words became energetic. I felt an embodiment and could feel the spirit of God moving through me with peace and power. I could feel dances stirring in my soul and God restored me and revealed Himself to be the God of all creation. It made me feel light and alive; one with God as creator and giver of life. In essence, this interfaith prayer service was a worship experience that I so desperately needed to reconnect with God.



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Secondly, as an African American woman, I had never considered the plight of Hispanics in America. As I reflect on the lectures of Dr. Miquel A. De La Torre, I was struck by his opening statement, "To be a U.S. Hispanic is to constantly live on the border." It took me a moment to digest that phrase. I suppose, I never considered that Hispanics had a plight in America, especially as it compares to African Americans. His lecture put racism and ethnicity in a humanizing light for me.

As his lecture unfolded, I began to hear the marginalization and disenfranchisement of Hispanics who seek to maintain their rich cultural heritage in America, the great melting pot. In this journey, Hispanics live on the border, constantly having to be aware of the dominant culture as well as their own. I do not view the plight of the Hispanic as being similar to that of the African –American. Mostly, Hispanics have assimilated into Caucasian culture to escape the parities of being demoralized and victimized.

I reflected on how I function: live and worship in my own subcultural environment. I thought, am I quick to lift a hand to praise God, but slow to lift a hand to help someone else; particularly others who don't mirror me? I reside in a multicultural neighborhood, which is serene and private. Neighbors greet each other, but most don't even know each other's names. I intentionally worship in an African-American church that decided to reach out specifically to our Christian brothers and sisters in the African-American community. Is living and worshipping in these cul-de-sacs preventing us from working together for the building up of the church universal? How can diversity exist within this system? How do we get others within our subcultures to open their hearts and minds to accept the diverse gifts and heritage of all God's people? Is the black community ready for liberation theology outside of our own liberation? I do realize it must begin with me on an individual level to raise my consciousness of the plight of those from differing racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Considering the large volume of Hispanic patients I see in the clinical setting, REM gave me a broader outlook and heightened compassion as I minister to this culture. Now, as I offer spiritual care, I am more aware of their borders ... the issues in community they might encounter in everyday life, in addition to facing the illness of a child in the hospital. I am more aware of their Christianity as well as cultural religious traditions that accompany them into the hospital and the broader scope of the surrounding community. Now, as I provide spiritual care, I am conscious of the Hispanic's need for more than a translator to interpret a prayer.

Lastly, the REM keynote banquet speaker, Rev. Claudette Copeland, stirred my spirit and challenged my perspective when she posed the question, "Do you want a post racist church?" As we enter conversation about a diverse church, I whole heartedly agree with her stance on coming together to worship. She contents that we as people need to be more accepting of each other's worship language. She stated, "I don't want to have to disappear to be with you and I don't want you to have to disappear to be with me." In other words, "I want to be able to bring all my stuff to the table ... my big booty, my thick lips, my worship, my dance, and music. I want to be able to bring all my stuff and celebrate it."

As I considered the words of Rev. Copeland and reflected on my experience at the Interfaith Worship Service, I wondered, as I felt the spirit moving through me in dance, would I have felt comfortable worshipping in my own style; in dance at the Jewish worship service? In a multicultural society, can we



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really embrace each other in worship; music, dance, liturgy and preaching? Are we free to worship our God within our own construct at the table of others? This experience opened my heart and my mind. So even now, as I enter Chapel worship service in the clinical setting, I am more careful to speak to a racial, ethnic and multicultural congregation; but free to speak from my experiences. I left the conference empowered.

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THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

During the month of February of this year I had the awesome opportunity to attend the Racial Ethnic Multicultural Conference sponsored by the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. which was held in San Antonio, Texas. When I was first presented with the opportunity to attend I was excited. I had read the conference information and details that were attached to the office door of the CPE Director and was excited about the possibilities of learning more about CPE and how it is experienced in other cultures. Even more so I was excited about meeting other Chaplains from other races!

I grew up in Portland, Oregon during the late 60's up to about 1974. During that time my life was richly exposed to a very diverse culture. On any given weekend my house would look like a verse from the song "Jesus Loves the Little Children." My friends were African American, Caucasian, Samoan, [Czechoslovakian](#) (white people of the Hungarian Empire) and Hispanic. I loved it! We saw no difference in each other's skin we only saw the difference in girly things, our hair, Barbie Dolls things like that. So the thought of possibly forming these types of relationships again stirred up excitement in me. So I sent the Director an email telling her that I was interested and would like an application for a scholarship to attend. However, the invitation to the REM Conference was posted shortly after we began the first unit of CPE and we had not gotten into the meat of the program.

As the time grew closer my chances of attending the conference seem to grow slimmer. CPE was an intense adjustment and I found myself struggling to manage the CPE assignments, my M.DIV courses, church ministry and being a mother to three (a 9 year old boy, 15 year old girl and 21 year old young man. All of who have urgent needs if you were to ask them. Did I mention that I am also a new grandmother (the 21-year-old). Oh! Least I forget, I have a husband too who is a ministry all by himself. Needless to say with all of this, my chances of attending seemed to slowly fade.

For a while I toggled between going and not going. I cited reason to myself such as I can't afford it. I have too much to do. If I go, who would take care of my nine-year-old? In retrospect I now realize these were not the hindrances that kept from finalizing my decision. I realize I was afraid. I was down right scared of leaving my husband, my children and my parents. All of who seemed to be totally dependent on me. I was afraid of relinquishing control of the things that I could control. Nevertheless, God said otherwise.



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As the deadline for attending approached things seemed to fall in place. My CPE classmates and I were able to book our flight at a reasonable price. Two of us split the hotel cost. My hotel mate and I tried to persuade the other person to room with us so that we could split the cost three ways, but *he* was the voice of reason. He convinced us that this wouldn't fair to well with our spouses.

We made it to our destination even though we were a little shaken due to the turbulent airplane ride and the delay in one my companion's luggage. But all in all things were going well and I was looking forward to the change of atmosphere and much needed rest. After checking into the hotel I headed to the conference meeting area for the "meet and greet," it was a little different than what I had pictured but interesting all the same.

I was really impressed by the food served during the conference. I have attended various conferences and this is the first time I was served food that looked and tasted like it had been prepared by a chef. The entertainment for the night was a female comedian. As much as I wanted to and was pulling for my sister, I could not find the humor in her jokes and or in her monologue. I actually found myself embarrassed by some her comments that were directed at other races and cultures.

The following morning I attended worship service, which was conducted by a "female Rabbi." I didn't know that the Jewish religion accepted female Rabbi's. She and her accompanist lead us through worship using the Torah. I really enjoyed it after I figured out how to use it. Upside down, right to left. I particularly liked the upbeat praise song, la, la, li, li, la.....I was hoping that the Rabbi would invite us to participate in a traditional dance of praise with her.

I left in awe of God. I am still amazed at how God allows man to participate in various forms of religious services that draw us closer to him. He did say "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." However we choose to worship Him. Mark 2:27-28

That night I set my alarm so that I could attend the 6 am prayer and meditation that was held on the 21st floor the next morning. I did get up and make it to prayer on time and I must say that it was an experience of a lifetime. From the time I entered the room I could feel the presence of the Lord. I don't know if it was that the young lady who led prayer had set the atmosphere for worship or if was because we were up so high which created a sense of somehow being closer to God. It was probably a combination of both. When I looked out of the window it seemed like I was on an even plane with the stars.

The Plenary session was next. The presenter was Professor Miquel A De La Torre. He expounded on the history and progression of the Hispanic people and their culture. He enlightened us on who they are and how they came to be in America. He also described their struggles as an ethnic culture. I learned so much about this group of people who is more like me than I dare admit. The breakout session was very intense. The facilitator did an outstanding job bringing out the hidden things in our hearts. I found it interesting how a room full of people listening to the same speaker could hear different things. I sensed that the Hispanic people in my circle (1 man and 1 woman) felt liberated. When the floor was opened



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for discussion they sat up tall in their chairs and their body language exemplified victory. The Caucasian people (4 men and 1 woman) conveyed expressions that caused one to think that they only heard the speaker bashing “the White man” and blaming him for “stealing” their land. The Asian people could identify with the struggle of being a misunderstood race in America. This African American woman simply appreciated the richness of the history that was given and the sermon that was carefully woven in. It was interesting to watch people who claimed not to be “prejudiced” become so inflamed and defensive when the words that described this mind set were spoken. Some of them were careful to point out that they work “with” Blacks and Hispanics all the time and that some of them even lived in their neighborhoods. I was surprised that not one of them pulled out the “My best friend is Black” Or “My wife’s sister is married to a Hispanic man card.” If the truth be told, aren’t we all prejudice in some form or fashion. Whether it is toward another, race, culture or lifestyle. I think that a lot of people miss or do not understand the meaning of the word. According to the dictionary the word prejudice means “an unfavorable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought, or reason. Any preconceived opinion or feeling, either favorable or unfavorable; Unreasonable feelings, opinions, or attitudes, especially of a hostile nature, regarding a racial, religious, or a national group.”

Haven’t we and don’t we all exhibit these types of behaviors when we walk into a place and there is no one we can readily identify with? I have. There are times when I walk into a restaurant with my husband and I perceive from looks we get that the present group (the majority of them being white) are wondering how we can afford it. It is times like these that the “prejudice” in me raises her head. As a friend of mine says, “I am working on me.”

The REM Conference really opened my eyes and my heart to a lot of perceptions, misconceptions and -isms that I had not taken the time to think about before. I will explore these in future Reflection papers in order to work on me. I want to be a better me and I will even if it kills me (the part of my flesh that to die for me to be free).

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do **mortify** the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Phil.1:20-22, Rom. 8:13)

I want to live.

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