

# Creating Just Language



8th Day Center for Justice ≈ 2016 Revised Edition

## FOREWORD TO THE 2016 EDITION

The many iterations of this booklet have attempted to keep pace with the important changes in our understanding of the ways language reflects and is reflected by structures of power. As we come to hear more voices and opinions, and bear witness to the many ways in which language acts as injustice, we come to realize the limitations to us and what we are able to cover. We limit ourselves by directing this publication towards persons of privilege in so-called “western” culture, because the language used by privileged individuals is historically and currently problematic. Those who do not feel the burden of oppression tend not to realize the power that language can have in perpetuating that oppression. So, in many ways we fail to speak directly to persons experiencing oppressive language. But we hope that the content reflects a reality that many people are already aware of, people who see what we describe in these pages, as well as the injustices that this booklet does not cover.

We are also limited by time and by our own privileges. There are so many resources from such a diverse array of sources, we couldn’t hope to convey the richness of opinion and experience that could, and should, contradict any of our assumptions and mistakes. We ask for mercy in advance, and for our readers to contribute and correct, so that our next edition of *Creating Just Language* is ever more inclusive and insightful. We need many loud voices in the world, outweighing the violent impact of unjust language, converting hearts and rendering useless the systems of power that manipulate words and minds.

*Content Warning: This booklet contains offensive words and other examples of harmful language.*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS TO THE 2016 EDITION

Collaboration, mutuality, and cooperation are not just buzz words for 8th Day Center, but indeed the life blood of what makes it possible to continue the struggle for justice. The Center acts on the belief that working with others is more fruitful than doing it alone. It takes a community to achieve a just cause and producing *Creating Just Language* is no exception.

The community of friends and colleagues of the Center who helped with this project begins with Mary Fran Coleman, O.P. Her efforts of research and writing *Cleaning Up Biased Language (CUBL)* in 1990 continues as the basis for this edition. Special thanks to all of those who made the previous editions of this publication a success: Yaa Asantawa (a.k.a. Deloice Phelps), Kaye Ashe, O.P., Dolores Brooks, Charles Carney, Kathleen Desautels, S.P., Mary Kay Flanigan, O.S.F., Martha Green, Jean Hughes, O.P., Jean Kracher, Christy Lytle, Haley Moreland, John Poole, and Denise Starkey, O.P. All of these contributors, proofreaders, and editors are still represented in this edition, confirming our trust in the lasting impact of community efforts.

The 2016 edition pulls in several more voices, including 8th Day staff Liz Deligio, Scott Donovan, Gwen Farry, Rachel Kohl, Mary Ellen Madden, and Dorothy Pagosa. Much gratitude is owed to volunteer Anne Burkhardt who contributed the most significant updates and additions for this edition of *Creating Just Language*.

# INTRODUCTION

By Anne Burkhardt

I was honored to be asked to help update this book. It performs an important function: laying out clearly how our language can create or encourage inequality in our society. Scholars have long argued over whether – or how – our language impacts how we see the world. While this debate will be ongoing, many studies have found something important: language changes how we view space, time, and each other.

How do we view each other? How do we view the world? Habits, laziness, thoughtlessness – all of these things can contribute to language that is violent, cruel, and unequal. But this can change. From militaristic language, that normalizes war and violence both individually (that performance was killer!) and on an international scale (there was some unfortunate collateral damage), to sexist language, to language that stigmatizes the disabled, the fat, the elderly, and so on – all of these things, if we try, can be changed.

Oppressive language is not oppressive because it offends someone. It is oppressive because slurs and casual belittling draws upon power dynamics that already exist. By using them, they remind the target of their vulnerability within those power dynamics – and implicitly threaten violence and exploitation of that vulnerability. A casual slur, even when not intended to be offensive, can trigger reminders of unequal status in society, of past violence, of difference and not-belonging.

This is not a proposal to try to stop anyone from saying anything in particular. This is not a proposal for punishing those who use this kind of language, or censoring anyone for choosing these words.

Instead, we propose that we behave with sensitivity towards one another. All it takes is one extra thought when addressing a room – a man saying “Gentlemen,” and immediately making the women in the room feel unwelcome or unimportant. Pausing for a moment and choosing more inclusive language (“Esteemed colleagues,” “friends,” “Y’all,” “folks...”) can create a wholly new experience for the people in the room, including the speaker.

It is our hope that, after reading this booklet, you will come

away with a little more knowledge and a little more thoughtfulness in your everyday language choices. “To know is to take a stand, even if we do so without reflecting. To know is to affirm oneself as a human being in a given relationship with a world of values. To know is to take a position in relation to other living beings, other human beings, and oneself” (Gebara 1999 p. 24).

As Ivone Gebara reminds us, once one knows, one can start to consider one’s actions. In Latin American liberation theology, she says, the “most important thing is not ‘orthodoxy’ but ‘orthopraxis’: acting correctly, with justice and mercy” (192). This booklet is aimed towards helping people know more, reflect more, and therefore act in a manner inclusive and welcoming to all God’s people, male, female and otherwise; black, white, brown, and more; those with a variety of abilities—the fullest array possible of the universe.

# SEXIST LANGUAGE

## Theological and Biblical Perspectives

Speech about God in the exclusive and literal terms of the patriarch is a tool of subtle conditioning that operates to debilitate women's sense of dignity, power, and self-esteem (Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*, 1992, p. 38).

Language in the Bible needs to be addressed at three levels: language reflecting a patriarchal society; biased translation; and inclusive and expansive images of God.

### *Language Reflecting a Patriarchal Society*

The major Western religions have been shaped by men who have sacralized or legitimized their rule in society. In classical Judaism religious law and social law were identical. They formed one legal code which was not only given by God but also was reflective of natural law. Male headship was not only divinely derived but based on the natural order of the universe. As a result, metaphors used to express theological insights were overwhelmingly male-oriented.

The predominant image of God was the Great Patriarch, the Father, complete with his creation, his angels, his people. God as Father became not only just one analogy for God among others, (e.g., Mother, friends, dove, wind, fire, bread), but the normative image, even though apologists insist that God has no sex. Thus, a patriarchal order of society is not only validated by the image of God, but male leaders are seen as God's representatives on earth. If God is Father (or King or Lord), then women cannot represent God. This has become a primary argument against the ordination of women.

In both civil society and the church, the women's movement has shed a bright light on the pervasive exclusion of women from the realm of public symbol formation and decision-making. In these areas, women have been forced to bow to the imagination and needs of a world designed chiefly by men whose views predominate in every area of church life: in ecclesial creeds,

doctrines, prayers, theological systems, liturgical worship, patterns of spirituality, vision of mission, church order, leadership, and disciplines.

The exclusion of women has been stunningly effective in speech about God. While officially it is rightly and consistently said that God is spirit and beyond identification with either male or female sex, the daily language of preaching, worship, catechesis, and instruction conveys a different message: God is male, or at least more like a man than a woman, or more fittingly addressed as male than as female. Upon examination it becomes clear that this exclusive speech about God serves in manifold ways to support an imaginative and structural world that excludes or subordinates women. It undermines women's human dignity as equally created in the image of God (Johnson, 1992, p.4-5).

Biblical and theological analysis must question the patriarchal references to God and the religious justifications for male rule. Any effort to identify the deity as male or female rather than as person, (or in reality, beyond person, for what human can truly name God?) will have the ethical outcome of one sex justifying its domination over the other. Obedience and domination have been used to justify hierarchy as well as control by the strongest. Therefore, "ironically, religion may well lie at the base of both sexism and militarism, as violence done to women legitimates violence done to others" (Chittister, 1986, p.105-06). Consequently, care is needed to recognize the patriarchal language of the Scriptures, the creeds, the teachings of the Church, and to modify it when possible.

### ***Biased Translation***

The difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug (Maggio, 1991, p. 147).

Theological and biblical language reinforced by the political realities of the dominance of male clergy within the institution of the church has produced faulty translations to further the patriarchal view. Feminist theologians and biblical scholars are thus working consciously with insights and understanding gained from their own experience as women to challenge these mistranslations and misinterpretations.

Dr. Phyllis Trible, professor at Andover Newton Theological Seminary, exemplified this effort when she demonstrated that in the language of the biblical creation story, examined outside the traditional confines of patriarchal interpretation, the evidence of full equality between men and women is inescapable (Miller, 1991, p.18).

There are two stories of creation in Genesis. In the first chapter, God created “*man*” in the divine image “...male and female God created them.” In the second chapter, God formed “*man*” of the dust of the ground and later made woman from man’s rib. Scholars recognize the latter as the earlier version, and at first glance it seems to reflect a more primitive concept of human beginnings. But closer examination of the older story as it was recorded in the original Hebrew reveals some significant points lost in English translations. The man formed out of the dust of the ground is ‘*adham*, a generic term in ancient Hebrew for humankind. This original person is seen in the story as an androgynous being having the potentialities of both sexes. It is for the proto-human ‘*adham* that God plans to make a help-mate (‘*ezer*) or fit helper rather than a handmaiden.

Up until God performed surgery on the sleeping androgynous ‘*adham*, the ancient Hebrew storyteller consistently used the generic term ‘*adham*. Only after the rib episode are the Hebrew words specifying the human male, ‘*ish*, and the human female, ‘*ishsha*, introduced. ‘*Adham*, whose flesh and bones have not been sexually identified as female and male, speaks of the two sexes in the third person. That she be called woman (‘*ishsha*) because she is “differentiated from” man (‘*ish*) provides a valid alternative to the Hebrew term usually rendered “taken out of.” The story is far different from the male-oriented interpretation of creation embedded in current conscious understanding and a less conscious use of language (Miller, 1991, p.19).

Biblical translations also have changed the meaning of some of the Greek texts. For example, the *Jerusalem Bible* renders Jesus’ words: “A woman in child-birth suffers because her time has come; but when she has given birth to the child, she forgets the suffering in her joy that a *man* has been born into the world.” (John 16:20). Modern readers quite naturally attribute the woman’s joy to the birth of a *son*. But the Greek word here, translated man, means a *human being* (White, 1975, p.1202).



Other instances occur in which masculine nouns and pronouns have been substituted for those of common gender. In the Gospel of John (1:12) and in the First Epistle of John (3:1-2) for example, the phrase “sons of God” in the King James version is changed to “children of God” in most contemporary translations. The word *adelphoi* is commonly translated brothers, but it actually means siblings, children of one mother, i.e. brothers and sisters. Since enormous weight is given by Christians to every word of the Bible, these and other words need to be corrected. Indeed, the more one looks, the more sexism is found in the Bible—some of it due to modern translation, most of it the result of patriarchal cultural patterns in Biblical times.

### ***Expansive Images of God***

Another area of concern is the variety of metaphors Scripture uses to refer to God. Feminine images are largely lost in interpretation. When Moses, near the end of his life, admonished the Israelites, he said, “You are mindful now of the God who *fathered* you” (*Jerusalem Bible*). The Hebrew verb, however, specifically describes the action of a *woman in labor* and is never used in reference to a man. The translation’s use of *fathered* is at the same time patriarchal and erroneous. (In other translations, such as the *Revised Standard Version*, the *New English Bible*, and the *King James Version*, the rendering is also incorrect though somewhat different in each case.)

On the other hand, after Isaiah describes Yahweh as a warrior and a hero, in the next verse he compares God to a woman in labor (Isaiah 42:13-14). In another passage Yahweh is the one who brings to birth (Isaiah 66:9). Isaiah likens Yahweh’s love to a mother’s love for her child when he asks, “Can a woman forget her baby at the breast or fail to cherish the child in her womb?” (Miller, 1991, p.66). Nevertheless, in spite of these references, Scripture is overwhelmingly male oriented.

God’s presumed masculinity has provided a religious legitimization of the social structures and attitudes that treat women as second-class, non-normative, derivative human beings. The key to inclusive God-language is to be conscious that we are using metaphors to make pure Spirit more accessible to us (Maggio, 1991, p.120).

Jesus used both feminine and masculine images to explain God's relationship to the reign of God. The parable of a man planting mustard seed is followed by another depicting a woman burying yeast in dough. In the parable of the shepherd and lost sheep, Luke describes the woman searching her home for a lost drachma. Further, Jesus likens his suffering to that of a woman in childbirth, and refers to himself as wishing to gather people as a mother hen gathers her brood under her wings (Matt. 23:27; Luke 13:34).

Ivone Gebara points out that Jesus' conception of God is "an orientation toward life itself, a road that needs to be continually built, to be laid out in the light of the unexpected and expected events of every day, in the light of encounters with the outcast. Comparisons of the reign of God to the yeast a woman works into the flour, or a great banquet in which all are satisfied, or the multiplied loaves that ease the multitude's hunger: None of this is metaphysics. These are wisdom lessons drawn from everyday life, from the realities that touch our bodies and weave the texture [of] our relationships" (Gebara, 1999, p.42). Thus, rather than an invocation as male or female, God can also be perceived as neither, or both, or all-encompassing.

Although we may not be free to rewrite Scripture, it frequently needs retranslation with a distinction between what is culturally contingent on a patriarchal society and what is essential to revelation. St. Paul said many things about women that scripture scholars now believe only reflect his culture and therefore are not matters of faith. On the other hand, he made a radical statement, which, because it follows the egalitarian teaching of Jesus, is considered to have great theological import: "There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

The Gospels reveal that Jesus related to women in a way that challenged his society's patriarchal system. His treatment of women frequently shocked his contemporaries because it defied traditional Jewish prescriptions regarding relationships between the sexes. On his way through Samaria, for example, he stopped and spoke with a woman—breaking a Jewish custom forbidding men to speak publicly with women. Jesus celebrated the widow giving her small sum as an example of generosity (while criticizing a system that could force her to), and cured the woman with a

flow of blood, breaking the purity taboos about women. These and other incidents, as well as the general teaching of Jesus, do not make the Gospels a text in women's liberation—they are still a product of patriarchal society—but they do provide a Christian basis for challenging the structures and changing attitudes.

We do not, of course, question the masculinity of Jesus. As a concrete human individual of his time, Jesus was recognized as a man. Yet the significance of the incarnation lies not in the fact that Jesus *became man* but that Jesus *became human*, a person with whom anyone can identify. Jesus was male; Christ is not. Our theological language and our prayers should reflect that fact.

The presenting issue in debates about inclusive language is ostensibly whether the reality of women can provide a suitable metaphor for speech about God. The intensity with which the question is engaged from the local to the international level, however, makes clear that more is at stake than simply naming God with women-identified words such as mother. The symbol of God functions to shape the reality of women in the culture just as male-only language about God has functioned to elevate the position of males in culture and society. We are faced with a pressing need to grow in our understanding of the formative nature and power inherent in language.

Language which represents God as female or feminine challenges the literal-mindedness that has clung to male images in inherited God-talk. Insofar as symbols impact our thoughts, such speech calls into question prevailing structures of patriarchy and dominance in general. It gives rise to a different vision of community, one in which the last shall be first, the excluded shall be included, the mighty put down from their thrones and the humble exalted. These words of Mary of Nazareth's song of praise create conditions for the formation of a community characterized by relationships of mutuality and reciprocity of love and justice (Lk. 1:52).

Introducing this mode of speech signals a shift, among those who use it, in their sense of the divine, a shift in total world view, in highest ideals and values, in personal and corporate identity. Such usage is urged upon the whole faith community in the conviction that it bears a fruitful and blessed promise.

What is the right way to speak about God in the face of women's newly cherished human dignity and equality?

This is a crucial theological question. What is at stake is the truth about God, inseparable from the situation of human beings, and the identity and mission of the faith community itself (Johnson, 1992, p.5-6).

Community worship is where the average Christian most frequently takes part in explicitly theological statements and actions. Nothing else does more to form a Christian's thinking about God. Yet sexist language is rampant in liturgy, particularly in the prayers and music. Hymns and prayers with words describing the community or God in exclusively male terms, such as man, mankind, and brotherhood, make it more likely that the community that uses them will imagine and describe God as male.

How can sexist language in the Scriptures—often due to incorrect translations and patriarchal influence—be changed? There are several possible approaches. One is to use equivalent images of God: i.e. both feminine and masculine images. Another is to be aware of what is communicated in the metaphors we use in worship. Many of the metaphors we encounter are derived from imperialistic and monarchical contexts. Words such as Lord, King, and Ruler imply a one-up/one-down relationship. In addition to substituting words for Lord (e.g. God), Kingdom (e.g. reign), and for Father (e.g. Creator), we can also do further study of those terms to discover deeper and richer meanings. For instance, Lord once had the meaning “bringer of the loaves.”

At first these titles may seem awkward and artificial. However, without some conscious effort, sexist language and sexist discrimination will not be eliminated. These titles can be substituted in public and in private readings of Scripture—no doubt in some places more easily than others. (Some wish to substitute Yahweh for existing titles for God, but this word is commonly considered offensive to Jewish people who believe it sacred, and not to be used). In songs, prayers, and readings we can remove the ever present he, his, and him when referring to God and when used generically to refer to all human beings.

In our attempts to make the language of the liturgy inclusive, we should be aware of the mindset of particular worshiping communities. Respecting the diversity of the community requires a broad and inclusive use of language, symbols, and metaphors that is sensitive to context and history.

## *Societal Perspective and Usage*

Language is replete with biased words, references, and images. They surround us and penetrate our subconscious. Politicians concern themselves with the “common man” and the “man on the street.” We are told that “all men are created equal.” Women do not necessarily read themselves into these phrases, and, in fact, are doing so less and less. They are, rather, demanding that explicit mention be made of them and that the term “man” be recognized for the pseudo-generic term that it is.

In English and American society, patriarchal law codes remained intact until the middle of the 19th century. It was only in 1971 that the Supreme Court began to recognize women as persons with equal rights under the law. Today, although remnants of inequality persist in legal codes, subordination of women is held intact largely by socialization into a patriarchal culture maintained primarily through discrimination against women in the workplace. But even here patriarchy is floundering. Women’s contribution at home and at work is increasingly recognized as co-equal with men’s. People are accepting their co-equal collaborative roles in raising children and working side-by-side as laborers and professionals. Our language should reflect this reality.

Currently, the real-world implications of women being described as less than men are seen in wage differences, poverty statistics, reproductive rights, and medical study representation. The pay gap has barely budged in the last decade – remaining at about 78 cents for every dollar a man makes, and worse as the statistics are broken down by race (“The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap,” AAUW, 2014). Women are the majority of minimum wage workers and the majority of those receiving government aid (EPI Briefing Paper, Economic Policy Institute, 2009). Doctors are finally starting to include women in studies, discovering – for instance – that the symptoms of a heart attack for women are very different than the symptoms for men (“The Woman’s Heart Attack,” New York Times, 2014).

In patriarchal systems, women are regarded as legally dependent on the male head of the family: father, husband, or guardian. They therefore lack autonomous legal status. Even rights to their person are restricted: e.g. men determine whom they will marry as well as proper sexual behavior for women.

Many girls learn early that they are to serve their fathers and brothers until transferred to another man through marriage. Recent studies have found that girls do more housework than their brothers, and the “second shift” for adults has not yet fallen by the wayside. Traditionally, the wedding ceremony condescendingly pronounces the couple man and wife, rather than husband and wife or partners, and afterwards the wife takes the surname of her husband. Indeed, women are often introduced as Mrs. [husband’s name] after their weddings in what appears to be a complete renunciation of identity.

Since the Industrial Revolution, this patriarchal ownership has been symbolized in the use of “Mrs.” to designate a woman’s status as different from “Miss.” Originally Mistress—abbreviated Ms., Miss, or Mrs.—applied to all female people. In the seventeenth century Mrs. was separated to refer to adult married women and Miss to female children. As women gained some independence as paid laborers, their titles supplied information about their sexual availability and social status in relation to men.

### ***Linguistic Exclusion***

The subtle power of linguistic exclusion does not stop with words like man, brother, son, or father. Even neutral words are often understood to be male, unless explicit reference suggests otherwise. Consider the following sentence: “People will give up anything before power—money, home, wife, children—but not power” (Miller/Swift, 1990, p.55). Here it is presumed that “people” are *men* since reference is made to wives. The wording also subtly suggests that women are not interested in power. They attain whatever power they enjoy through the men they marry. It suggests, furthermore, that men are irredeemably power hungry. Such biased language reflects and reinforces male dominance by excluding women from even non-gendered words and by perpetuating dangerous stereotypes.

### ***More than Words***

Every language reflects the prejudices of the society in which it evolved (Maggio, 1991, p.125).

Language is more than words. It is communication between

people which mirrors socio-political structures. Most sociolinguists agree that while language is a significant factor in the maintenance of social structures, changes in language alone will not alter the power structure. It is true that language normally lags behind social change. However, “changes in language can be a significant factor in raising consciousness in the process of seeking change in power structures” (*The Power of Language*, 1979, p. 12).

Language, then, both reflects and reinforces social relationships. Many more women than men are called by their first names on the job and in offices, where more executives are men and more office assistants and clerks are women. The first-naming of all women becomes habitual, regardless of status. Nicknames, too, are often a way to differentiate between the respect for men and respect for women: “sweetie,” “sweetheart,” “honey,” and more are used to refer to women in various professional capacities. This discriminatory use of language not only reflects hierarchical relationships but also reinforces them.

### ***Power and Dominance Intrinsic to Language***

Language...is one of the instruments of domination. It is carefully guarded by the superior people because it is one of the means through which they conserve their supremacy (Maggio, 1991, p.154).

Studies show that male dominance appears in the very content of words. Words that name men or refer to men tend to have positive connotations such as power, prestige, leadership. Words referring to women generally are negative and suggest weakness, immaturity, triviality, inferiority. Words used about women—even terms of endearment—frequently assume underhanded meanings or become derogatory in a sexual sense.

For example, queen, a royal term, has come to mean an effeminate man, but king has not been similarly trivialized. A teacher tried to describe one of her most attractive and capable students: “I found myself saying, ‘She’s really a prince.’ Appalled as I was at my own pro-masculine description, I just couldn’t say she was a princess because ‘princess’ connotes someone who is fussy and spoiled and accustomed to living in the lap of luxury” (Miller, 1991, p.58).

Frequent gender-based double standards in describing a person's characteristics:

- an aggressive businessman and a pushy businesswoman
- an active boy and a tomboy
- a worried family man and a harried housewife
- a brave man and a tough little woman
- a big-spending male and an extravagant female
- a man who protests and a woman who complains
- a shrewd man and a scheming woman
- a take-charge man and a bossy woman

In its definition of “manly,” the *Random House Dictionary* describes strong, brave, honorable, resolute, virile as qualities usually considered desirable in a man and cites feminine, weak, cowardly as antonyms. Its definitions of “womanly” are like or befitting a woman, feminine, not masculine, or girlish. The many positive qualities admired in men could be used to define women, too, but they are not. This type of language also completely disregards those who identify differently on the gender spectrum.

Another way in which the English language expresses male dominance is by using male categories as universal or by using “man” to refer to both men and women, and “he” both for him and her. While it is true that English speakers tend not to accept “they” as a singular personal pronoun for both male and female, the use of the masculine he, him, or his to include women reinforces male dominance. Using “they” is a preferable, more inclusive alternative to male or female pronouns alone.

Moreover, the absorption of “woman” into the universal category of “man” causes women to become invisible. The words “man” and “he,” however, are not universal because they are never used to refer just to women. When women protest the use of exclusive male nouns and pronouns, they are often chastised for raising a trivial issue or they are told everyone knows the word man includes woman or that it is merely grammatical convention.

“Man is the highest form of life on earth,” the *Britannica Junior Encyclopedia* explains. “His superior intelligence combined with certain physical characteristics have enabled man to achieve things impossible for other animals.” The response of a young boy to this information is likely to be “Wow!” – that of a young girl,



“Who? Do they mean me too?” Even if the woman understands that, yes, she too is part of man, she must leap the hurdles of all those other terms that she knows, from her experience, refer to men only (Miller, 1991, p. 33).

The relationship between power and language is evident in stories from the Hebrew Scriptures. From Adam’s naming of the animals to assume control over them to Moses’ demanding a name from God, the narratives from Hebrew scripture recognize the power of language: naming and power are closely tied. God refused to reveal the divine name to Moses, but asserted instead: “I Am who Am.” After wrestling all night, the Angel named Jacob but would not allow Jacob to name God. The powerful person speaks with authority and names the weaker (*Power of Language*, 1979, p. 8).

In most Western societies, men not only keep their names but can pass them on intact to their sons, who in turn pass them on to their sons. Women, if they wish to trace their ancestors, normally must search back along a line of men, each of whom took his respective father’s name. Too often women simply disappear from family histories.

### *Pseudogeneric Mankind*

Whatever may have been true in the past, “man” has become so intimately tied to its primary meaning of “male person” that it no longer is general enough to apply to humanity as a whole.

Studies have shown that male terms used in the universal sense tend to exclude women. In 1972, two sociologists tested some 300 college students by asking them to select from magazines and newspapers a variety of pictures that would appropriately illustrate the different chapters of a new sociology textbook. Half the students were assigned chapter headings like “Social Man,” “Industrial Man” and “Political Man.” The other half were given different but corresponding headings like “Society,” “Industrial Life,” and “Political Behavior.” The results revealed that in the minds of the students of both sexes, use of “man” evoked images of males only—filtering out recognition of women’s participation in these major areas of life—whereas the corresponding headings without “man” evoked images of both males and females.

The authors concluded, “this is rather convincing evidence

that when you use the word man generically, people tend to think male and tend not to think female” (Miller, 1991, p.19).

Little is known about how or to what extent children learn to use the word “man” after having first learned its primary meaning as referring to males. However, a study at the University of Iowa in 1973 touches on the subject. Using a picture-selection technique with 100 children ranging in grade level from nursery school through the 7th grade, the study found that “man” in the sentences, “Man must work in order to eat” and “Around the world man is happy,” were interpreted by a majority of children of both sexes to mean males and not females (Miller, 1991, p.21). Suffice it to say that the intent of this section is not to substitute feminine for masculine language. The goal of this reflection is inclusivity, mutuality, and cooperation in language and in life.

### *Gender Non-Binary Language*

As it becomes clear that gendered language is made up of arbitrary distinctions which reinforce power systems, the existence of two and only two distinct genders becomes less realistic. Many individuals do not identify with the gender traditionally associated with their anatomy, many identify with a variety of characteristics both masculine and feminine, and many do not identify with either of these genders. While many people prefer not to choose a specific gender, it is difficult to navigate a society which largely expects gender conformity. Individuals are assumed and labeled as a specific gender by observers. People are expected to behave and interact in ways traditionally associated with a specific gender. Rules of gender, which can be advantageous to many, can be oppressive and ostracizing to these individuals. Legal/medical forms, restrooms, locker rooms, and more do not typically allow for those identifying outside of a gender binary.

It is important both to acknowledge that masculinity is not more important than femininity, and that the existence of these distinctions harms many people. Imagining the possibility of a non-gendered society, in which gender is realized as arbitrary, is helpful in envisioning ways of behaving which are more inclusive.

With non-genderism there simply is nothing that is, say, feminine: not a way of talking, walking, dressing, thinking, or

communicating. These ways of behaving, of course, do still exist, that is, a person might be nurturing or aggressive, but *there is no further association of them with a gender category...* It is non-genderism that approaches the ideal of eliminating sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, transphobia, and sexual discrimination. All of these social categorizing phenomena depend for their existence on the performance of gender according to the rules of bigenderism (Gilbert, 2009).

It is important to recognize that we cannot pretend to be oblivious to the impact of gender. Those who identify as women, those who identify as other or no gender, and those who identify as men but do not conform to stereotypical masculine traits are oppressed by gender expectations in different ways, and we cannot make up for that oppression by acting as though it does not have lasting effects. A non-gendered world cannot spring up out of such a reality. Yet, while a non-gendered world may not be within easy reach, reducing our assumptions about gender, avoiding labeling the gender of others, and other practices which defeat gender binary oppression are important steps in creating safe, inclusive social settings.

# MILITARISTIC LANGUAGE

In the previous section, we reflected on the power which is intrinsic to language. One of the ways in which this power has become overt is in the predominance of violent metaphors and images in our everyday language.

Words connoting destruction or aggressive posture have crept into daily language because the culture translates them as efficient (beat the clock, take a stab at it, she blew up, etc.). Many words have come into usage directly from military action (call in the troops, a shot in the dark, bullet points, etc.). This phenomenon suggests a society that identifies effectiveness with aggression, even violence.

On the other hand, one of the most common ways for groups to deal with difficulty is by denial. Society is continually looking for ways to express anger and destruction without having to suffer the pain of memory. Hence, dead non-combatants during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and dead Panamanians during the invasion in search of Noriega were called “collateral damage.” In the war in Kosovo, NATO’s bombing of refugees was considered a justifiable risk. Rationalizing civilian deaths due to their use as “human shields” has transferred the blame for their deaths from the aggressor to the victims. Use of such language inures the community to the reality and pain of destruction, war, aggression. It takes the hurt out of social reality and the violence out of war.

Society has a responsibility to evaluate both the use of violent words in everyday speech, as well as the denial language used to subvert good judgment. The recent epidemic of shootings, both in schools and in other public spaces like malls and movie theaters, the phenomenon of “road rage,” and the prevalence of violence in our speech, has a profound, yet subtle influence.

Militaristic language can also be used to create and/or reinforce prejudices. A kind of negative stereotypical identification has become a useful tool of governments in demonizing their enemies as “terrorists” and their governments as “regimes.” The English would have called the rebellious colonists “terrorists,” while the colonists would have called themselves “freedom fighters.” The term is always applied to the less powerful of adversaries and promulgated by the more powerful to cultivate disdain for the

enemy. Unfortunately, once the term “terrorist” is applied to a group of individuals with similar ethnic origins, the negative reverberations spill over to all persons of that particular ethnic background, and those who are perceived as similar to them – for instance, the violence against Sikhs due to the misplaced association of the turban with Muslims after 9/11 and Islamic State attacks. Linguistic choices like “warlord” to refer to African leaders but not genocidal leaders from Europe or the United States also reinforce the innate “savage” qualities that people of color and “others” are believed to have.

Questions we might consider as we work to create just language include: *How does violent language lead to violent behavior? If we are committed to nonviolent action, how does our use of language reflect this value? In liturgical settings, how can we discuss the violent images and language which saturate Judeo-Christian text?*

# LANGUAGE AND DIFFERENCE

If we listen closely to the way language is used in societal and cultural contexts, it becomes apparent that language is focused on naming the differences which exist between persons. Differences may include race, class, sexual orientation, and any other feature which distinguishes a person. Language is used to make persons “other,” thereby separating them from the “dominant” group. This section offers some reflections and suggestions for honoring the rich tapestry created by our diversity.

## **Aggression in Language**

### *Microaggression*

Language can tear people down in both obvious and subtle ways. Small, cumulative interactions that tend to cut down individuals within marginalized groups have popularly begun to be referred to as ‘microaggressions.’ Microaggression can come in the form of derogatory words, stereotypes, comments, insults, compliments, assumptions, and expectations towards or about someone based on race, gender, orientation, and many other factors. A woman, for example, may have every-day experiences which make her feel that the world perceives her as less important than a man. Each one of these incidents is relatively easy to brush off, especially when the intent of the other person involved is not malicious. However, a full day speckled with interactions that are based on the assumption that men are more important than women leaves her exhausted and dejected. A lifetime of feeling this way makes it that much more difficult for her to strive for her voice to be heard. Speaking up requires energy and self-confidence, of which she is stripped on a daily basis. Microaggressions often cause or contribute to lower self-esteem, anger and frustration, depletion of energy, physical and mental health problems, and even shorter life expectancy.

Some persons of privilege shy away from acknowledging that microaggressions are a reality. They might equate changing their behavior to a sort of walking-on-eggshells political correctness, not worth the effort. It is frustrating for people to feel that their intentions might be misunderstood because of the wording they

choose, words which they understand to be the best way to explain themselves accurately. But this frustration is secondary to the impact of harmful language upon already marginalized groups. And in the end, those who limit their microaggression build stronger connections with a wider variety of individuals, allowing the wisdom of others to help them become more humble, justice-seeking, and communicative individuals.

### *Appropriation and Code Switching*

One explicit form of aggression is the realm of appropriation. Some side effects of globalization are, of course, being exposed to new cultures and their music, rituals, fashion, and more. However, there is a thin line between appreciation and appropriation. Sometimes, when a food becomes trendy but the people who invented that food are not fully accepted in our society, the implications can be very hurtful. The item might even be branded with a stereotype of an individual from the culture of origin, putting money into the hands of the appropriator while further dehumanizing the creator. This is particularly blatant around Halloween, when cultures become costumes – particularly religious dress – in a manner that is highly disrespectful.

Code switching refers to the interplay between different types of language or behavior; for example, a student using African American Vernacular English (AAVE) at home and with friends, and American English at school or work. This is an important tool for people who move between different cultures. However, it can be appropriated by people who do not live in those cultures, which – once again – can be hurtful to those who feel that they must restrict their own language for the comfort of others.

### *Racist Language*

“Prejudices, it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the heart whose soil has never been loosened or fertilized by education; they grow there, firm as weeds among stones” (Maggio, 1991, p. 237).

Racism is prejudice *plus the power* of one group to control and/or exclude another. In a racist society, this power is so

profound and pervasive, playing itself out in every aspect of the social constructs, that successive generations come to accept the stratifications of power and access as normal. The language of the conspiring systems—religious, cultural, economic, social, and political—promotes and maintains the myths.

Both the Crusades and the Inquisition demonized the beliefs of others allowing for the economic expansion of the controlling groups. Anti-Communist efforts in the United States began a tradition of disrespecting eastern cultures and religions at a fundamental level. To this day, unverifiable Christian beliefs are respected as tenets of faith (in many western cultures), while unverifiable non-Christian beliefs are negatively referred to as superstition (Moor, 1989).

The “discovery” language used for the recorded arrival of Europeans in the western hemisphere gave a less-than-human connotation to the resident developed Indigenous Nations. By extension, expanding “civilization,” as defined by the controlling group, justified the decimation of Indigenous culture, society, religion, political, and economic structures. It should be remembered that to finance the “discovery,” Spain carried out a purge, confiscating the property of Jews who would not convert to Christianity.

The selling of Africans, their re-naming by owners, the use of the term “boy,” and the written laws that identified them as real-estate (Virginia, 1705), both defined and perpetuated their exclusion. The present day, seemingly innocuous—and therefore more dangerous—use of “you people” or “those people” perpetuates that exclusion by setting individuals apart as a group whose characteristics are unacceptable to the controlling group and by creating an “us” and “them” mentality. In addition, a subtle, yet pervasive reality which accompanies this language is the assignment of negative stereotypical behavior, such as the belief that most welfare mothers are black, when in fact most are white. Another popular assumption is that all black or Latino males are drug dealers and thieves and all persons of Middle Eastern descent are terrorists.

The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the internment of Japanese-Americans (and not German Americans) during WWII again reinforced European-American prejudices, consolidating the power to enforce racist policy. “This is a race war,” said



Representative John Raskin in 1942. He continued, “Let’s get rid of them now” (Moore, 1989).

Denigrating terminology toward other racial-ethnic groups flows freely in everyday speech: these are any and all terms which a specific group or individual has not self-identified with, which generalizes, or which is associated with oppressive actions. This phenomenon has a long history that flows from both racist and nativist inclinations. It is language that attempts to justify a history of exploitation.

Within the last decades, racial, ethnic, and women’s groups have realized that others more politically powerful have named them. Civil rights leaders explained how language was used to maintain discriminatory views of African-Americans. Analyzing negative stereotypes about African-Americans, Simon Podair, a linguist, wrote: “So powerful is language in its imprint upon the human mind that even the minority group may accept the very expressions that aid in its stereotyping” (*Language of White Racism*, p. 264). Examples of pushback against this negative naming include African-American men marching with signs that read “I AM A MAN,” both during the civil rights/labor movements and now, protesting against police brutality.

Other frighteningly real implications of unjust language have confronted our nation with the violence against black men and boys, particularly from white men and the police. The narrative around their deaths, unlike the narratives often around the deaths of white people, usually asks, “What did they do to deserve it?” The repercussions for those who kill black people are often little more than a slap on the wrist, while the discussion tends towards sympathy and attention for them rather than for the loved ones of the person killed.

Another example of power in naming has appeared as the United States begins to approach the issue of immigration reform. Referring to someone as an “illegal alien” rather than an “undocumented immigrant” frames the issue very differently and literally alienates the individual. Similarly, there is a significant distinction between an exile, a refugee, a temporary worker, and an immigrant.

Finally, one recently common reaction to the issues of race and ethnicity has been to claim “I don’t see race.” Though this may seem like a good, “colorblind” approach to dealing with one

another, it erases the importance of difference and diversity, and ignores the fact that we are not all treated equally and we have not all received the same privileges in life. No one is ever truly objective, and for someone to claim that they are is disingenuous.

### *The Symbolism of Color*

Roger Bastide writes: “Christianity has been accompanied by a symbolism of color. This symbolism has formed and cultivated a sensitivity to color...But the greatest Christian two-part division is that of black and white. White is used to express the pure, while black expresses the diabolical. The conflict between good and evil comes finally to be expressed by the conflict between white and black” (Schwartz and Disch, 1985, p.271).

In Christian language, as in everyday language, dark and light in the abstract are not separable from darkness and lightness of skin. These associations are pervasive and have tangible consequences when heard so many times in such stark contrast.

“Some may blackly (angrily) accuse him of trying to blacken (defame) the English language, to give it a black eye (a mark of shame) by writing such black words (hostile). They may denigrate (to darken) him by accusing him of being blackhearted (malevolent), of having black or dark outlook (pessimistic) on life, on being a blackguard (scoundrel) – which would certainly be a black mark (detrimental fact) against him. Some may blackbrow (scowl at) him and hope that a black cat crosses in front of him for his black deed. He may become a black sheep (one who shames or embarrasses because of deviation from accepted standards) who will be blackballed (ostracized) by being placed on a blacklist (list of undesireables)... But he doesn’t see things in entirely black or white (entirely good or entirely bad) terms, for he is a white man (marked by upright firmness) if there ever was one. However it would be a black day when he would not call a “spade a spade,” even though some suggest that a white man calling the English language racist is like the pot calling the kettle black.” – Robert Moore

Ossie Davis, in *Racism in the English Language*, has developed

a lesson on racism in language. When he looked up whiteness and blackness in *Roget's International Thesaurus*, he found that of the 120 synonyms for blackness, 60 are unfavorable, e.g. blotch, smut, murky, evil, deadly, and dirty. Of the 134 synonyms for white, 44 are favorable and include purity, cleanliness, innocent, fair, and trustworthy. Only 10 synonyms are negative, e.g. whitewash. Ossie Davis notes, "The English language is my enemy. It teaches the African-American child 60 ways to hate (themselves) and the white child 60 ways to aid and abet the crime" (Moore, 1976, p. 23, edited).

Just as the word black is commonly associated with evil the words yellow and red also tend to carry negative connotations ("yellow coward," "red-necked"). The word white, however, is viewed as positive ("though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow").

An important step that can be taken to honor inclusion and diversity is to be respectful and sensitive to the ways which people self-identify: for example, do they wish to be identified as African-American or Black; Hispanic or Latina/o; Native American, American Indian, or First Nations? To create a truly just world requires that we not fall into the dominant mode of naming others, but allow people to name themselves.

These examples and the brief look at the history that produced them serve as a mirror of the past as well as an indicator of the future. Commitment to inclusive, non-racist language reflects not just a willingness, but rather a need to create new prisms through which to view and relate to the world at large.

### **Heterosexist/Homophobic Language**

*Faggot*. 1. A bundle of sticks or twigs esp. as used for fuel, as a fascine, or as a means of burning heretics alive (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*)

*Homophobia*: 1. The fear of feelings of love for members of one's own sex and therefore the hatred of those feelings on theirs; 2. The irrational fear of any sexual expression between people of the same gender (*A Feminist Dictionary*, C. Kramarae and P. Treichler, 1985)

Hate speech against lesbians and gays begins at a very early age. “Fag” and “dyke” are two of the most popular insults used in schools and on playgrounds all over this country. In a Des Moines, Iowa, School District study it was found that students hear sexual orientation slurs 26 times per day during school hours. The popularity of phrases such as “that’s so gay,” referring to anything that the speaker does not like, have continued to grow. As with most hate speech, what starts out as taunts often ends up as violence.

We have grown up in a world where heterosexuality is seen as the norm. Yet research shows that at least ten percent of the population are not heterosexual but are lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

When writing or speaking about sexual orientation, we need to become sensitive to the fact that the terms “heterosexual,” “bisexual,” or “homosexual” (or any other description of sexual preference) do not represent the fullness of human potential as people created by God. These terms are narrow, clinical definitions of one aspect of human existence.

As with race, we can help to create just language by respecting the language which people choose for identification. The terms “gay,” “bisexual,” and “lesbian” are preferred adjectives, as in “gay men,” “bisexual person,” and “lesbian women.” To avoid objectifying a person do not say “he is a gay,” “they are bi,” or “she is a lesbian.” Avoid “preference” or “choice.” Avoid “homosexual lifestyle” or “gay or lesbian lifestyle” because no one lifestyle typifies gay or lesbian people any more than one lifestyle typifies heterosexually oriented people. The struggle for gay marriage is an example of erasure in language; a preferred description is “same-sex” marriage, so as to refer to the broader spectrum of people this political decision impacts. Some people have begun to reclaim the slurs used to refer to their groups. This reclamation may make others uncomfortable, but it may be an important process individually.

Increasingly, we see LGBT, LGBTQ, and LGBTQAI as acronyms denoting non-heterosexual individuals. These acronyms are not synonymous with “gay and lesbian” (those identities are represented by only the first two letters of the acronym) and the acronyms go beyond denoting sexuality and also denote gender identity. Some understanding of what each letter of these acronyms means —particularly the less familiar T, Q, A and I—is

necessary if we are to create just language.

**LGBTQAI** stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), asexual, and intersex. People who identify as **asexual** do not experience sexual attraction and will negotiate sex, partnerships, marriage, and family structures differently than non-asexual people. **Queer**, to some, is an umbrella term for all persons who are not heterosexual, and this has proven to be problematic. Some persons dislike the word queer because it has, historically, been used as a bullying term for gay folks. Hearing the word “queer” can bring back painful and traumatic memories for people who have experienced the word as degrading, verbal abuse in bullying situations. Queer has been used to dehumanize people. Increasingly, however, “queer” is being reclaimed by non-heterosexual identified individuals, as well as theologians and other academics (e.g. in the areas of “Queer Theology” and “Queer Theory”), as a positive and affirming identity term. Identifying as queer empowers such individuals to authentically express themselves while resisting traditional narratives of gender and sexuality supported by a binary gender construct. However, given that “queer” can mean empowerment and freedom to some, and pain and degradation to others, the term should be used with care. As with any identity, you should not label a person as “queer” unless they have explicitly told you that they identify as such.

Heterosexism and homophobia, as well as gender inequality, are supported by/predicated on, and simultaneously help to reify, a **binary gender** construct. Binary gender describes the man/woman, male/female dichotomy that we are all familiar with. This binary is oppressive to persons who do not adhere to it and it problematically reduces the God-given diversity of creation: “the dualistic opposition of male versus female has never been a precise description of the human race” (Mollenkott, 19). In 1989, famed gender theorist Judith Butler wrote, “there is a political problem that feminism encounters in the assumption that the term women denotes a common identity.” Butler continues, “if one is a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive... because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional ... identities” (Butler, p.4). Butler’s point is that the identifier “woman” (or “man”) fails to be exhaustive and partially because of this, is not an

essential identity for some people. Also, gender identity—the socially learned and expressed characteristics of being a woman or a man—and sex—the way we classify and name genitalia and chromosomal makeup—are not interchangeable. For some people, their gender identity is different than their sex.

People who are identified as **intersex** are born with genitalia or chromosomal makeup that does not fit neatly into medically prescribed categories of male or female. When the first pronouncement about a person is usually either “it’s a girl!” or “it’s a boy!” we see the problem of language for such persons. Such pronouncements are descriptive but also prescriptive. It is through binary gender that our society recognizes personhood—imagine filling out census forms, job applications, or surveys if you were neither “properly” male or female. When being named as *either* a boy or a girl defines one’s humanity, where does that leave the person who is intersex?

Even though the struggle may not be so visibly clear as it is for intersex persons, persons who identify as **transgender** and **transsexual** are also outside of, or in a place of relative ambiguity between, the gender binary. Many people are assigned either male or female at birth but in later years feel dissatisfied with that assignment. Some people who feel dissatisfied wish to change their gender—this transformation takes place through changing how they think and talk about themselves and how they want others to think and talk about them. Name changes, pronoun changes, and changes in clothing choices, hairstyles, and other grooming methods are common during such transitions. A person who identifies as transgender will likely have undergone a transition such as this. Many such individuals may also find that altering their body through methods such as surgery or hormone therapy helps them feel more comfortable in the gender they now identify as. People who identify as transsexual have medically transitioned in one or more of these ways. Most transgender and transsexual people transition from either male to female or female to male, but a good number also transition in ways that are not as identifiable as either “male” or “female.” Gender expression is something that every person (not just trans people) has to negotiate to find the way they can be their authentic selves. Importantly, a transgender identity does not say anything about the sexual orientation of the individual.

The linguistic difficulty and prejudice against trans folks is also evident in the fact that there has not been a word for people who are not transgendered (similarly, the term “heterosexual” was created only after the advent of the “homosexual” in the late 19th century)(Jagose, p.16). People who are not transgendered have been assumed to be correct and normal, and therefore their particular identity need not be specified. However, in the past few decades, “**cisgender**,” which refers to the gender identity of persons who have accepted their traditional gender assignments has come into use. Using terms like “heterosexual” and “cisgender” demonstrates recognition that no identity is better than another.

The current problems and the potential positives of our language about human gender also extend to our gendered language for God. Christian theologian and ethicist Kathy Rudy states “basing theology on gender... increases the importance of gender in all areas of life, leading finally to a system in which all social and theological roles are connected to one’s genitals.” Our language about God should challenge our own human problematic distinctions, rather than reify them.

### *Language about Disabilities*

“Jesus makes a point of revealing his character and power to the oppressed first...It’s the women, slaves, and the sick (and not the privileged) who got an insider’s glimpse in his jaw-dropping miracles” (Christina Cleveland).

Language goes hand-in-hand with social change—both shaping it and reflecting it. Rosalie Maggio in her book, *The Bias-Free Word Finder: A Dictionary of Non-discriminatory Language* says: “Language...is one of the instruments of domination. It is carefully guarded by the superior people because it is one of the means through which they conserve their supremacy” (Maggio, 1991, p. 154).

All language which excludes or diminishes a person is a form of domination. How we speak about persons with disabilities can also be discriminatory. Consider first how you would introduce someone – Jane Doe – who doesn’t have a disability. You would give her name, where she lives, what she does or what she is interested in: she likes swimming, or eating Mexican food, or...

Why say it differently for a person with a disability?

Every person is made up of many mental as well as physical characteristics, and few want to be identified by their ability to play tennis, or their weight, or the mole on their face. Whole persons are more than their parts.

1. Acknowledge the person first, not the disability. Ask the person how s/he refers to her/his disability. When speaking about people for professional purposes, the correct term is “persons with developmental and intellectual disabilities”.
2. Emphasize abilities, not limitations.
3. Do not label people as part of a disability group. Don’t say “the disabled;” say “people with disabilities.”
4. Don’t give excessive praise or attention to a person with a disability; don’t patronize them.
5. Choice and independence are important: the person with a disability should speak for themselves as much as possible.
6. A disability is a functional limitation that interferes with a person’s ability to walk, hear, talk, learn, etc.: use handicap to describe a situation or barrier imposed by society, the environment or oneself.
7. Normal is more appropriately used referring to inanimate statistics and averages. Referring to non-disabled persons as normal insinuates that disabled persons are abnormal. This is unacceptable.
8. Avoid words with negative connotations which tend to evoke pity: abnormal, condition, deformed, differently abled, disfigured, incapacitated, poor, spastic, afflicted, invalid, confined, crazy, psycho, insane, dumb, retarded, or lame.
9. For mental disabilities or illnesses, two preferred terms are “neuroatypical” to refer to those people with illnesses and, alternately, “neurotypical” to refer to those without illnesses.

Another easy way to provide accommodations for people with disabilities or mental illnesses – besides making sure that your meeting-places are accessible, that you have translation services available, and that you have been sensitive to the food needs of your group – is to provide warnings on material that could potentially cause a traumatic response, particularly due to post-traumatic stress disorder.



## *Classist Language*

The word “class” is used to describe income and employment status, but also taste: “She has class.” “Don’t you have any class?” No one likes being designated lower class or underclass (a term used in economic activist literature to describe people who have the least economic resources). When it comes to class designations most people don’t seem to mind being labeled middle class and upper class. But those designations can be misleading and can minimize a person’s dignity.

The term working class suggests that these persons work and that the person with a higher income doesn’t have to work. In other words, classist language communicates broad stereotypes which become descriptions of character as well as economic status. The assumption is made that a lower-class person has low income, little education, and little knowledge of ‘arts and culture’. At the same time the upper-class person is considered to have a high income, a higher education, and ‘good taste’. Such assumptions are belittling, superficial, and inaccurate, and there are innumerable examples that refute such generalizations.

Given the current reality of a stratified society, we do need language and terms to describe people’s various situations in our society; to discuss, for example, how a certain presidential candidate or bill in Congress will affect different groups of people. One way of avoiding classist language is to use language more precisely in concrete situations rather than in global generalizations – such as using the language of “underpaid” rather than poor.

## *Ageism*

Our healthcare system has improved by leaps and bounds. As a result, the US population has more people over the age of eighty than ever before. In addition, the economic downturn has pushed retirement ages back for many workers. Due to these factors, people are encountering more elderly people both at home and in the work environment. Elder abuse and neglect cases are on the rise and geriatrics is one of the fastest-growing fields of medicine and social work.

At home, one important trend to be aware of is the possibility of treating the elderly as less competent, less aware, or less

intelligent. Assumptions are made about their ability to adapt to new environments and technology, make their own decisions regarding their independence, and more.

Similarly, at work, people above the traditional retirement age of sixty-five may find it difficult to keep their jobs (often due to a misperception of their comfort with newer technology). They can be considered “past their prime,” “over the hill,” or that their “ship has sailed.” Even by middle age, jobseekers report immense difficulty in finding jobs, believing that the jobs are going to younger workers.

Young people can also be treated with disrespect, with the assumption that they are “wet behind the ears” and lack experience, even when the opposite may be true. A common issue in the job market now is the rise of the internship, which is often not considered real work but is the only entry level job available. Another issue is in the belief of the “magical youth,” expecting that millennials are wizards of technology – leading to hiring fewer tech people and expecting workers to do work outside of their true job description.

### *Faith Discrimination*

It is important to be careful in interactions with those of other faiths, particularly when planning an event or expectations for jobs. Different faiths have different traditions, expectations, and diets; when ordering food for an event that may have a variety of believers, it is important to ask attendees whether they have any dietary restrictions and keep extra Halal, Kosher, vegetarian, etc. food available.

Similarly, it is important to be sensitive and flexible to differences in prayer practice. A prayer room that may be used by a variety of different faiths can include a prayer rug, a compass or qibla (to help direct prayers towards Mecca), floor pillows, and more. This is especially important in places like hospitals which, though they may be Catholic or Christian in foundation, are used by many people of different faiths.

Accommodations for prayer are particularly important for those religions who have designated times that they must pray. Flexibility in the work or retreat environment is imperative.

## *Sizeism*

Language surrounding people who are outside of accepted boundaries of size can be very hurtful. One movement that is currently attempting to address these issues is the “Health at Every Size” movement. They argue that size has very little to do with health and “acknowledges that good health can best be realized independent from considerations of size,” focusing on adopting healthy behaviors rather than the obsessive focus on limitation and other poor health choices resulting from body hatred. Casual workplace talk about dieting or comments about someone’s weight can be unintentionally hurtful, as can old metaphors about size being equated to greed and evil – fat cats of Wall Street, for example, or images from political cartoons using size as a commentary on a person’s worth.

## *Conclusion*

Though some of these linguistic changes can be difficult at first, once your mind gets in the habit of thinking before speaking about groups you are not a member of and adding nuance to your everyday life, your world can open up to be inclusive of many more people and friends. The more inclusive you are in your language, the more welcoming your community is, and the more thoughtful you can be about the world and its peoples.

# THE NEW COSMOLOGY

“Anthropocentrism refers to our focus on the human and the belief that we are the final purpose of the cosmos” (Paul Collins).

“Human beings are a part of the whole we call the Universe; they are a tiny fragment of time and space. However, they regard themselves, their ideas and their feelings, as separate and apart from all the rest. It is something like an optical illusion in their consciousness. This illusion is a sort of prison; it restricts us to our personal aspirations and limits our affective life to a few people very close to us. Our task should be to free ourselves from this prison, opening up our circle of compassion in order to embrace all living creatures and all of nature in its beauty” (Albert Einstein).

Language reflects the cosmology—the study of the universe and what goes on within it—to which one adheres. There are two dominant world-views that describe reality: the “old cosmology” and the “new cosmology.” The old cosmology is often depicted as originating with the rise of classical science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when we came to regard the universe as a great machine and understood it to operate primarily in a mechanistic/linear way. Some say it goes back as far as 8000 BCE when patriarchy came from the Agricultural Revolution.

The “old cosmology” was based on the prevailing consciousness of domination which sought to “conquer and control” everything in life. Experiences were divided into contrasting opposites to explain reality. The language used reinforced this dualistic thinking, i.e., good and evil, right and wrong, patriot or terrorist, heaven or earth.

The “new cosmology” thrives on forces that have existed from time immemorial, but which are now understood in a new way. Because the patriarchal and mechanistic approaches of the past few thousand years undermined a more inclusive vision, the “new cosmology” is retrieving what has been lost and/or subverted over time. As Thomas Berry would say, “it’s reclaiming the sacredness

of the universe as a community of subjects not a collection of objects. The universe is a subject to be communed with, not a collection of objects to be used.”

Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry would further say “the ‘new cosmology,’ the new story promotes the interdependent, interconnectedness of all life. Everything in the universe needs everything else. They promote a ‘new cosmology’ requiring a radically transforming understanding that the human system is a sub-system of Earth systems. Everything that is has rights according to its mode of being. The three basic rights for everything that is include: 1) The right to exist – to its ‘isness,’ 2) the right to habitat, 3) the right to fulfill its role in the Great Work (of creation). Spiritualities based around the idea that “I am because we are” rather than classical Aristotelian structures of men standing above all else because of their supposed rationality are radically transforming how we can understand the world.

Ivone Gebara points out that “because western monotheism named itself as the center of creation, it was able to take an imperialistic stance and destroy expressions of the divine it regarded as inferior.” Placing humans at the center of a vast universe; anthropocentrism and monotheocentrism have fundamentally altered how we view the world and our place in it” (Gebara, 1999, p.36). She also quotes Rosemary Radford Ruether in explaining her understanding of the human place in the cosmic plan, saying that “Human consciousness, then, should not be what utterly separates us from the rest of ‘nature.’ Rather, consciousness is where this dance of energy organizes itself in increasingly unified ways, until it reflects back on itself in self-awareness. Consciousness is and must be where we recognize our kinship with all other beings” (51).

Language, as we know, is formative. It contributes to forming attitudes. Words matter. If one believes in this ‘new story,’ a new consciousness of communion within the universe, Thomas Berry suggests we need new rights language, new non-fundamentalist religious language, new economic language. The new language of economics, he says, must preserve the integral economy of the planet. If the human sub-system of economics is to devastate the natural economy, neither will stand.”

Like Berry, Gebara believes that if we reformulate our vision of our place in the world, we will begin to treat it in a fundamentally

different manner. She focuses particularly on the treatment of the earth, calling herself and her ideas “ecofeminist,” but also points out that

“sacred interdependence would...require a radical modification of the transnational market economies, which fail to respect regional cultures and almost always abuse both the land and the populations that inhabit it. It would call for a new understanding of the makeup of nations, one that would recognize ethnic groups...It would also require the construction of a new network of relationships among peoples...It would require that we rethink Christian theology not on the basis of preset dogmas but on the concrete lived experience of groups that find their inspiration in the very same fountainhead of wisdom that inspired Jesus of Nazareth” (Gebara, 54).

Religious language, too, will be ever-expanding. Berry quotes St. Thomas Aquinas on his treatise for non-believers by saying, “the universe is the ultimate and noblest perfection in Creation.” He doesn’t say human is. He says the universe is. “The universe,” says Berry again, “is the primary purpose of incarnation and redemption. Not the human.” The words we use to tell the story of creation will reflect one’s cosmology. Watch your language. “If we don’t understand creation correctly, we can’t understand God correctly” (O’Murchu speech, 2014).

(Ideas above are from Diarmuid O’Murchu, *Reclaiming Spirituality*, 1998; talk by Thomas Berry, Fall 1998.)

## CREATING JUST LANGUAGE

“Why shouldn’t we quarrel about a word? What is the good of words if they aren’t important enough to quarrel over? Why do we choose one word more than another if there isn’t any difference between them?” (Maggio, 1991, p.61).

Thanks to the contributions of numerous scholars, theologians, ministers, and lay people, more and more people, have become aware of the negative impact of biased language. As a result, the English language is beginning to change.

The elimination of terms such as man and mankind and the masculine pronouns in the generic sense has become more and more common, although many journalism professionals have not yet made this shift. The National Council of Teachers of English, a group more likely to acknowledge current usages than to initiate new ones, has officially recognized this change. The State of Connecticut has a law requiring that whenever the title of a public office denotes gender—as in chairman, councilman, alderman—the title shall suit the gender of the person holding the office.

The initiator of the law, State Senator Betty Hudson, said, “To call a woman a man is not only unfair to the woman involved, but also denies to all women the recognition and regard which accrue from the accomplishments of members of their sex and attributes those achievements to the male sex.” After the law became effective in 1973, Hudson heard from a number of women in public office who did not want their titles changed. “That convinced me the bill was necessary.”

In 1974, California voters decided to remove words like congressman and assemblyman and the pronouns he, his, and him from their Constitution entirely.

Editorial decisions made by two leading scientific organizations also indicate a climate of change. In 1971, after sixty-five years of publication as *American Men of Science*, that prestigious directory of scientists was retitled *American Men and Women of Science*. And in 1973, the American Anthropological Association passed a resolution urging anthropologists to become aware in their writing and teaching that their wide use of the term man as generic for the species is conceptually confusing and urged that it be replaced

by more comprehensive terms such as people and human beings (Miller, 1991, p.115).

Today many major textbook publishers have adopted, or are preparing to adopt, nonsexist guidelines for their authors and editors. They give practical examples of how language can be used to liberate and expand thought.

Library cataloguers are also removing sexist language by subject headings and descriptions. Another gain in eliminating separate and unequal categorization was made when the U.S. Department of Labor revised its list of occupational classifications to drop sex-stereotyped job titles. The United Church of Christ was in the vanguard of change when at its 1973 General Synod it voted to eliminate sex and race discrimination in every area of its life. To implement that affirmation the church wrote or revised its laws as well as all printed materials including worship books and services, hymnals, curricula, journals, and personnel documents to make all language deliberately inclusive.

In 1975, at a symposium celebrating the publication of the *Revised Standard Bible*, scholars agreed that some attitudes and language in the Bible excluded or demeaned women. The *New Revised Standard Version* of that period attempted to make human language inclusive wherever the original texts allow. In 1976, the Call to Action Conference, organized by the U.S. Roman Catholic Bishops, recommended to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic publishing houses that they act to insure that sexist language and imagery be eliminated from all official church documents, catechisms, liturgical books, rites and hymnals (AD-1977: 6).

Unfortunately, the revised *Lectionary* failed in its attempt to have inclusive human language. In 1977, a symposium sponsored by the Council of Theological Seminaries and the Council of Women and the Church pointed out the need to search for inclusive language to replace limited and exclusive images about God and the people of God (*Power of Language...*, 1979, p.9). More recently inclusive texts of the New Testament, Psalms and Hebrew Scriptures have become available.



## *Language Changing All The Time*

“Language is perpetually in flux; it is a living stream, shifting, changing, receiving new strength from a thousand tributaries, losing old forms in the backwaters of time” (Maggio, 1991, p.114).

Language is a dynamic reality, growing as new concepts evolve and need to be named. Over the past sixty years, hundreds of new words entered our vocabulary, as basic scientific research was translated into advanced technology for the space program, and new products for the market place. In the 1950s, relatively few people had heard of astronauts, tranquilizers, lunar modules, polyester, freeze-dried coffee, rap music, crock pots, chemotherapy, laser discs, fax machines, microwave ovens, and Teflon.

Changing economic and political realities also enrich our language. Not only are new words created but some old ones shed their meanings and others extend theirs. Centuries ago *girl* was a young person of any gender, a *knave* was a boy, not a scoundrel, and a *gossip* meant a sponsor in baptism.

When thinking about and using language it is important to remember that language is comprised of signs, symbols, and metaphors which signify or represent something referred to. When the symbol itself becomes absolutized (e.g. only the metaphor “Father” can be used to describe God) the stage is set for language to become controlling, exclusive and domineering.

No one can predict what words will eventually replace outmoded biased language. Probably most will not be innovations but familiar words recycled. The candidate most likely to succeed the stubborn masculine generic pronoun is a word already in wide use, “they.” Despite grammarians’ efforts to restrict it to plural antecedents, “they” is already commonly used as an alternative to the awkward “he or she.” “They” and its inflected forms have been used for centuries by reputable writers from Shakespeare (“*Everyone to rest themselves*”), to Shaw (“*It’s enough to drive anyone out of their senses*”), to F. Scott Fitzgerald (“*Nobody likes a mind quicker than their own*”).

The use of “they” as a singular pronoun slips out in response to a healthy democratic instinct to include women when references are made to people in general. An egalitarian impulse also created

the extension of another word—"you"—from the plural to the singular. "Ye" and "you" in Old English were plural pronouns which gradually replaced the singular forms "though" and "thee" (Miller, 1991, p.121). In addition to these general changes, individuals are now choosing to refer to themselves as "they/ them," "zie/zir," and more varieties of pronouns. This is, once again, why it is very important to make sure that each person's chosen pronouns are identified and respected early on in a relationship, working or otherwise.

Language has changed, but further changes are necessary. Certain historical changes have left some language lagging behind. Not until the late 1800s were many women allowed to go to college, so naturally the terms freshman, underclassman, penmanship, bachelor's degree, fraternity, and master's degree specifically meant males. Today the reality has changed, but not the language. Only inertia holds language back from keeping up with the way women are participating in daily life.

Undoing racist language has long been a focus in the African-American community's efforts to educate society at large. There has been considerable success in making blatant racist slurs unacceptable to the thinking public. There is still much work to be done regarding the more subtle racist remarks as well as the use of trivializing, racist symbols. It is most important to listen to the affected communities, since those communities, and only those communities, can determine what words and symbols are appropriate in describing and relating to them.

The same trend is evident in the increased focus on identifying and discarding any words which stereotype or exclude people regardless of their ethnic and cultural heritage. Such a step is required in the face of an earth community which has become irreversibly global in nature. Due in part to advances and gifts of technology, we can no longer have an isolated, ethnocentric view of the world as "us" and "them." In a global and universal culture the answer to the question "who is my neighbor?" has far-ranging implications for all of us.

Militaristic/violent language crosses cultural, racial, and gender lines. In a society fraught with violence, there seems to be no concerted effort to analyze the elements of social interaction that may or may not contribute to the acceptance, if not the promulgation, of that violence. Undoing militaristic language is

not the total answer to the problems of violence. It is, however, a cultural approach to dealing with the excessively aggressive, competitive attitudes that have given rise to the expressions. If physical aggression prompts a physically aggressive response—violence begets more violence—it follows that non-aggressive language patterns should promote non-aggressive responses.

Language which focuses solely on the differences which exist between people serves to exclude, discriminate, shame, and blame. Rather than celebrating our commonalities and the gifts of our diversity, such language is used to create barriers and to bolster one person's sense of self at the expense of another.

We stand at a crossroads moment in time when our vision of what it means to be a part of the created universe is growing exponentially and replacing our former scientific assumptions. How we speak about the universe, the cosmos and all that exists within it has an impact.

In conclusion, creating just language requires that we recognize the values of cooperation, mutuality, and inclusivity. Non-aggressive language reflects new ways of interacting with one another and the earth. Hopefully this book will stimulate conversation and learning so that language becomes a tool for creating a just and holy society, world, and universe.

# EXAMPLES AND EXERCISES

This section outlines alternative ideas for those interested in eliminating exclusive language.

## *Exclusive Language*

The structure of English makes it difficult to use phrases that are both non-sexist and grammatically acceptable. Some solutions already gaining acceptance include:

### **A. Generic use of man and other masculine terms**

#### ***Stereotypical Language***

#### ***Try Using***

---

when man invented the wheel

when the wheel was invented

---

businessman

business people

---

business leaders

---

the common man

ordinary people

---

brotherhood

unity, community

---

mankind

humankind, humanity

---

### **B. Supposedly generic pronouns he, him, his**

#### ***Generic pronouns***

#### ***Try using***

---

Don't judge someone simply on the basis of "his" sex.

Don't judge someone simply on the basis of sex.

---

Each citizen must pay his taxes

Everyone (all citizens) must pay taxes

---

The teacher...she

The teacher...he or she, they  
The teachers...they

---

The farmer and his wife

A farm couple, farmers

---

Homeowner and his family

Homeowners and their children

---

A good nurse cares about her patients' feelings

Good nurses care about their patients feelings

---

If a man can drive

If a person can drive

---

The cat washed herself

The cat washed itself

---

**C. Workers' titles should reflect jobs that can be filled by members of any sex.**

<i>Job title</i>	<i>Try using</i>
authoress	Author
busboy	Dining room attendant
cleaning lady, maid	Housekeeper, office cleaner
congressman	Member of congress, congress person
delivery man, boy	Deliverer
fireman	Firefighter
mailman	Mail carrier, letter carrier
foreman	Supervisor
steward, stewardess	Flight attendant
suffragette	suffragist

**D. Racist language**

The following examples help to illustrate language that is offensive to specific racial/ethnic communities.

Uncle Joe is the black sheep of the family.

The issue is a clear-cut black and white one.

We blackballed her from the church committee.

This writer always looks on the dark side of things.

They blackened my name when they told you that story.

That person is an Indian giver. We're having an Indian summer. (Both refer to deceit.)

They act like a group of wild Indians.

That old squaw (when referring in a derogatory manner to an indigenous woman).

She is a dragon lady, a china doll (these expressions reinforce the exotic in younger women and submissiveness in older women and are considered derogatory).

Go Redskins/Braves/Blackhawks/Indians/Chiefs! (or any use of a racial group as a team mascot).

Don't be a Jew.

He gyped me (this term refers to a cultural belief that the Roma are thieves).

He's so articulate! (when referring to a person of color)

Bad juju

Chinaman's chance, Chinese fire drill

Indian, Eskimo (correct term is Inuit, as Eskimo has a derogatory meaning)

## E. Militaristic/Dominating Language

The following are some examples of language inspired by militaristic attitudes and exaggeratedly competitive practices.

---

Shot in the dark	Spearhead
Call out the troops	What a riot
Search and destroy	On target
Gather the troops	Telling war stories
Task force	In the trenches
Dead soldiers	Kill 'em
Closing ranks	Battle scars
Blow 'em away	Bite the bullet
Under-the-gun	Pick your battle
Lost the battle but not the war	A real coup
Shoot from the hip	Minding the fort
Shoot you (photograph)	The big guns
Choosing your battles	Gun shy
Take a shot (a try)	Bullet points
Trigger	Hit me
Battling a sickness	Arsenal (of drugs)
Deadline	War on drugs/poverty/etc

Be attentive to conversation, the written word and the media's use of militaristic language over the next few weeks. Jot down violent words or phrases. If possible compare results with others. Circle violent words and/or phrases in your local newspaper or a magazine.

It might be helpful to make a list of alternative expressions. Since language is learned by repetition, find opportunities to use the alternatives.

## F. Language about persons with disabilities

Here are some suggestions for ways to speak about disabilities in a manner which respects and honors the dignity and worth of each person without reducing them to a limitation or difference.

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try Using</i>
Disabled or handicapped child	Child with a disability
Palsied, or C.P., or spastic	Person with cerebral palsy
Afflicted, suffers from, victim	Person who has...
Mute or dumb	Without speech, nonverbal
Slow	Developmental delay
Crazy or insane	Emotional disorder, mental illness
Deaf and dumb	Deaf or hearing impaired
Confined to a wheelchair	Uses a wheelchair
Retarded	Person with a developmental delay
Epileptic	Person with epilepsy
Mongoloid	Person with Down's Syndrome
Is learning disabled	Has a learning disability
Crippled	Has a physical disability
Fits	Seizures

## G. Heterosexist/Homophobic Language

The following suggestions may be helpful reminders when talking about or identifying persons with a same-sex orientation.

---

- Remember that families are of many different types – include a variety of family configurations in illustrations and references (not just two-parent, heterosexual parents). In other words, refer to a child's family (not Mom and Dad) – and allow children to tell you who their parents/caregivers are. Ask about someone's partner (not about their husband or wife).

- Be aware of what your local schools and churches are teaching and not teaching in order to support lesbian/gay/queer families and individuals and young people who are in the midst of forming their sexual identities

- It's important to remember that LGBTQ persons are far from a uniform group—each letter stands for a distinct identity, and each of those distinct identities contain a great variety of God-given diversity. Allies need to take special care to remember that LGBTQ is not a synonym for “gay and lesbian,” and that transgender and queer identities are categorically different than gay and lesbian identities: gay and lesbian identities speak about sexual orientation, while transgender speaks about gender identity and gender performance, and queer identities speak about transgressing the binary boundaries of gender, sex, and sexuality.

- Just as it is unacceptable to objectify someone by identifying them only as “a homosexual,” calling someone “a transgender” or “a transsexual” is not acceptable. Words like “tranny” are often used to degrade and bully a person, and should be avoided, though some persons who are transgender/transsexual have reappropriated the term.

- Public bathrooms are often the sight of anxiety and exclusion for persons who are transgender, gender-variant, gender-nonconforming, genderqueer, and intersex. Single-stall “unisex” bathrooms are a solution to this problem.

- Remove unnecessary (binary) gender distinctions: For example, rather than saying “courageous men and women of God,” say “courageous people of God.” Likewise, rather than referring to “brothers and sisters in Christ,” refer to “one in Christ.” Some may find this neutrality to refer exclusively to men, given the patriarchal history of our language. If that is a concern, then a phrase like “courageous persons of all gender identities/ variations” may be used. In either example, all people are included, and no gender is preferred or left out.

- Be open and accepting if someone corrects you about their pronoun choice, or, for example, if their name seems masculine while their appearance seems feminine to you. When possible, use gender-neutral pronouns (such as “they” or “them”) or refer to a person only by their name if you do not know their pronoun preference. Do not use “it” or “he-she,” as these are derogatory terms that do not honor the full humanity of a person. The English language is constructed around a binary gender system, and working around it for more just language may sometimes seem unwieldy and grammatically incorrect but if language has helped to stabilize oppressive, exclusive categories, then it is also the job of language to help heal that.



## H. Classist Language

When discussing economics and social position, try to be precise and accurate in your use of language.

### ***Economic:***

---

Use:	People without income
	People with low income; moderate income, middle income
	Affluent, wealthy, upper income
	Underpaid
Avoid:	Using someone's economic status to define them. Don't say "poor people" or "rich people" since a person can be rich in many areas other than economic.
	Lower class, classless

---

### ***Employment:***

---

Use:	Trade
	Profession
	Job status
	Coworkers
	Manual laborers
	Tradespeople
	Service providers (to describe "service sector" workers at a variety of pay rates, including social workers, cooks, servers, janitors, and highly paid hairstylists to the stars)
	Educators
	Factory workers
	Office workers
	Trained or skilled workers
	Working poor vs. the non-working rich
	Business owners
	Self-employed
Avoid:	Blue collar, white collar, etc.
	Unskilled labor

---

***Education:***

---

Use:	Self-educated
	College educated
	People with high school degrees

---

Avoid:	Uneducated
--------	------------

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**Other Considerations**

“Pre-literate society” or “illiterate person” assumes that written communication is superior to other forms, that people who can’t read or cultures and religious communities that rely more heavily on oral communications are inferior. A person from an oral culture, for example, is likely to have a much more developed memory than a literate person.

Many linguists also discuss the good and bad implications of the rise of electronic culture—television, radio, and the internet—including less reliance on printed words for disseminating and gathering information and the creation of a “global village.”

While learning how to read and reading is a good thing we must also respect the value of oral culture that uses storytelling and collective memory—and not disdain myths and histories just because they’ve been transmitted through the centuries by “word of mouth” rather than written documents.

The terms pre-industrial, undeveloped, underdeveloped, or developing to refer to countries or societies assume that other societies, economies, or nations should or will progress toward mirroring industrial models like the United States and Western Europe and dismisses the inherent value in any other systems.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Write to official church bodies and ask them to remove exclusive, diminishing, power-over language from prayers and hymns.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops

3211 Fourth Street NE

Washington, D.C., 20017

202-541-3000

2. Review hymns used by your congregation and identify those referring to God and human beings in general in exclusively masculine terms. Report your findings to those responsible for choosing hymns using for worship.

Ask them to:

A. Choose only those hymns free of exclusive, diminishing and violent language;

B. Explain to the congregation why they were chosen, and,

C. Write to publishers of song books and ask for a policy of publishing only inclusive and nonviolent songs, suggesting you may need to look elsewhere for suitable materials.

3. Regarding exclusive pronouns and nouns in Scripture, write to those who hold the copyright for a particular translation. Ask them to establish a policy of weeding out sexism and violence in their translation as much as possible.

4. An excellent resource for teachers has been created by the National Council of Teachers of English: *Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language in NCTE Publications*.

5. For a book on nonviolent language read: *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion* by Marshall Rosenberg, Ph.D.

6. ***Whosoever: An Online Magazine for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Christians.*** <<http://whosoever.org/index.shtml> >

7. ***Affirming Christian Church Directory: Gay & Lesbian Welcoming Christian Churches Throughout the World.*** <[http://www.gaychurch.org/Find\\_a\\_Church/find\\_a\\_church.htm](http://www.gaychurch.org/Find_a_Church/find_a_church.htm)>

8. ***TransFaithOnline.*** Interfaith Working Group, Philadelphia, PA. <<http://www.transfaithonline.org/> >

9. ***TransChristians.*** This site is a place for transgender Christians of all shades to find encouragement. Transgender Christians have a unique challenge and opportunity. Here you'll find lots of information from "what is gender" to deep theology to help you on your way. <<http://www.transchristians.org/> > This site also has many links to other great resources: <http://www.transchristians.org/Home/links>

10. ***Trans Faith in Color.*** This organization holds conferences and other events. <<http://www.transfaithincolor.org/>>

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# NOTES

# NOTES

Cover Art by **Joshua Miels**. Joshua Miels is a contemporary portrait artist who looks to capture the vulnerability of people and the emotions that people try to hide from others. Spending countless hours adding layer upon layer of paint Joshua produces artworks that are not only striking, but deep and powerful. Painted predominantly with oil paint, each piece begins with a subject, but with a large amount of experimentation, each art piece takes on its own journey from start to finish. The pieces challenge viewers to draw upon their own emotions and personal experiences.

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