

## Questions Raised by Workgroup Meeting

Theology and Community Building Workgroup Meeting  
New York, NY – October 14, 2001

Charles Marsh began the final meeting by asking everyone to take five minutes to write down one question that they were thinking about after the presentations and site visits.

Marsh:

1. What are the theologians looking for when they look at lived experience?
2. Are we of any use to the community development groups we met with?

Vasquez:

1. Is our observance of nihilism among people on the margins real or a projection (because they failed to fulfill our dreams for liberation)?
2. Are we over-dramatizing the problem of these people and communities rather than focusing on their resources?
3. What is the role of religion in addressing the problems they face?

Davis:

1. Want to explore issues of gender, class and race as they relate to intersection of theology and lived experience. Can you make blanket statements?
2. Whose moral agency is most critical (recipients or givers)?

Fowl:

1. How do we read ourselves and our communities into the narrative of scripture and specifically the history of Israel (as Rev. Rivera did)?
2. What about reading self and community into the NT?
3. If we do this, what happens to the particularity of the nation of Israel?

Pohl:

1. What are the moral and theological resources that these people use?
2. How do you get people into relationship with one another? (A lot of groundwork is required to encourage people to care about others).

Best:

1. How do you articulate the problems and how does this shape your approach to dealing with them?
2. What problems does the workgroup going into these places present?

Hall:

1. Should we evaluate the work the people are doing? If so, how?
2. In the case of LPAC, the people are given tools to succeed, how does this conflict with the gospel?

3. How do we “construct” Jesus and what difference does this make in the way we deal with the issues of our community (weak vs. strong Jesus)?

McRoberts:

1. Formal beliefs are one thing, but what about religious experience (gnosis vs. praxis)?
2. What is the connection between religious experience and the content of actions/commitments?

Marsh:

1. How do you sort out experience?
2. How do you make religion a controlling framework vs. inserting into your framework (skip and dip)?

Warren:

1. When we use faith language, are we using the right language? Experience appropriated through existing systems so that tradition and community go together.
2. How do we avoid using people as labs?
3. What are the ecclesiological limits? We say doctrine divides and service unites, but when do we reach the limits of similarity?
4. What can we offer? How can we help people become theologically reflective?
5. How does revelation figure into this? What does revelation look like?

Marsh:

1. What is lived theology?
2. How does it make a difference for social action?
3. What do we have the most to learn from?

There was a mini debate between the theologians and sociologists about what we mean by religious experience. The group concluded that they needed to agree on language they would use in their work and discussions related to the Project. They also agreed that they needed to develop a methodology – the questions we ask are those that are formulated by the communities we observe.