

# POST-Imperial FUTURES

ADDRESSING LEGACY AND LIVING INTO PROMISE

**October 6 – 8, 2022**

Online and multiplatform in Chicago

*Imperialist ideology and practice is threaded throughout U/Uism, as well as other religious traditions now practiced in North America. From the a/theological justifications of our founding fathers to the faith's everyday practices of money and leadership, the legacy of Empire and its desire to dominate and mark out Otherness has us participate in harmful colonial enterprises. This conference convenes scholars and activists to equip lay leaders and ministers with resources and practices to live into the promise of radical, post-colonial, and faithful futurities.*

Sponsored and co-hosted by  
Unitarian Universalist Association's International Office  
and LIGHT at Meadville Lombard Theological School



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# POST-*Imperial* FUTURES: ADDRESSING LEGACY AND LIVING INTO PROMISE

## PROGRAM All times are Central Time.

### Thursday, October 6, 2022

- 5:00 pm **Welcome and Centering** *Dr. Elias Ortega*
- 5:30 pm **Keynote: Post-Imperial Hope as Praxis** *Lisa Asedillo; Moderator: Dr. Pamela Lightsey*
- 6:45 pm **Closing Remarks** *Alicia R. Forde*

### Friday, October 7, 2022

- 10:00 am **Welcome and Centering** *Rev. Joan Javier-Duval*
- 10:30 am **Unlearning Labs I** (pick one):
- **How to Decolonize Preaching**  
*Rev. Dr. Lis Valle-Ruiz [Multiplatform]*
  - **What solidarities matter? What the Invasion of Ukraine Tells Us about Imperialism, Anti-blackness, and Occupation**  
*Rachel Freed, Ervin Malakaj, Fatima El-Tayeb; moderated by Dr. Beverly Weber [Online]*
  - **How to Liberate a Text: Colonial Legacies and Decolonial Practice of Reading the Bible** *Dr. Jin Young Choi [Online]*
- 12:30 pm **Break/Lunch on your own**
- 1:30 pm **Unlearning Labs II** (pick one):
- **Even the Dead Won't Be Safe: Imperial Archives, Post-Imperial Research**  
*John Leeker [Multiplatform]*
  - **Decolonizing Listening Practices in Pastoral Care**  
*Dr. Mindy McGarrah Sharp [Online]*
  - **People & Patterns: Case Studies in U/U Imperialism**  
*Rev. Fred Muir [Online]*
- 3:30 pm **Personal Reflection Time**
- 4:00 pm **Regathering & Conversation Circles** *Alicia R. Forde*
- 5:00 pm **President's Reception** (In-person only)

### Saturday, October 8, 2022

- 10:00 am **Welcome & Keynote Panel: Post-Imperialist Futures** *Featuring: Rev. Dr. Tink Tinker, Dr. Danika Medak-Saltzman, Rev. Theresa Ninán Soto; Moderator: Dr. Kate Lassiter*
- 11:30 am **Break**
- 11:45 am **Conversation Circles**
- 12:30 pm **Closing Worship** *Rev. Joan Javier-Duval*

# POST-Imperial FUTURES PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

## THURSDAY KEYNOTE

5:30 pm

### Post-Imperial Hope as Praxis

*Lisa Asedillo; Moderator: Dr. Pamela Lightsey*

It is not enough to simply declare anti-imperialist intentions—we must innovate strategies. What concrete methods of doing and being are needed to create the world we long for? Similarly, it is also not enough to face histories of imperialist brutality carried out in the name of religion—focusing only on brutality tells a story of totalizing destruction that erases crucial resistance knowledge and leadership. In the wake of centuries of Spanish colonialism, US colonialism, and US imperialism in the Philippines, we must expose the role of dominating master narratives in this history. The innovative concepts, methods and contributions of these Pilipinx leaders exemplify decolonial, de-imperial praxis needed for ethics that attend to U.S.-based colonial Christianity and global politics. My starting point is US Christian imperialism in the Philippines, and in this talk I engage with resistance strategies mined from the theology of struggle and ecumenical women's movements in the Philippines between the 1970s-90s.

## FRIDAY MORNING UNLEARNING LABS

10:30 am

### How to Decolonize Preaching

*Rev. Lis Valle-Ruiz, PhD*

Given that Christian preaching was born in an imperial context and arrived to the western hemisphere as part of an imperial and colonizing project, is it even possible to decolonize Christian preaching? The work of decolonizing preaching in the Christian tradition needs to address the legacy of imperialism within the very practice of preaching. This workshop equips participants with values and practices of decolonizing preaching to live into the promise of radical anti-colonial preaching. A different future is possible and we can preach it into existence through words and delivery actions.

### What solidarities matter? What the Invasion of Ukraine Tells Us about Imperialism, Anti-blackness, and Occupation

*Rachel Freed, Ervin Malakaj, Fatima El-Tayeb; moderated by Dr. Beverly Weber*

In this webinar, our speakers explore questions of what global responses to the invasion of the Ukraine reveal about the workings of imperialism, anti-Blackness, and war. How might we connect the dots between US and Russian aggressions? How do dominant framings of the war obscure (or perhaps, highlight), how we respond to other moments of occupation and/or forced migration? What can we learn from the important and immediate outpouring of support for Ukraine, and the conflicted responses to peoples experiencing occupation elsewhere in the world, including in settler colonial states? Whose pain, loss, and occupation matters? Whose expulsion from their own lands garners our support? And ultimately, what do these things tell us about whose lives are valued?

### How to Liberate a Text: Colonial Legacies and Decolonial Practice of Reading the Bible

*Dr. Jin Young Choi*

Decolonizing our reading and interpretation of sacred texts is central to the work of ministry. In this workshop, Dr. Jin Young Choi will lead a discussion on how to liberate a text--the bible in this case--and be liberated by practicing with sacred texts.

## FRIDAY AFTERNOON UNLEARNING LABS

1:30 pm

### Even the Dead Won't Be Safe: Imperial Archives, Post-Imperial Research

*John Leeker*

One of the challenges to researching the legacy of imperialism within Unitarian Universalism, or any other context, is that archives have never been passive participants within imperial process and structures. Archives, and the knowledge they produce, are constitutive of empire, not incidental or

passive. Archives and the theories and norms that create and maintain archives are fundamentally connected to European and American imperialism and settler-colonialism. This workshop will provide an introduction to archive theory and practice; explore the connections between archives, the state, and empire; and provide practical advice for memory workers and researchers working to address imperial legacies and create post-imperial futures.

## Decolonizing Listening Practices in Pastoral Care

*Dr. Mindy McGarrh Sharp*

Almost every pastoral care resource recommends listening as a practice and skill of ministry across many diverse forms and contexts. Yet listening is not neutral. This workshop will invite practices and possibilities of decolonizing listening aimed toward change and transformation. Listening is not easy. Under what circumstances could listening itself be liberating? What does it mean and look like to liberate deeper ways of hearing and being heard that confront complicities, are real about the risks of ableism, and co-create new possibilities?

## People & Patterns: Case Studies in U/U Imperialism

*Rev. Fred Muir*

Following the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy (1893), the U.S. extended its imperial Pacific grip by colonizing the Philippines (1898-1946). In both nations, Unitarians and Universalists played significant, shaping roles that left imprints on these Pacific archipelagos, the U.S. and

on the UU faith. While the names and roles of UUs who were in key positions of leadership and power during the US overseas imperial era have lived in obscurity, the imperial faith they embraced and the theo-political legacy they sustained and we inherited from their colonizing successes remain imbedded in our 21st century liberal faith tradition causing un/intended consequences. This workshop will explore this history, but more importantly, focus on the theo-institutional dynamics and patterns that continue shaping UUs.

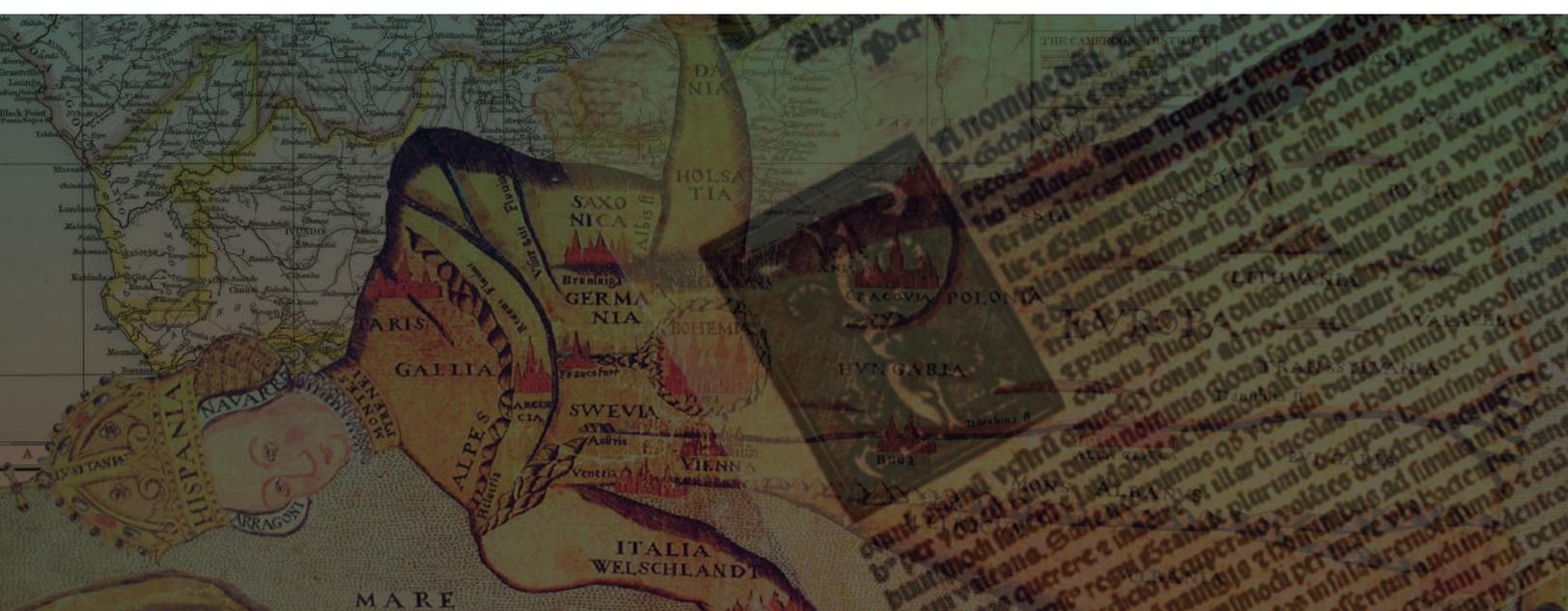
## SATURDAY KEYNOTE & PANEL

10:00 am

### Post-Imperialist Futures

*Featuring: Rev. Dr. Tink Tinker, Dr. Danika Medak-Saltzman, Rev. Theresa Ninán Soto; Moderator: Dr. Kate Lassiter*

Thinking and acting toward futurity and generativity in the post-Empire invites conversation, collaboration, and conspiracy to make intervention in colonial discourse and its apparatus. How might we do this? This panel discussion invites Dr. Danika Medak-Saltzman (Turtle Mountain Chippewa), Assistant Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Syracuse University; Rev. Dr. Tink Tinker (wazhazhe, Osage Nation), Professor Emeritus at Iliff School of Theology; and Rev. Theresa Ninán Soto, Poet and Senior Minister of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland; to imagine and call forth post-imperial futures. This intimate panel discussion will be moderated by Dr. Kate Lassiter.



# POST-Imperial FUTURES PRESENTERS

In alphabetical order

## Lisa Asedillo

Keynote Address, Friday 5:30 pm

Lisa Asedillo is Assistant Professor of Worship and Liturgical Ethics at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. She is an ethicist and liturgist with research interests in decolonial/postcolonial feminist theory, transpacific and Asian American Christian Ethics, and Philippine studies. Lisa co-founded New Day Church in the Bronx, New York in 2009—a vibrant, queer, anti-racist and boundary-crossing faith community—serving in various roles, including Assistant Pastor of Inviting and Welcoming and Chair of Worship, for over a decade. She earned her MDiv at Union Theological Seminary, and her PhD at Drew University in the Religion and Society area (she is ABD and plans to defend this Winter). Lisa's co-authored chapter, "Becoming Asian American Christian Ethicists," is included in *Asian and Asian American Women's Contributions to Theology and Religious Studies: Embodying Knowledge*, edited by Dr. Kwok Pui Lan (2020); and she is a contributor to *INHERITANCE* magazine, which amplifies the Asian American and Pacific Islander experience of Christianity. Lisa is also a board member of Pacific Asian North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry (PANAAWTM), an organization for education, mentoring, and networking that was founded in 1984.



## Dr. Jin Young Choi

How to Liberate a Text, Friday 10:30 am

Dr. Jin Young Choi is Baptist Missionary Training School Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. By weaving biblical narratives together with diverse interpretative threads, her work focuses on the intersection of race/ethnicity, gender/sexuality, empire, and early Christianity. She is the author of *Postcolonial Discipleship of Embodiment: An Asian and Asian American Feminist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Her co-edited volumes include *Minoritized Women Reading Race and Ethnicity: Intersectional Approaches to Constructed Identity and Early Christian Texts* (with Mitzie J. Smith, Lexington Books, 2020), *Faith, Class, and Labor: Intersectional Approaches in a Global Context* (with Joerg Rieger, Pickwick Publications, 2020), and *Activist Hermeneutics of Liberation in the Bible: A Global Intersectional Perspective* (with Gregory L. Cuéllar, Routledge, forthcoming).

Attuned not only to the local church but also to the life of global Christianity, Choi has authored Bible study books and lectionary resources for the church and has given lectures and presentations to a diverse audience. Her scholarship is also dedicated to the wider academic society in the U.S. and internationally. Choi is currently an Academic Fellow of the Wendland-Cook Program in Religion and Justice at Vanderbilt University.





## Fatima El-Tayeb

*Panelist: What Solidarities Matter, Friday 10:30 am*

Fatima El-Tayeb is Professor of Ethnicity, Race & Migration and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Yale University. Her research interests include Black Europe, comparative diaspora studies, queer of color critique, critical Muslim studies, decolonial theory, transnational feminisms, visual culture studies, race and technology, and critical European studies. She is the author of three books and numerous articles on the interactions of race, gender, sexuality, religion and nation. Her current research projects explore the intersecting legacies of colonialism, fascism, and socialism in Europe and the potential of (queer) people of color alliances in decolonizing the continent.



## Reverend Alicia R. Forde

*Closing Remarks, Thursday 6:45 pm; Regathering & Conversation Circles, Friday 4:00 pm*

The Reverend Alicia Roxanne Forde serves the Unitarian Universalist Association as the Director of the International Office. She is a graduate of The Iliff School of Theology and currently lives in Longmont, Colorado. Alicia was born and spent her formative years in Trinidad and Tobago. She identifies as an African descent queer, cis-gender female with deep roots in Tobago. She considers herself bi-cultural and is grateful that her formative years enabled her to cultivate a global perspective. Alicia is a certified Spiritual Director and has a strong interest in health and wellness. When she's not hiking, you can find her reading, working out, or podcast-walking.



## Rachel Gore Freed

*Panelist: What Solidarities Matter, Friday 10:30 am*

Rachel Gore Freed is a human rights lawyer, community organizer, and social justice advocate and educator with a wealth of domestic and international experience. As Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's Vice President and Lead Program Officer, Rachel leads the organization's creative and effective approaches to advancing the rights of people who are most overlooked or discriminated against in crises such as forced migration, large-scale conflicts, genocide, and natural disasters. Prior to joining UUSC, Rachel was deeply engaged in community struggles around the world including litigation against Exxon for violations of the Clean Air Act in the Houston Baytown shipping channel, arguing for the right to seek asylum before the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, and representing low-income immigrants and detained asylum-seekers pursuing relief from unjust deportation in New York City. She has also helped volunteer youth serve as peace witnesses in Gujarat, Northern India after communal rioting and worked with the legal team that prosecuted former President of Liberia Charles Taylor and leaders of the rebel forces through the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Rachel holds a bachelor's degree with a focus in International Development from the George Washington Elliott School of International Affairs and a law degree from Vanderbilt University Law School.



## Rev. Joan Javier-Duval

Welcome & Centering, Friday 10:00 am; Closing Worship, Saturday 12:30 pm

The Rev. Joan Javier-Duval was born and raised in Chicago, IL as the child of immigrants from the Philippines. She learned early on that family and community sustain human life and that ampalaya (Filipino bitter melon) can be grown even in the black soil of a backyard in Chicago. Joan is a Unitarian Universalist minister serving the Unitarian Church of Montpelier, VT. Joan is a member of the board of Vermont Interfaith Action and is one of the tri-chairs of the Vermont Poor People's Campaign. She roams the green hills and swims in the rivers on Abenaki land with her spouse and eight year-old child.



## Dr. Kate Lassiter

Moderator: Post Imperialist Futures, Saturday 10:00 am

Kate Lassiter, Ph.D. is a feminist practical theologian and Senior Director of Lifelong Learning at Meadville Lombard Theological School. She currently directs the Leadership Institute for Growth, Healing, and Transformation (LIGHT), which equips and supports professional and lay faith leaders in ministry. She holds a Ph.D. in Religion, Psychology, and Culture from Vanderbilt University. She is the author of many articles and the monograph, *Recognizing Other Subjects: Feminist Pastoral Theology and the Challenge of Identity*.



## John Leeker

*Even the Dead Won't Be Safe: Imperial Archives, Post-Imperial Research*, Friday 1:30 pm

John Leeker is the Director of Library and Archives at Meadville Lombard Theological School, co-chair of the UU Studies Network, and President of the Chicago Area Theological Library Association. He holds a Masters of Arts in Social Sciences from the University of Chicago and Masters of Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. John came to Meadville Lombard in 2013, has been burrowing into the Meadville Lombard Library and Archives ever since.

As a librarian and archivist, John understands information work to be a form of social justice work and uses technology to help create and make accessible resources that speak to all identities and experiences found within Unitarian Universalism. He also consults with UU organizations and congregations across the United States to help preserve the history being made everyday throughout Unitarian Universalism. Beyond books and archives, John works on issues of digital privacy and security for activists and ministers.



## Dr. Pamela Lightsey

Moderator: Keynote Address, Thursday 5:30 pm

The Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey is Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, and Associate Professor of Constructive Theology at Meadville Lombard Theological School. She is a scholar, social justice activist, and military veteran whose academic and research interests include classical and contemporary just war theory, Womanist theology, Queer theory and theology, and African American religious history and theologies.

Dr. Lightsey's publications include the book, *Our Lives Matter: A Womanist Queer Theology* (Wipf and Stock), "He Is Black and We are Queer" in *Albert Cleage Jr and the Black Madonna and Child* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), "Reconciliation" in *Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), and "If There Should Come a Word" in *Black United Methodists Preach!* (Abingdon Press).



## Ervin Malakaj

Panelist: *What Solidarities Matter*, Friday 10:30 am

Ervin Malakaj is assistant professor of German studies and director of undergraduate studies in German at the University of British Columbia. He's co-founder of the scholarly collective, "Diversity, Decolonization, and the German Curriculum." Ervin was a refugee in Germany in the aftermath of the Bosnian war and is currently writing a book of personal essays on queer life in the Bosnian diaspora.



## Danika Medak-Saltzman

Panelist: *Post Imperialist Futures*, Saturday 10:00 am

Danika Medak-Saltzman is assistant professor of Women's and Gender Studies and faculty affiliate of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Program faculty at Syracuse University. Her scholarship focuses on Native American and Indigenous Studies particularly as related to feminism, race and representation, transnational Indigeneity, comparative settler-colonialisms, Indigenous futurisms, and visual culture. She also examines the transnational movement of American colonial policies—particularly in the case of Japan. Her work has appeared in *American Quarterly*, *SAIL* (Studies in American Indian Literatures), *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, *Journal of Critical Ethnic Studies*, *Critical Asian Studies*, and most recently, *Feminist Formations*. Alongside Iyko Day, Antonio T. Tiongson, Jr. and Shanté Paradigm Smalls, she is co-editor of the *Critical Race, Indigeneity, and Relationality* book series with Temple University Press.



## Rev. Fred Muir

*People & Patterns: Case Studies in U/U Imperialism, Friday 1:30 pm*

After a year of hospital chaplaincy followed by serving a congregation in Maine for seven years, in 1983, Rev. Fred Muir was called to the UU congregation in Annapolis, Maryland, where he served for 34 years. He retired from this ministry in 2017 as Minister Emeritus. Since then, he was the Interim Director of the UUA's International Programs in 2019, followed by 15 months as the Interim Executive Director of the UU Partner Church Council.

It was during his Annapolis ministry that he completed the DMin program at Wesley Theological Seminary focusing on liberation theology, which is how he began a 30-year relationship with the UU Church of Philippines—all because his thesis advisor wanted him to “test” his version of UU LT in a non-western/Anglo nation that had a UU setting.

For twenty years, Rev. Muir has been the UUA's Ambassador to the UUCP. This ministry has led to a research and writing project about the disproportionately large number of U/Us who were in leadership roles during the US colonial/imperial rule of the PLP from 1898-1946. He is learning how this chapter of UU developed, took hold and remains a part of who we are today.



## Dr. Elías Ortega

*Welcome and Centering, Thursday 5:00 pm & Friday 10:00 am*

Dr. Elias Ortega is the president of Meadville Lombard Theological School. He is an interdisciplinary scholar who received his M.Div. and Ph.D. (Religion and Society, Magna Cum Laude) from Princeton Theological Seminary (2005, 2011). He also holds a B.A. in Communications Arts & Sciences and Philosophy and Religion from Calvin College.

Prior to coming to MLTS, Dr. Ortega served as Associate Professor of Social Theory and Religious Ethics at Drew University Theological School. His primary teaching and research areas are Sociology of Religion, Religious Ethics, Cultural Sociology, Social Movements, Critical Theory, Africana Studies, Latinx Cultural Studies.

In recent years, his denominational service included serving as a member of the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change (2017-2020) and co-authoring the Commission's report, *Widening the Circle of Concern*, and a term in the Religious Education Credentialing Committee (2016-2018). From 2015 to 2017, he served as a mentor in UUA's Growing Racial Justice initiative, and during that same period was the Co-Chair of the UU Legislative Ministry of New Jersey's Dismantling Racism Group. He has been a volunteer, provided strategic planning, and program support to various community organizations including the Student Outreach and Academic Reinforcement Program at Bethel AME in Morristown, NJ; New Jersey Parent Caucus, a mental health and juvenile justice advocacy group; and the Sila Maria Calderon Foundation.



## Dr. Mindy McGarrah Sharp

*Decolonizing Listening Practices in Pastoral Care*, Friday 1:30 pm

Mindy McGarrah Sharp, PhD, (she/her/hers) serves as Associate Professor of Practical Theology and Pastoral Care and Director of the Master of Arts in Practical Theology program at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. Her teaching, research, and public witness unfold at intersections of pastoral care, decolonial movements, and ethics. She brings a guiding and haunting question into her work that was first posed to her from an activist colleague, “why do you care?” She is the author of *Misunderstanding Stories: Toward a Postcolonial Pastoral Theology* (Pickwick 2013), *Creating Resistances: Pastoral Care in a Postcolonial World* (Brill 2019), and essays and chapters on practicing, teaching, and learning postcolonial pastoral care. She fosters collaboration and creativity as part of the work of identifying and dismantling complicities in oppression for the sake of transformed practice. She is currently researching and writing about intercultural listening. In her life outside academic work, she practices and performs as an avid lifelong tap dancer. Mindy McGarrah Sharp lives with her family in Decatur, Georgia.



## Rev. Theresa Ninán Soto

*Panelist: Post Imperialist Futures*, Saturday 10:00 am

Rev. Theresa Ninán Soto is the lead minister of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland. They have served on the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Team Committee of the UUA. Pastor Ninán wrote *Spilling the Light: Meditations on Hope and Resilience* in 2019. They are married to the Rev. Sean Parker Dennison. Pastor Ninán enjoys Detroit pizza and playing with Pico the rescue pup.



## Tink Tinker, Ph.D.

*Panelist: Post Imperialist Futures*, Saturday 10:00 am

Tink Tinker is a citizen of the Osage Nation. He was professor of Indian Studies for three and a half decades at Iliff School of Theology. After publishing *Missionary Conquest: the gospel and American Indian Genocide* (Fortress, 1993), Tinker made the deeply self-conscious move to separate himself from christianity and turned fully to embracing the historical American Indian worldview and culture of his wazhazhe People. At the same time, he committed himself to reaching out to the historical colonizers of Osages and other Native Peoples to help teach the history of domination and conquest. There is a decided shift in his publications over the past decades as he made this intellectual and praxis move, so readers should note what period in Tinker's career they are reading and citing. Tinker is heavily published, with several books and nearly one hundred journal articles. His most recent thinking is reflected in the last thirty or so articles he has published rather than in his books.



## Rev. Lis Valle-Ruiz, PhD

*How to Decolonize Preachin*, Friday 10:30 am

Rev. Lis Valle-Ruiz is Assistant Professor of Homiletics and Worship and Director of Community Worship Life at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, IL. She earned her PhD in Homiletics and Liturgics from Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, where she also studied gender and sexuality. Her dissertation *As One Among Many: Affirming a Multitude of Embodied Preaching Practices* analyzes pulpit preaching through public speech, street preaching through symbolic action, and preaching through theater and proposes that these are three paradigms among many others in the repertoire of embodied Christian preaching practices among which preachers may choose. Rev. Valle received a ThM in Homiletics from Princeton Theological Seminary and an MDiv from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She also holds a JD and a BA in Education from the University of Puerto Rico. Lis has been an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) since 2013. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, a colony of the United States of America, Lis has been resisting imperialism and colonization as long as she remembers.



## Beverly Weber

*Moderator: What Solidarities Matter*, Friday 10:30 am

Beverly Weber is Professor of German Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder. Her research and teaching interests include the intersections of race, gender, and migration in Germany and Europe. She is the author of *Violence and Gender in the "New" Europe: Islam in German Culture* (Palgrave 2013) and co-author of *Precarious Intimacies: The Politics of Touch in Contemporary European Cinema* (Northwestern University Press, 2020).

She serves as a steering committee member for the collective Diversity and Decolonization in the German Curriculum, is a member of the DDGC working group for Mutual Aid, and is co-editor for the journal *Feminist German Studies*.