

currents GTU

Where religion meets the world

NEWS OF THE GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

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SPRING 2009

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Martha Stortz: top row, second from right

"

... how priceless education is... how hard people work for it.

Martha Stortz GTU Core Doctoral faculty



noto by Paul Jacobson

"The mountain can't be conquered by climbing or captured in words. Better Job's response, after YHWH speaks to him from the whirlwind":

> Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know ... I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees you ...

> > — Job 42:3-5

his is what Martha (Marty) Stortz says about her climb to the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro, or the Shining Mountain — the tallest mountain in Africa. Stortz, GTU Core Doctoral Faculty and Professor of Historical Theology and Ethics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, climbed the 19,340-foot mountain last July accompanied by six other adventurers — including her colleague Lisa Fullam, assistant professor of Moral Theology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, and a team of porters, cooks, and guides.



Currents presents the news, people, and progress of the Graduate Theological Union. Published two times a year, Currents is distributed to alumni, faculty, students, staff, and friends of the GTU.

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GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

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Student Stories A Profound Surprise: Presenting the History of Jews in Italy

he most surprising discovery for David Rosenberg-Wohl during his research into the life of Jews in Italy for a recent museum exhibit was the ambiguity of Jewish life in the Renaissance-era ghetto.

A joint Graduate Theological Union/UC Berkeley doctoral student in Jewish Studies, Rosenberg-Wohl was given the task of curating "Forging Italian Jewish Identities 1516-1870" for the Museo ItalioAmericano in San Francisco.

He dove into academic libraries around the country, interviewed Jewish historical scholars, sought the advice of museum display experts, and contacted photographers, museums, and private collectors. Along the way he absorbed information about the arts, medicine, architecture, and literature in an era when the Mediterranean peninsula moved from 16th century citystates to unification in 1870.

And he borrowed — majolica plates from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, a musical score for madrigal singers from UC Berkeley's



Hargrove Library, silver Torah finials and other objects from the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley — in all, 20 pieces from these islands of Jewish life in the sea of Catholic Italy. It took him nearly a year to assemble the exhibit, which ran from September 2008 to February 2009. and conquering Arabs but still unknown to the Christian world. Despite edicts that Jews wear signifying clothing, physicians were on occasion allowed to ignore the requirement so as to discretely enter the homes of Christian patients, indicating, says Rosenberg-Wohl, the permeability of side-by-side cultures.

"Christians initially saw Jews as an impoverished, tattered community."

"Much of my work focused on the Middle Ages and Renaissance," says Rosenberg-Wohl, who was already familiar with this time period due to his doctoral research into the interaction of Jewish and Christian humanist thinkers during the Italian Renaissance.

Organizing the exhibit by cities — Venice, Rome, and Florence — as well as themes such as inclusion and exclusion, Rosenberg-Wohl led viewers through text, image, and object to show how Jews in Italy — many exiles from Moorish Iberia or immigrants from the Byzantine and Ottoman empires — maintained their religious and cultural identities.

"The Jewish presence in Italy was driven by commerce, not religion," Rosenberg-Wohl says. The Medicis, a powerful trading family, welcomed talented Jews to Florence and Livorno. Except for Livorno, where they were allowed wide-ranging privileges, Jews were segregated into ghettos, an Italian invention, with many restrictions.

But ghettos, Rosenberg-Wohl found, did not entirely define Jewish life.

Italians often patronized Jewish doctors, Rosenberg-Wohl says. These physicians could read ancient Greek and Arab medical texts preserved by Jewish scholars "Christians initially saw Jews as an impoverished, tattered community — the price non-believers paid for not recognizing Jesus as Lord," he says. "Then, with trade, economic circumstances improved for all, and that image no longer held. Now Christians came to view all Jews as moneylenders as a way to tolerate their presence. In some places, Jews were required to serve as moneylenders."

With Rosenberg-Wohl's research came what he calls a "profound surprise."

"I wasn't prepared for a more nuanced interpretation of what it meant to impose a ghetto," he says. "In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the customary way of dealing with Jews was expulsion, forced conversion, or death. The ghetto was a more liberal view at the time, an exercise in co-existence. I see this as a profound lesson in our modern era when the West is viewed as under attack from the East. Hundreds of years ago in Italy there was a multiethnic reality — it is not as modern a notion as we might think."

The Non-Pursuit of (Unsustainable) Happiness A Buddhist View

He who is satisfied with what he has is rich.

- Buddhist proverb

A mericans often chase that elusive state called happiness with the same aggressive energy we use to compete in the marketplace, buying the latest flat-screen TV or a custom sports car for an all-too-fleeting moment of bliss. In a poor, landlocked corner of Asia, Bhutanese citizens measure their well being through a national index called Gross National like 'no desires, no blind passions, or non-attachment.' But nonattachment does not mean aloofness — it can mean being very engaged, without being attached to outcomes.

Dr. Scott Mitchell, the institute's program director who also completed his Ph.D. in Buddhist studies at the GTU, adds: "Buddhism is about seeing beyond the dualism of happiness and unhappiness."

Last fall, scientists, philosophers, and psychologists gathered in San

"As a Buddhist, it's easy to be happy because there are no conditions."

Happiness. But happiness, according to Dr. Eisho Nasu, assistant professor at the Institute of Buddhist Studies, is just not the point.

"As a Buddhist, I understand that happiness means to let go of all unsustainable or excessive desires," says Nasu, who earned his doctorate in Buddhist studies at the Graduate Theological Union and now teaches at this GTU-affiliated institute near downtown Berkeley.

Nasu explains: "If you give up the never-ending pursuit of unsustainable happiness, you will eventually become happy. To describe happiness, Buddhists use expressions



Francisco for a conference called "Happiness & Its Causes" about the same time an international conference on "Gross National Happiness" (GNH) was taking place in Bhutan, where participants focused on optimum development as encompassing both economic and spiritual wellbeing. In San Francisco, one UC Berkeley psychologist shared his research on compassion and kindness as human biological traits. Other participants focused on the positive feelings that come from putting the needs of others before one's own. A few weeks later, Harvard and UC San Diego researchers released a study showing that there is a contagious quality to happiness. Happiness has become a hot topic.

As it turns out, ancient Buddhist philosophers were well ahead of these 21st century investigators.

Nasu says, "Instead of chasing after our own happiness, Buddhism teaches us that we might cultivate a mind of compassion, lovingkindness, joyfulness, and letting go of our ego-attachment — this can work for ourselves and for the sake of others."

But there's a catch. "If you really want to be truly joyful," Nasu says, "you have to forget about what you did for yourself or others." In other words, the no attachment rule still applies. Hook your ego to the outcome of effort and you risk disappointment or loss, as your happiness inevitably subsides.

The Pursuit of (Sustainable) Happiness

Are you happy? If you ask almost anyone around the world if they want to be happy, they'd likely say yes. But what is happiness? And how do we attain it, especially when the future is uncertain? Share your views on happiness and the root of happiness through our designated chat on Facebook or by email: communications@ gtu.edu.

"The material things we think we need to be happy don't last very long," Nasu says. "In a sense, as a Buddhist it's easy to be happy because there are no conditions."

In Bhutan, King Khesar's government operates from the principle of Gross National Happiness established in 1972 as the chief indicator of how his country of more than 2 million citizens is faring. Khesar writes on his website, "As the king of a Buddhist nation, my duty is not only to ensure your happiness today but to create the fertile ground from which you may gain the fruits of spiritual pursuit and attain good Karma."

While Nasu agrees with the king's focus on national satisfaction through sustainable economic development, preservation of cultural values, environmental conservation, and good

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Scott Mitchell and Eisho Nasu

photo by Cheryl Bowlan

photo by Chervl Bowlan

Supporting The GTU





Karen Lebacqz

"My gift comes from a deep sense of gratitude for what I've received from the GTU over the years."

Called to Create Leaders

Karen Lebacqz, GTU professor of ethics for 31 years, now retired, returns to the GTU from the Mendocino coast each spring for Commencement. "When I stand with students at the pre-Commencement reception where they describe their work, I am staggered," she says. "Staggered by the range of their studies, the resources and energy they bring to their work, and the fact that they really want to make a difference in the world."

Anyone standing with Karen Lebacqz, might likewise be staggered. In retirement, she is a bioethics consultant, teacher, speaker, minister, feminist, liberation theologian, photographer, quilter, and chorister. She gives glimpses of her life before retirement: While she was teaching, she served in the mid 1970s on the National Commission for the Protection of Human

Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research — which set the standards for the policies in place today. Then in the mid-1980s, she served at the GTU in the Center for Ethics and Social Policy, which prompted her to study professional ethics for clergy, and she ultimately shifted her perspective to liberation theology. She says, "When I approach a topic," I ask, "what kind of response on this topic will be the most liberating to people? What will free them to have the most abundant life?"

Lebacqz speaks of her career as a "calling."

"I think about my work not just as scholarship and teaching but about helping people become leaders. What's remarkable about GTU is it melds high standards of scholarship with an active concern for what's happening in the world, and a goal, through preparing leaders, to make the world a better place."

In July 2008, Lebacqz pledged \$100,000 to establish the Karen Lebacqz Endowment in Ethics at the GTU. The fund will support and strengthen GTU's offerings in ethics and social theory. "My gift," she says, "comes from a deep sense of gratitude for what I've received from the GTU over the years. GTU has been an anchor in my life."

For more information on how to contribute to the GTU, visit: www.gtu/give.

New Gifts to the GTU

GTU TRUSTEE DALE WALKER AND HIS WIFE, WEIXING XIAO, pledged \$50,000 in November 2008 to the GTU's Asia Project. The Asia Project is jointly sponsored by the GTU and the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia. The project seeks to transform theological education by addressing Asian theologies and contexts. It furthers the GTU's mission to educate students for teaching, research, ministry, and service — preparing future global leaders with a knowledge of Asian theologies.

TRUSTEE DENNIS STRADFORD pledged \$50,000 in January 2009 to the GTU's Unrestricted Endowment. The Unrestricted Endowment is an investment in the overall GTU mission. It provides funds for new projects; supports existing programs whose funding may be at risk; and serves as a reserve fund for the GTU's emerging needs and priorities. Donors who make gifts to the Unrestricted Endowment can be confident that their gifts will make an important difference to students, faculty, and staff. Their gifts extend to the world community, as GTU graduates are making a difference in world of differences and conflict.

Coming in April!

Keep a lookout for *GTU Legacy*, a newsletter for the GTU community on planned giving at the GTU and new developments in estate planning. There are many ways to create a legacy at the GTU. Visit http://www.gtu.edu/plannedgiving for more information.

Our staff is happy to answer your questions about how you may create your legacy at the GTU. For a confidential appointment, call Linda Frank, Vice President for Advancement: 510-649-2425 or email her: lfrank@gtu.edu.

Sign up for the new *GTU Legacy:* www.gtu.edu/contact/keep_in_touch.

Pursuit of Happiness

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governance, he regards it as not entirely transferable, though governments in such countries as Brazil, India, Australia, France, and Canada are showing some willingness to give it a try. They have begun to measure their own citizens' well-being. Here at home, the State of the USA project is attempting to quantify our national satisfaction and post the information on www.stateoftheusa.org to help Americans assess their direction and progress in key areas — wealth, crime, health care, and the environment.

"Personally," Nasu says, "I think it's a smart idea for governments to get interested in how people feel rather than gather numbers about what they buy. However, the reason it may work in Bhutan is that it is a small kingdom with relatively little ethnic and cultural diversity. If you tried to measure happiness in Berkeley, how many committees would you need to agree on which words to define happiness?"

Can religion lead to happiness? Mitchell says religion can help lay a path to joy.

"It seems there are two kinds of happiness," he says. "The first is the mundane, easy satisfaction like getting a new car or an iPhone. Religion can take you into a deeper kind of happiness."

In Buddhism, that means an awareness of a reality as vast and fluid and changing as an ocean.

"The ultimate goal is to awaken to your true nature — a nature that is always changing. We call that enlightenment."

— Eisho Nasu, assistant professor, Institute of Buddhist Studies

Alumni



Alum of the Year: Scholar, Author, Teacher, Administrator — Above All, Mentor

Dr. Terrence Tilley, Ph.D. '76, professor and chair of the department of Theology at Fordham University, and the GTU's 2008 Alumnus of the Year, feels called to mentor. It is, he says, a part of his vocation in theology: "I get immense satisfaction if others are able to thrive because of a contribution I've made," he says. Tilley is a prolific author and scholar, a dedicated professor recognized by students and colleagues for excellence in teaching, and a gifted administrator. He seems simply to weave mentoring into each of his many roles. His drive to help may have started when he was an undergraduate, working his way through the University of San Francisco as a

President James A. Donahue, Terrence Tilley, Dean Arthur Holder



nursing-orderly at St. San Francisco's St. Mary's Hospital.

The introduction to his 1991 book *The Evils of Theodicy* begins: "I have taken many bodies down to the morgue." Tilley vividly recalls the hands-on, physically and emotionally demanding work. Seeing how patients, families, and caregivers coped with suffering inspired his later work — including his 2008 book, *The Disciples' Jesus* — on the question of how we account for suffering in the world.

Throughout his academic career Tilley has distinguished himself as a scholar who pushes himself and his students to consider their work in the context of real life experience, and to ask the "sowhat" questions. For Tilley this has often meant exploring areas of study outside his own specialty, something he says the GTU encouraged. "The GTU prepared me to engage in 'little interventions' in fields that are not my own. I've used a lot of literary work and biblical scholarship in my teaching, something I wouldn't have felt comfortable doing if my training hadn't prepared me to go out on a limb and say things that philosophical theologians don't usually say."

While he describes the ability to look at questions from several perspectives as "a GTU gift," it is clearly also the gift of



See Terry Tilley's newest book: The Disciples' Jesus: Christology as Reconciling Practice,

Practice, Orbis Books (October 2008).

experience, openness, and a long career. As an instructor for required undergraduate theology courses, he teaches outside his specialty. As a result, he says he's had to learn things he wasn't trained in. This, he says, helps him see questions and issues that others, trained in that specialty, might overlook. And his many years in the

"I get immense satisfaction if others are able to thrive because of a contribution I've made..."

academy have given him resources he didn't have earlier in his career. "Much of my current work," he says, "I wouldn't have been able to do ten years ago. Becoming an old fogy has its advantages!"

Another gift Tilley says he received from the GTU is camaraderie, which he brings to his work as a scholar, teacher, and administrator. "Theology is a team sport," he says. He recalls intellectual pursuit at the GTU as a joint activity among students and faculty. And: "I remember a group of us on Le Conte throwing Frisbees over the heads of the National Guard during the spring 1971 protests against the Vietnam War.

"Now what gets me out of bed in the morning are those times when, as department chair, a colleague comes in with a problem or idea, and I can help solve the problem or focus the idea. What makes my day is helping my colleagues, students, and faculty flourish."

New Books

GTU alumni are busy publishing. Here are two more books published in 2008.

... by Kate McCarthy, Ph.D. '94

Interfaith Encounters in America Rutgers University Press

"...essential reading for scholars of religion, sociology, and American Studies, as well as anyone who is concerned with the purported impossibility of religious pluralism."

-Amazon editorial review

... by James Treat, Ph.D. '93

Around the Sacred Fire: Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era University of Illinois Press 2008 and Palgrave Macmillan / St. Martin's Press, 2003

A cultural history of intertribal activism centered on the Indian Ecumenical Conference, an influential movement among native people in Canada and the U.S. "A magnificent job of excavating the history of the ecumenical conference and illuminating key personalities involved."

—Journal of American History

For a more complete listing of books by GTU alumni and faculty, visit www.gtu.edu/news-events/publications.

DR. MIA M. MOCHIZUKI has been selected as a 2009-10 Henry Luce III Fellow in Theology. The program is one of the premier fellowship programs for theological scholarship. It recognizes the excellence and creativity in Dr. Mochizuki's work on *The Netherlandish Print Abroad, 1543-1639: Art, Religion and Economics in the Early Modern World.* Dr. Mochizuki is GTU Core Doctoral Faculty, Assistant Professor, and Thomas E. Bertelsen, Jr. Chair of Art History and Religion at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley.



Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro and Other Life Lessons...

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It was a "watershed" experience. "Grief takes your breath away, and I needed to be back in my body again," Stortz says of the trip that came three years after she lost her husband to brain cancer.

She and Fullam prepared for the climb by outfitting themselves with the right gear and hiking the peaks and valleys of the East Bay neighborhoods and regional parks, their backpacks filled with modern and ancient language dictionaries.

On Kilimanjaro, Stortz saw "a dense and magical rainforest... heathery moorland...alpine desert ...moon-like arctic reaches of the summit...plants that had adapted to equatorial climes and extreme temperatures...ravens that could cruise thin air at 16,000 feet...a field of lava shards that looked like broken pottery from a giant's kitchen...shields commemorating climbers who had died near the summit.

"The academy often does not yield much in the way of tangible results, but on Kilimanjaro, you can see and taste and touch and feel how high you are," she says.

Stortz speaks eloquently not only about the physical dimension of the climb, but its spiritual dimension. The mountain was a great equalizer: "We were all bodies in need of food

and water, encouragement and rest ...and we also knew how much we depended on each other." She says the mountain taught her three things: "...how to walk, no matter how slowly so that I could keep moving forward at a steady pace without stopping and starting all the time...how to breathe, no matter how shallow, so that I could keep a rhythm and not be gasping for air...how to pack what I need for each day and leave everything else in the tent...not bad lessons for life at sea level — or wherever it finds you."

There is a delightful twist to the end of this story. Once off the mountain, Stortz visited a small



photo by Paul Jacobson

A Message from President Donahue

DEAR FRIENDS OF THE GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION,

The financial and economic crisis facing our nation has presented challenges for the GTU as well as for many other institutions and for many people in their personal lives. Many GTU friends, alumni, and staff have asked about how GTU is faring and what people can do to help. We are so grateful that our well being is on your minds and in your hearts. We especially thank those, who in this difficult time, are stepping forward to support our students and the unique interreligious programs that make us the most diverse partnership of graduate schools in the United States. Your generosity helps make us the place where religion meets the world. And there could not be a more important time, when our world is increasingly interdependent but so rife with conflict.

The GTU has a long history of being a good steward of our resources. We have budgeted conservatively, managed our broadly diversified investments well, and used our resources wisely – working to be cost-efficient and effective. We will continue these practices that have served us well.

Read the rest of President Donahue's message, including how the turmoil in the market has affected the GTU Endowment and how giving to the GTU — through our annual giving campaigns or legacy gifts — can make a large difference: Visit www.gtu.edu.

Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro and Other Life Lessons...

village secondary school started by a Tanzanian friend named Evaristo Sanga, one of the climbers, who, unfortunately, had to descend the mountain due to altitude sickness on the third day of the trek. Stortz and Fullam brought funds to the school for a year's tuition for two girls. In a concrete building with no electricity or windows at the

end of a red dirt road, Stortz asked the students, all in pressed green uniforms, "Who are you?" and "What do you want to be?" One by one the students stood up, their answers came like rapid fire: I want to be a doctor...a nurse...a pilot...a teacher...a preacher...a cook. Later, as Stortz and Fullam walked back down the red dirt road, "we saw this cloud moving toward us, like the approach of a great low-flying bird. In the middle of it was a green uniform worn by one of the older

continued from page 10

girls. She stopped in front of us, and the first words out of her mouth were: 'My name is Apollonia. I want to be the president of Tanzania.'"

Stortz describes the mountain as "epiphanic" and the school at the end of the red dirt road as "transformative." How will she use her experiences on Kilimanjaro and in the village school in her teaching? She says, "I tell students

they need to travel in a third world country. And I remind them how priceless education is and how hard people work for it."

Portions of this article are excerpted from Martha Stortz's *Climbing Kilimanjaro,* which can be read in its entirety on her Web page: http://www.plts.edu/ stortz.html. For additional photos, visit www.plts.edu/ stortz20080803photos.html.

Martha Stortz and Lisa Fullam are recipients of a 2009-2010 Lilly Collaborative Research Grant, "The Progress of Pilgrimage."

Their thesis is that cross-cultural experiences, service learning projects, and immersions are the post-modern version of the ancient practice of pilgrimage. They hope to hike part of Spain's Camino de Santiago de Compostela, participate in Santa Clara University's immersion program in El Salvador, and be faculty resource persons for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America cross-cultural program in Mexico City.

GTU calendar

The Eighteenth Annual Surjit Singh Lecture in Comparative Religious Thought and Culture

The U.S. and the Muslim World: Rethinking the Discourse

SHIBLEY TELHAMI, Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development, University of Maryland, College Park, and Non-resident Senior Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, the Brookings Institution

Tuesday, April 21

Reception 6 pm: Pacific School of Religion Badé Museum Lecture 7 pm: Chapel of the Great Commission, across from the Badé Museum 1798 Scenic, at Le Conte, Berkeley

The Sixth Annual McCoy Memorial Lecture on Religion, Ethics, and Public Life

Religion, Ethics, and Media

MICHAEL KRASNY, host of KQED-FM radio's award-winning *Forum*, a news and public affairs program, professor of English, San Francisco State University, and author of *Off Mike: A Memoir of Talk Radio and Literary Life* IN DIALOGUE WITH

JAMES A. DONAHUE,

Graduate Theological Union president and professor of Ethics

Krasny and Donahue will touch on the religious ideas and issues of the day, people who are framing these issues, and what the media's responsibility is for framing the issues.

Monday, May 4

Program 7 pm: Pacific School of Religion Chapel of the Great Commission Reception 8 pm: Badé Museum 1798 Scenic, at Le Conte, Berkeley

Faith in Human Rights:

An Interfaith Project Lectures, workshops, and courses through May 2009 For more information: www.dspt.edu

All events are open to the public and free. For more information on these and other events, visit www.gtu.edu.

Spring 2009 Currents Newsletter

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