

# Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium

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Volume 6

Article 2

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12-1-2012

## From the Editor's Desk: Triumph!

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### Recommended Citation

Flint-Hamilton, Kimberly (2012) "From the Editor's Desk: Triumph!," *Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium*: Vol. 6, Article 2.

Available at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/jbcts/vol6/iss1/2>

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# Triumph!

**Kimberly Flint-Hamilton, Senior Editor  
Stetson University**

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What a year! From the presidential election, to the great accomplishments of our members, to the various tragedies our nation has experienced – it's been quite a whirlwind of emotion!

First and foremost is our nation's presidential election. President Barack Obama was re-elected for a second term, due in no small part to the work of many of our members! Our past convener, Bryan Massingale, even dined with the President at the 2012 White House Easter Prayer Breakfast this past April, a true honor! Several of us made telephone calls, knocked on doors, and made donations to support Obama's re-election efforts. This was a very close race, and many of us waited and watched the election results with bated breath. Our efforts and prayers paid off, however, as, at about 11:15 pm EST on November 6<sup>th</sup>, Obama was declared victorious.

Hard work and dedication has its rewards, and several of us were honored with promotions and other recognitions this year. Shawnee Daniels-Sykes, SSND, was tenured this past fall. Her tenure portfolio was so strong, in fact, that she was simultaneously promoted to the rank of Associate Professor of Theology – at an institution in which the norm is to be promoted only after having been tenured for a year!

Shawnee is the first black faculty member in the 100-year history of her institution to earn both tenure and promotion! In addition, Shawnee was honored with the Alumni MERIT award from her alma mater, Spelman College, for outstanding service to the community.

Moreover, two of our members were promoted to the rank of Professor. Bryan Massingale and I were both promoted at our respective universities. In each case, we are the first black faculty members to have earned this rank at our institutions. And at least two of our members earned honorary degrees. Our editor-in-chief, Cyprian Davis, OSB, was awarded an honorary doctorate from Xavier University New Orleans, and Bryan Massingale earned an honorary doctorate from Catholic Theological Union. Most of our members are very ambitious and high-achieving, but also modest, so it may well be that there are others who have been honored that we don't know about. To all, for your efforts and dedication, congratulations!

The Oral History Project continues to progress. After receiving generous support from Stetson University and the University of Dayton, Cecilia Moore and I interviewed M. Shawn Copeland and Diana Hayes this past summer. We presented some of the highlights of the interviews at October's Annual Meeting at St. Thomas University in Florida.

This year sees an addition to the Journal's editorial board. Beginning with Volume 7 (2013), Diana Hayes has agreed to serve as book review editor!

And yet, not all our news is about triumph. Despite the auspicious good news, there were also quite a few tragedies.

We lost one of our beloved ACHTUS colleagues. Earlier this year Ada Maria Isasi Diaz passed away. Many of us remember her fondly, and she will be missed.

There are also quite a number of national tragedies, among them two tragic “Stand-Your-Ground” cases. This year 17-year-old black teenager, Trayvon Martin, was shot and killed in Florida by George Zimmerman, who cites the *stand-your-ground* legislation as his defense. Later this year another black teenager, 17-year-old Jordan Russell Davis, was shot and killed in Georgia while sitting in his car with friends by Michael David Dunn in another *stand-your-ground* claim. What does this mean for black teens? Whites who employ the stand your ground legislation after killing a black person are acquitted 73% of the time, as compared to 59% acquittal rate after killing a white person. In the words of DeWayne Wickham, “Those numbers have the stench of Jim Crow justice. They suggest that black life does not have the same value as white life in the Sunshine State. They imply that a law that gives a person the right to use deadly force, when he has the option to retreat from a conflict, tilts the scales of justice in favor of injustice.”<sup>1</sup>

These, of course, are just a few of the tragic moments of 2012. Hurricane Sandy devastated the northeastern United States in late October this year, killing more than 250 people and leaving millions to suffer in the cold for weeks on end. Perhaps the worst, and most memorable for most Americans,

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<sup>1</sup> DeWayne Wickham, “Stand Your Ground Law Flaws – Latest Shooting Death in Florida Shows Uneven Justice of the Law,” USA Today (December 4, 2012), <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2012/12/03/stand-your-ground-dewayne-wickham/1740795/> (accessed December 21, 2012).

however, is the Sandy Hook tragedy, in which 20-year-old Adam Lanza shot and killed 20 elementary school children and six adults.

In spite of these events, however, our work continues. In fact some of the highs and the lows of the year are mirrored in Volume VI of our Journal. Susan Peppers-Bates reflects on the incompatibility of the Gospel message with racism in *The Satanic Nature of Racist 'Christianity.'* SimonMary Ahiokhai explores the philosophical concept of friendship as a model for interreligious dialogue in *Building Interreligious Encounter/Dialogue through Friendship in a Pluralistic World: The Nigerian Context.* Shawnee Daniels-Sykes, SSND, scrutinizes the concept of religious liberty and the irony with which its proponents turn a blind eye to the needs of marginalized groups in *Still We Remain: Living Religious Liberty Consciously and Unconsciously.* Jon Nilson engages the work of James Cone in *Introducing James Cone's 'The Cross and the Lynching Tree.'* Finally, Diana Hayes offers a review of Diana Brady's recent book, *Fraternity.* Volume VI will be difficult to put down!