

# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

## The Power of Names

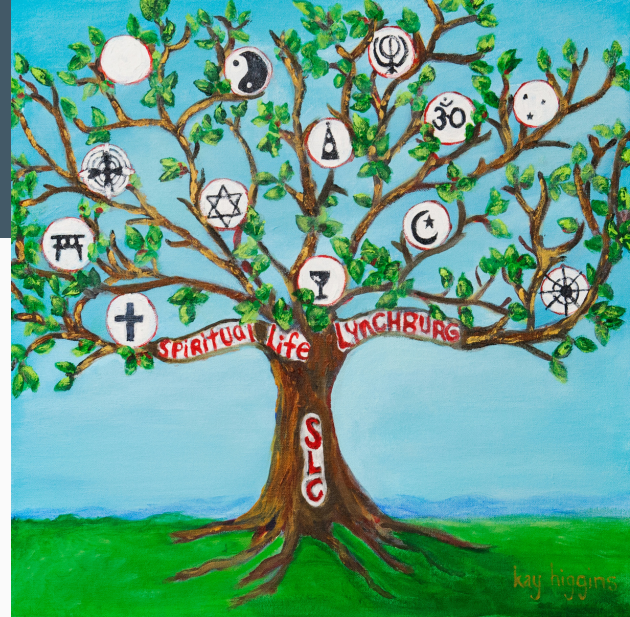
BY STEVE

Last week Laura Anderson spoke to a crowded Sydnor Auditorium about religious trauma. For those of you unable to attend, Laura is a licensed psychotherapist and author of the recently published *When Religion Hurts You*. She describes religious trauma as the body's response to overwhelming experiences that happen within religion, especially what she describes as "high-control religion." High-control religions are ultimately communities constructed by means of human action. Power is distributed throughout these communities systematically. According to social scientists, power is defined as the capacity to influence, lead, dominate, or otherwise create consequences for others. While power can uplift, it can also harm. Power in high-control religions can disempower others simply because of their identity—their gender, their sexuality, even the beliefs they hold about themselves and the world they live in. When these individuals are overpowered by the communal systems characteristic of high-control religion, they experience religious trauma—the physiological experience of overwhelm.

Laura used storytelling to demonstrate examples of the individual embodied experience. One story she told stood out to me. She described how her journey out of high-control religion began with the insight that her mind and body were not aligned. Even though she could feel the imbalance in her body, could not fully articulate it—she could not speak its name. Nevertheless, her body continued insistently to bring this unbalanced feeling to her attention. Laura tried different therapists who offered various diagnoses. None of them, however, could name her malady. It was necessary for her to name what she suffered in order to start her healing process. Part of her motive for getting her PhD was to research and write about her experience of healing. Her doctoral work with her mentor provided the opportunity for Laura to recover the voice of her wise self, the voice of self-knowledge: who she really is. An important step in her healing process was coming to know who she was not. Doing so opened space for her revelation of self.

Knowing the name of something or someone can give the knower power over that thing or person. This is a widespread cultural motif.

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# The Power of Names (cont'd.)

The ancient Egyptian god Ptah, for example, could create anything he could name. In the biblical book of Genesis, Elohim said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Naming in both examples is necessary for creation to take place. As Laura's experience demonstrates, naming can also be necessary for negating embodied hurts. Naming trauma allows us to start healing. And it is in the healing process where we encounter ourselves, where we hear the voice of our wise self, where we no longer look at ourselves through a glass darkly, but face-to-face with who we really are. Knowing ourselves is like the experience of hearing our name spoken aloud by someone whom we love.

If you have suffered religious trauma, there are many resources available on campus—contact the Spiritual Life Center or the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment with a chaplain or counselor.

Did you miss our

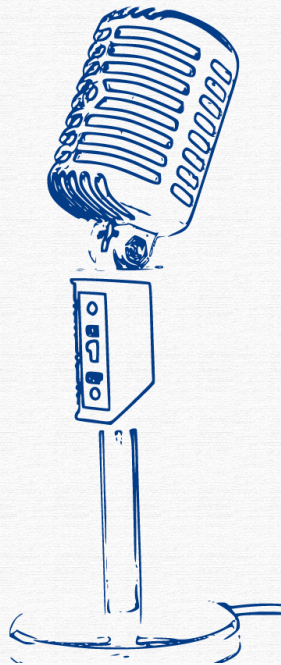
## SHUMATE OR SNIDOW LECTURES?

Good news!

**LECTURE  
RECORDINGS ARE  
NOW AVAILABLE**



Link  
in the  
email



For more information about the Spiritual Life Center, including info on our student groups, go to our webpage - link in the email signature.

You can also visit our [Linkt.ree](#)

# Upcoming Interfaith Holidays

April 17

Ramanavami (Hinduism)

April 22-30

Passover (Judaism)

# Dates to Remember

Weekly on Sundays in Snidow Chapel:

- 11 a.m. Worship with Church of the Covenant
- 4:30 p.m. Roman Catholic Mass

Tuesday, April 23

6-8 p.m. in Memorial Ballroom,

Hall Campus Center

SOUND BATH

with Greg Burns