



## Racism: some basics

*"I... ask you to know who you are, and who we are. Because unless we are willing to do the hardest work, that of knowing ourselves; unless we are willing to hold in check our natural inclination to jump to solutions, we are at great spiritual risk as we approach the reality of race and class, and the making of justice in our world."*

--the Rev. William G. Sinkford  
*"Where Race and Class Unite"*

### **A Basic definition of Racism:**

Racism is racial prejudice and discrimination that is sustained by institutional power and authority.

### **Racial Prejudice vs. Racism:**

Racial prejudice is judging an individual based on pre-existing biases toward a perceived or ascribed racial or ethnic category, and using that judgment to assert relative worth. Racism stems from a broad system of power which selectively rewards and discriminates against individuals based on race or ethnicity.

*"The critical element that differentiates racism from prejudice and discrimination is the use of institutional power and authority to support prejudices and enforce discriminatory behaviors in systematic ways with far-reaching outcomes and effects. In the United States, racism is based on the ideology of White (European) supremacy and is used to the advantage of White people and the disadvantage of people of color."*

--Enid Lee, Deborah Menkart, and Margo Okazawa-Rey

### **Why Anti-Racism?**

The Unitarian Universalist Association uses the language of anti-racism because it describes an *active* commitment to dismantle the structures of racism in our religious movement and in our broader society and culture.

### **White Privilege:**

White privilege is a term that has historically been used to identify the privileges, opportunities, and gratuities offered by the American society to anyone who is Caucasian. This has manifested itself in a number of ways such as better housing, education, economic opportunities, and higher wages for Caucasians.

It is a Eurocentric attitude of superiority that is perpetuated in America by the so-called "Old Boy" system of covert racism that prevents non-whites from receiving equal, fair and just treatment.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://wik.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/White\\_privilege](http://wik.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/White_privilege)



### Further Resources:

- *Soul Work: Anti-racist theologies in dialogue* by Majorie Bowens-Wheatley and Nancy Palmer Jones, eds. (Skinner House, 2003)
- *Privilege, Power, and Difference, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* by Allan G. Johnson (McGraw Hill, 2006)
- *Against All Odds: The Struggle for Racial Integration in Religious Organizations* by Brad Christerson, Michael O. Emerson, and Korie L. Edwards (NYU Press, 2004)
- *Uprooting Racism* by Paul Kivel (New Society Publishers, 1996)
- *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn (HarperPerennial, revised and updated in 1995)
- *Learning to Be White* by Thandeka (Continuum, 1999)
- *Unitarian Universalism and the Quest for Racial Justice* (UUA, 1993)

### UUA Curricula:

- *Weaving the Fabric of Diversity: An Anti-bias Program for Adults* by Jacqui James and Judith A. Frediani. 8 sessions. Helps people overcome bias and celebrate diversity through telling their stories and listening to others. Engages participants in a variety of activities to examine and challenge ableism, racism, heterosexism, ageism, and classism in the safe, caring, and respectful environment of religious community. Ends with an invitation to action. (UUA, 1996)
- *Rainbow Children: A Racial Justice and Diversity Program for Ages 5 to 8* by Norma Poinsett and Vivian Burns. 12 sessions. This is an anti-bias, pro-diversity curriculum that addresses racial and ethnic prejudice while affirming the inherent worth and beauty of the child, the family, the community, and the diversity of humankind. Beginning with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, it celebrates the differences and commonalities of all people. (UUA, 1995)
- *Race to Justice: A Racial Justice and Diversity Program for Junior High* by Robin Gray and Jose A. Ballester y Marquez. 15-sessions. Affirms human diversity as a wondrous fact of life while revealing the destructive nature of racism through role plays, real-life stories and games. Culminates in a video project to promote racial justice and diversity. Includes 17 handouts, leader resources and bibliography. May be adapted for senior high. (UUA, 1995)

### Unitarian Universalist Association 2006 Responsive Resolution:

*“Resolved, that the Delegates to General Assembly are charged to work with their congregations to hold at least one program over the next year to address racism or classism, and to report on that program at next year's General Assembly.”*

This resolution, written by a GA delegate, was in response to reports of UUA officers at GA 2006 as well as events impacting Unitarian Universalist communities of color, especially youth, at the 2005 and 2006 General Assemblies. It was overwhelmingly supported by the delegates from over 600 UU congregations.

For more resources, go to <http://www.uaa.org/actions/responsive/06racism>.