

Preparation:

This week I'd like to continue our exploration of the implicitness of global north/global west cultural dominance. The aim for this session is for us to begin to see and feel the depths of the innate and internalized colonial and imperialist models that are evoked when we of the U.S. dominant culture interact with people and cultures different from us.

"...The effects of colonialism are far reaching. Within church life, it is likely to affect how we think about and use music, do religious education, choose readings, sources, architectural styles, and where and how we worship, with all of these aspects favoring the dominant culture.

The cultural dominance of the colonizing group punishes non-conformity; tokenizes and advances subjugated conformers; willfully ignores Indigenous history while codifying a narrative of events that reframes the intent, effect, and interactions of the colonizers; and cultivates cultural myths, media, and art that reinforce these beliefs.

We also see settler colonialism as the basis of a gentrification mentality in that the goal of settler colonialism is to displace and replace Indigenous groups.

Many have also explored the ways in which colonization also affects many Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color living within the countries of their colonizers...."

--from *Widening the Circle of Concern: Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change--Distinctions and Definitions* chapter definition of Colonization

A brief reminder or two - The group of us attending this webinar are not homogenous; not all of us are originally from the United States, nor can we simply by looking always assume the cultural history and heritage of any of us. When we, as presenters, use the term "we," the 4 of us are usually referring to those of us in this space who are Euro-descendant, of U.S. dominant culture, and predominantly make up the population of the U.S.-based UU community. Because global northern/global western culture holds significant and profound power over all of us who live here, it is important for us to examine and uncover its elements of internalization. As we have mentioned in both previous sessions, this is not comfortable work; but it is necessary if we are face our historic and current practices of perpetuating colonizing and imperialistic models of

relationship. Our hope is to move from feeling *guilt* over a past actions toward being inspired to *act and speak responsibly*.

As modern-day religious liberals, we cannot escape the reality and generational impacts of colonialization. As we have discussed in previous sessions, our Unitarianism played an integral part in the colonizing acts of the Philippines and the civic religion that is the bedrock of the U.S. understanding of freedom, democracy, and progress. Even when we venture beyond the borders of the U.S. and the Philippines, we find the scars of colonization alive and well within our global Unitarian, Unitarian Universalist, and Free Church communities. Nearly every nation in which lives a Unitarian, UU, or Free Church community has a history of colonization, either as those having been colonized or as the colonizers. There is no way this does not complicate, nor impact the relationships U/Us across the world relate to each other and work together.

Discussion Homework:

In our session this week I am using one U.S. domestically-focused piece and one overseas-focused piece to help us pay closer attention to how we respond to difference and to challenge from the source of difference.

Discussion Element One:

The first is the immensely popular and frequently used responsive reading #584, “Network of Mutuality” by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from the Unitarian Universalist Association hymnal *Singing the Living Tradition*.

[Please see the linked PDF document](#) that highlights each line of the responsive reading as it is written in the hymnal (on the left) alongside larger selections of the texts from which the lines were taken (on the right). You will notice that there are 6 sources from which the 10 lines originate. Each line or two were selected from much larger addresses, sermons, and writings woven together. Some selections seem simply editing a much longer piece, distilling it into what the editors of the responsive reading believed to be the central point. However, other selections taken from within their fuller context appear to have changed the meaning.

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Please take some time to review the questions below. Your responses to these will be the focus of our first small group conversation this week. I ask that you pay special attention to your immediate response, as well as any change in your response as you sit and ponder the questions more deeply. Does your response to these questions change over time? If so, in what way(s)?

Questions:

- Does the meaning of each line change when selected out of its original context? If so, how?
- Does the voice of the “speaker” change when each line is removed from its original context? If so, what is the impact of that change in speaker?
- Does the “audience” change when the lines are detached from their original context? If so, what is the impact of that change in audience?
- Can you think of texts, songs, or spiritual practices you use that are separated from the original cultural, religious, or racial context? How does the meaning and impact of that removal change the original purpose and intention?

Discussion Element Two:

This second element asks you to imagine yourself traveling to a fictitious land called Scriblandia, that is home to a U/U/Free Church community that has existed for generations.

Covid-19 has finally passed sufficiently enough that global travel becomes widely available again. You have been dreaming of a trip to Scriblandia for year,s and now is the time. As you research Scriblandia you discover there is a significant, vibrant, and long-standing Unitarian/Universalist/Free Church community. Their congregations are scattered throughout Scriblandia and you immediately wish to visit as many of these congregations as possible. Hoping that you will have a great experience even though you don't speak the native language, you are sure, as often happens, you and your fellow U/U will figure it out. Scriblandia is not a highly economically developed nation, but there is decent transport that can take you to all the highlights of the country. You begin to prepare for your trip.

In your preparations, you write to the national office of the Scriblandian U/Us asking for the contact information for the congregations in the towns and villages you intend to visit on your trip. While you await a response, you begin to confirm your travel arrangements to the places with U/U congregations in particular places in Scriblandia that you already hoped to see.

It takes several weeks, but the national U/U office in Scriblandia, as is their culture, warmly welcomes your visit. Over the course of another few weeks, it is arranged that during your 2 weeks trip you will visit 3 Scriblandian U/U congregations. In one

community you have been invited to stay with a local family, while in the other two the local congregations have arranged for your stay at a modest hotel.

You couldn't be more excited as the day of travel arrives and you head off to Scriblandia!

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Please take some time to review the questions below. Your responses to these will be the focus of our second small group conversation this week. I ask that you pay special attention to your immediate response, as well as any change in your response as you sit and ponder the questions more deeply. Does your response to these questions change over time? If so, in what way(s)?

Questions:

As you make your plans:

- What are your expectations of the U/Us in Scriblandia?
- What are your assumptions about the U/Us in Scriblandia?
- What are your hopes for your visit with the U/Us in Scriblandia?
- Why visit the U/Us in Scriblandia at all? What desire drives you to visit them?

Imagine yourself a Scriblandian:

- What are your expectations of the visit from an overseas U/U?
- What are your assumptions about overseas U/Us?
- What are your hopes about the visit with the overseas U/U?
- Why do you think an overseas U/U is visiting your remote village & your congregation?