



People of Color

A Basic Statement on People of Color:

The United States is a race based society made up of a dominant White group and several other racially defined groups which have been and continue to be oppressed in specific ways. While race is a social construct created by the dominant White group to oppress and exclude the other groups from the power and resources of the society, race has also been used by oppressed peoples to build group solidarity and a culture of survival and resistance. Racism has also created barriers which separate oppressed groups from one another. While each oppressed group is affected by racism differently and each group maintains its own unique identity and culture, there is also the recognition that racism has the potential to unite oppressed people in a collective of resistance. For this reason, many individuals who identify as members of racially oppressed groups, also claim the political identity of being People of Color. This in no way diminishes their specific cultural or racial identity, rather it is an affirmation of the multiple layers of identity of every individual.

- Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM)

A Definition of People of Color:

People of Color is not a term that refers to a real biological or scientific distinction between people. People of Color in the United States share the common experience of being targeted and oppressed by racism. Unfortunately, one of the ways racism operates is to keep People of Color divided. Many people only think about their specific ethnic or racial group when discussing oppression or the need to build political power. By using the term People of Color, we begin to push people to think more broadly. We need to build relationships with other groups of color. The term People of Color has movement building potential.

- The Western States Center, Portland, OR

History:

Historically the term People of Color has been connected specifically to people of African descent during slavery in the Americas. The term “free people of color,” or sometimes “gens de couleur libres” in areas of the Caribbean, referred to individuals of full or partial African ancestry who were not enslaved. This group played a large role in the establishment and liberation of Haiti.

Complexity:

While People of Color is considered an umbrella term by many, there remain groups who are targeted by oppression based on race or ethnicity who do not identify as People of Color.



Within Unitarian Universalism, our Latina/o Hispanic organizations remind us that their identity is distinct from that of People of Color. Latina/o and Hispanic identity is based on ethnicity rather than on race. In the article *Hispanic vs. Latino* Venus Gines writes, “it is difficult to make assumptions about Latinos since they represent a mix of racial and ethnic lines from 22 different countries of origin. This specific population has unique demographic characteristics and degrees of acculturation in addition to differences in history and cultural background.”

UUA Organizing History:

In 1995 the Latino/a Networking Association (LUUNA) was formed to nurture and support Latino/a UUs and furthering understanding of Latino/a issues within Unitarian Universalism

In 1997 the Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM) was formed to support and nurture UU religious professionals of color. In 1999 DRUUMM’s mission expanded to meet the growing need for all People of Color to gather, meet, and form religious community with one another. DRUUMM now has several identity based caucuses, including the African Descent Caucus, Asian/Pacific Islander Caucus, Indigenous Council, Queers of Color, Multiracial Caucus, and Seminarians of Color.

The UUMA Hispanic Ministry Caucus was formed to nurture and support Unitarian Universalist Hispanic, Latino and Latina ministers and seminary students.

In 2005 UU Allies for Racial Equity was formed to be accountable to people of color in building a movement among white UUs committed to unlearning white privilege/supremacy and to confronting racism in all its forms.

Further Resources:

- *White Ethnicity: Developing a Sociological Understanding of Native American Identity Reclamation* by Kathleen Fitzgerald (Lexington Books, 2007)
- *Hispanic/Latino Identity* by Jorge J.E. Garcia (Blackwell Publishers, 2000)
- *How the Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* by Karen Brodtkin (Rutgers University Press, 1999)
- *Multiracial Child Resource Book* by Maria Root, ed. (Mavin Foundation)
- *Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American Identity* by William E. Cross (Temple University Press, 1992)
- *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: A Psychologist Explains the Development of Racial Identity* by Beverly Tatum (Basic Books, 2003)
- *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White* by Frank H. Wu (Basic Books, 2002)