



Discussion Guides for Advance Preparation
in Support of
Trinity Institute® 39th National Theological Conference
Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability

January 21-23, 2009

These discussion guides include four interviews by Robert Owens Scott, Director of Trinity Institute. They may serve as four one-hour adult classes as well as introductions to the featured speakers for the 2009 national theological conference.

In the order of appearance the speakers are:

- ❖ Timothy J. Gorringer
- ❖ Néstor O. Míguez
- ❖ David C. Korten
- ❖ Major Carter

The discussion guides allow for sessions that last approximately one hour that may be adapted to suit local circumstances and time requirements. Each interview lasts roughly 15 minutes.

Biographical information about each speaker may be found on the Trinity Institute Web Site www.trinitywallstreet.org/institute

These study guides were designed by Edward O. de Bary.



Timothy J. Gorringer

Purpose: Timothy J. Gorringer is first of the four featured speakers for the 39th Trinity Institute January 21-23, 2008 on the topic “Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability”. His interest in theology, social science, arts, the environment and the built environment are the basis of his search for God in the everyday world.

Goals:

- To introduce people to the thought and work of Timothy J. Gorringer
- To consider our own perspective about a theology of the built environment
- To consider the implications of Gorringer’s portrayal of our current predicament
- To consider our role and how we may prepare to hear more from Gorringer

Length of presentation and discussion: One hour.

1. If the group is smaller than 12-15 and has not met as a group before, take time to arrange for introductions. If this is an on-going class and people know one another or group skip this step.

2. View of DVD Robert Scott’s interview with Timothy J. Gorringer. 15 minutes.

3. Divide into small groups of 5 to 8 persons. In the small group consider some of the following questions to begin your discussion. 30 minutes.

- What did Gorringer offer that you find particularly helpful or interesting?
- What do you find challenging in Gorringer’s point of view?
- Where do you find grace or God in the everyday world?

4. To wrap up or perhaps as a plenary of the small groups respond to:

- What do you take away from this discussion that you are not likely to forget?

Bibliography: Timothy J. Gorringer, *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption* (Cambridge University Press)



Néstor O. Míguez

Purpose: Néstor O. Míguez is the second of the four featured speakers for the 39th Trinity Institute January 21-23, 2008 on the topic “Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability.” His challenge is both personal and about the way we live. This is an occasion to encounter a man of deep faith who offers profound suggestions about our global dilemmas concerning the sustainability of our life styles and how we are called to reflect our Christian commitments.

Goals:

- Learn about how Néstor Míguez describes the paradox of achieving sustainability in a world of inequality.
- Consider our own relationship to the world he describes.
- Prepare to engage the presentation of Míguez in January 2008.

Length of presentation and discussion: One hour.

1. If the group is smaller than 12-15 and has not met as a group before, take time to arrange for introductions. If this is an on-going class or group skip this step.

2. View of DVD Robert Scott’s interview with Néstor O. Míguez. 15 minutes.

3. Divide into pairs. 10 minutes.

- On a personal level Néstor O. Míguez describes his early life in a religious and theologically astute family where “political awareness grew... as a matter of course.” Share with your partner your own thoughts about the relationship of politics and religion.

4. Bring the pairs together into groups of 6 to 8 persons. 20 minutes.

- Néstor O. Míguez says that “theology is of and about the community.” It is based in the engagement with the life of Christ. Given our personal points of view about the relationship of politics and religion, what are our community responsibilities concerning social needs and political decisions that intersect with our Christian faith?

5. The entire group. 15 minutes.

- Néstor O. Míguez suggests that we are called to change our minds. What do you take away from this discussion that you are not likely to forget?



David C. Korten

Purpose: David C. Korten is the third of the four featured speakers for the 39th Trinity Institute January 21-23, 2008 on the topic “Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability.” He offers a stark assessment of our economic and social life without giving up all hope. This is an opportunity to consider the implications of his thought and to prepare for the conference.

Goals:

- To learn about David C. Korten’s perspective on the economic and social implications of our current course of global development.
- To examine our own perspectives concerning the impact of globalization on ourselves, our immediate communities, our nation, and the larger world.
- To prepare to grapple more intensely with the opportunities and difficulties that face us, especially as we expect to encounter them during the January 2009 presentations at the 39th Trinity Institute National Theological Conference.

Length of presentation and discussion: One hour.

1. If the group is smaller than 12-15 and has not met as a group before, take time to arrange for introductions. If this is an on-going class or group skip this step.
2. View of DVD Robert Scott’s interview with David C. Korten. 15 minutes.
3. Divide into groups of 2 or 3 persons and consider the following. 10 minutes.
 - What hits home for you as you listen to David Korten’s analysis?
4. Come together in a larger group of 6 to 8 persons and consider the following. 20 minutes.
 - What rings true of what you have heard and how does this impact your church community and you own local government economically and morally?
5. In a plenary session consider: 15 minutes.
 - What do you take away from this discussion that you are not likely to forget?

Bibliography:

David C. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the Earth*, 2nd edition, 2001 (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc./Kumarian Press)

David C. Korten, *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, 2006 (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc./Kumarian Press).



Majora Carter

Purpose: Majora Carter is the fourth of the four featured speakers at the 39th Trinity Institute January 21-23, 2009 on the topic “Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability.” Her development work in the South Bronx, New York, “...a one time poster child for urban blight,” has won her acclaim. This is an occasion to learn about possibilities, opportunities, and a perspective of hope and creativity.

Goals:

- Discover a basis for hope even when we live in a dismal and difficult environment.
- Major Carter includes the local community’s apathy as part of the problems they face, along with larger outside institutions. Identify how we contribute to the problems and our lack of ability to address them.
- Identify a basis for hope that leads to creativity and a sustainable life.

Length of presentation and discussion: One hour.

1. If the group is smaller than 12-15 and has not met as a group before, take time to arrange for introductions. If this is an on-going class or group skip this step.
2. View of DVD Robert Scott’s interview with Majora Carter. 15 minutes.
3. Divide into small groups of 5 to 8 persons. Consider the following: 20 minutes.
 - What issues does Majora Carter raise for you that are similar to events and issues in your own community at some level or another?
5. In a full group consider the following: 25 minutes.
 - What would you like to learn from Major Carter about how to initiate and sustain successful community development that engages local people and also works with the larger commercial and governmental institutions?
 - What have you learned from this presentation and discussion?
 - What does it suggest to you to do in the future?