THE 21ST CENTURY PHENOMENA:

Women on the Cutting Edge of Ministry

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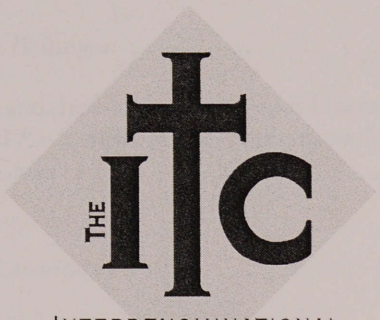

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Mary Anne Bellinger*

INTRODUCTION

The theme for this issue of *JITC*—"The Twenty-First Century Phenomena: Women on the Cutting Edge of Ministry"—is reflected in the diversity of our writers: faculty, students, staff, and alumnae. All avow that one of the most empowering dimensions of ITC is the emergent voice in African-American women's theological scholarship—Womanist Theology. This liberatory perspective is embedded in the Center's purpose—educating and nurturing leaders for engagement in church and world for the common good.

Women—strong, powerful, extraordinaire—grace the halls of ITC, making significant contributions to the paradigm of Womanist Theology: reconstructing knowledge to understand what African-American women's unique experiences mean in relationship to God, creation, and holistic survival. Two of America's leading Womanist scholars, Jacquelyn Grant and Katie G. Cannon, trod the hallowed halls of ITC, energies and intellects awakened, nurtured, and challenged during their sojourn, graduating in 1973 and 1974, respectively.

Dr. Jacquelyn Grant is the Callaway Professor of Systematic Theology at ITC and the founder/director of Black Women in Church and Society. Dr. Katie G. Cannon is associate professor of Christian Ethics at Temple University in Philadelphia. From 1983-1984 she served Harvard Divinity School as a visiting scholar. Both women earned the Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in New York City and have published extensively, exemplifying the full meaning of moral agent—facing racism, clas-

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sism, and sexism on a daily basis. These two persons are representative of the contingent of women who forge their legacies at ITC, contributing to the increasing influence of scholarship across disciplines.

The empowering assertion of Black women's voices must be heard against wounding forces—institutional church, culture, society—designed to keep Black women in "their place." No longer can these systems ignore our historical contributions and minimize our present influence in scholarly circles. We are twenty-first century women on the cutting edge of our ministries. We are phenomenal!