



BLACK LIVES of UU and The Clearing

A PRESENTATION TO THE UUA BOARD

Rev. Carlton Elliott Smith & Leslie Mac

Friday, October 14, 2016

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock
Manhasset, NY



WHAT IS BLACK LIVES of UU?

MISSION

Black Lives of UU is a grassroots platform created by Black Unitarian Universalists to encourage, inspire, engage and motivate Black people in their pursuit of liberation from systemic oppression in general and white supremacy in particular. It congregates locally, regionally and nationally/virtually.

VISION

Affirming our individual and collective worth and dignity with such bold consistency that each Black person in our Unitarian Universalist Association is equipped for and supported in the struggle for self-determination until victory is won.



Meet the



BLACK LIVES of UU

ORGANIZING COLLECTIVE



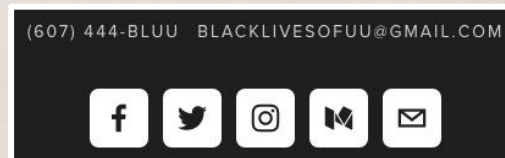
BLACK LIVES of UU

The Clearing



UUA BOARD PRESENTATION

What have we been up to since forming in August 2015?



The Clearing

UUA BOARD PRESENTATION

Our Heritage

*Religion is ethics touched by emotion.
If the intellect dominates and there is no
hint of emotion, a cold and barren
matter-of-factness results.*

*Conversely, if emotion leads, unguided
by intellect, we are doomed to a wild sea
of fanaticism. Yet mind and soul united
create one music, grander than before.*

-- Egbert Ethelred Brown
(1875-1956)



Our Heritage

*O women of America, it is yours
to create a healthy public
sentiment; to demand justice,
simple justice as the right of
every race.*

-- Frances Ellen Watkins Harper
(1825-1911)



Our Heritage



I have encountered riotous mobs and have been hung in effigy, but my motto is: Men's rights are nothing more. Women's rights are nothing less.

Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputations... can never effect a reform.

-- Susan B. Anthony
(1820-1906)

Our Heritage



An oligarchy of race, where the Saxon rules the African, might be endured; but this oligarchy of sex which makes father, brothers, husband, sons, the oligarchs over the mother and sisters, the wife and daughters of every household... carries discord and rebellion into every home of the nation.

-- Susan B. Anthony
(1820 - 1906)

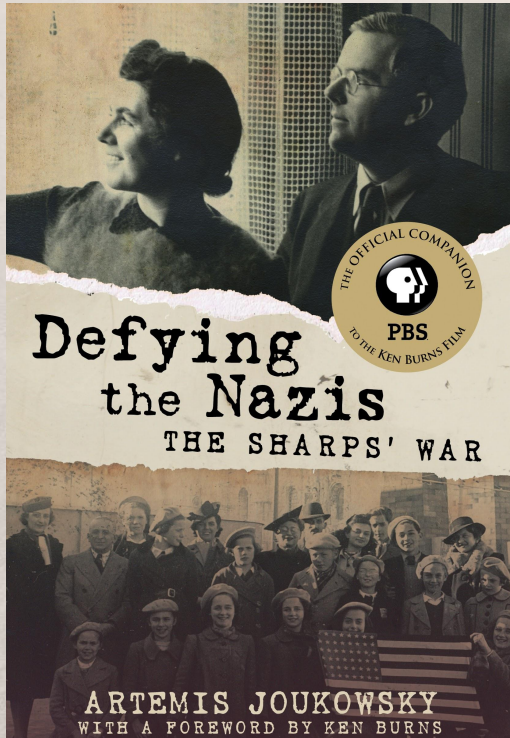
Our Courage

Martha Sharp and Rev. Waitstill Sharp

We have no interest in merely celebrating their heroism ... It is our intention to celebrate their heroism and redirect people's attention on to the slow genocide in Darfur today. We want to inspire activism by asking: How will our grandchildren celebrate our righteousness in regard to the inhumanity that occurs on our watch?

— Charlie Clements, President
UUSC (2003-2010)

“Righteous Among the Nations”, *UUWorld*, Summer 2006



Our Courage

So in his death, James Reeb says something to each of us, black and white alike—says that we must substitute courage for caution, says to us that we must be concerned not merely about who murdered him but about the system, the way of life, the philosophy which produced the murder. His death says to us that we must work passionately, unrelentingly, to make the American dream a reality, so he did not die in vain.

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Eulogy for the Rev. James Reeb", March 15, 1965



Our Courage

No one who either knows or believes that there is another possible course of action, better than the one he is following, will ever continue on his present course when he might choose the better. To 'act beneath yourself' is the result of pure ignorance, to 'be your own master' is wisdom.

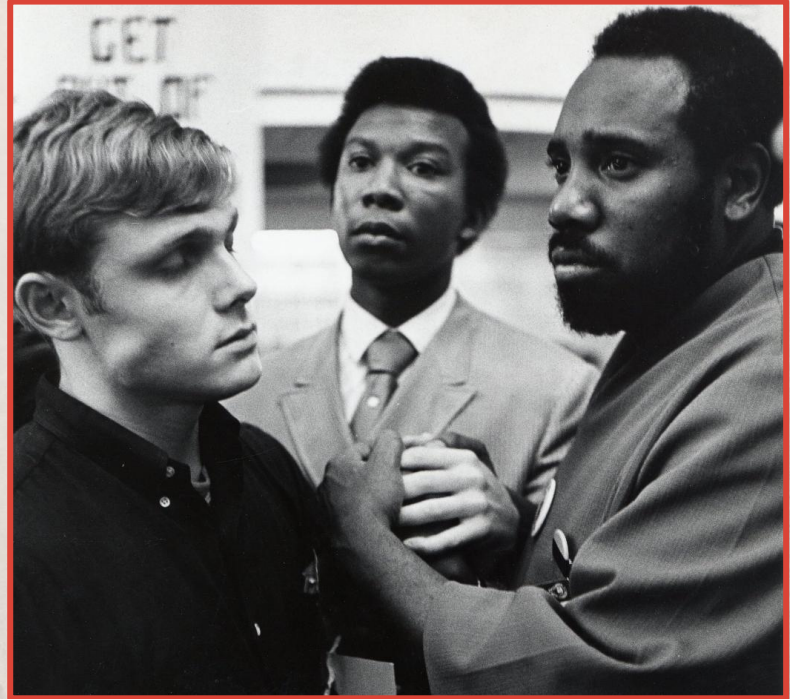
*-- from Socrates' Protagoras
(a favorite quote of Viola Liuzzo's, as
written in From Selma to Sorrow: The
Life and Death of Viola Liuzzo
by Mary Stanton)*



Our History

Unitarian Universalism never developed forms of worship, liturgy, writings, music, or theology reflective of African-American experience. Black folks came to UU congregations, not the other way around. Therefore, when 1967 arrived, there was nothing around which to build a specifically African-American UU identity and no natural interface with the African-American community. After one hundred years of squandered opportunities, the consequences came home to roost. The chaos that followed was the result of this self-created void.

--- Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed
“The empowerment tragedy” UU World 1.16.2012



Our Calling

"My involvement with Black Lives of UU proves what my late mother told me years ago: that one day, I would not have to choose between being in black community and being Unitarian Universalist.

On our core team and with black UUs and other UUs of color across the country, I feel understanding, camaraderie, and love. My mom was right--BLUU has helped me be proud to be black--and, through organizing and care--the proudest I've ever been to be a UU."

- Kenny Wiley

"BLUU has allowed me to STAY IN OUR FAITH during this time when my personal resources are desperately needed in the Movement for Black Lives. I don't know if I would still be calling myself a UU without Black Lives of UU being here."

- Leslie Mac

"I have been actively proclaiming my faith as a Unitarian Universalist for the last decade and then some. I'm proud of my faith because it calls me to live out the fullest and truest expression of my values and challenges me to live a life congruent with the ideals of equity, love, compassion and justice. BLUU is a clarion call for me to ensure that the lives of fellow Black UUs and myself are finally welcomed home in this faith."

- Dr. Takiyah Nur Amin

BLUU has allowed us each to **LIVE MORE DEEPLY INTO OUR FAITH**

Our Calling

"I lost my faith community when I became "Lena, Black Lives Matter Minneapolis leader." I could no longer go to my church to cry or be vulnerable or be spiritually nourished. It was a loss that struck me to my core (even as I also frequently experienced alienation because of my Blackness within my own congregation). Without Black Lives of UU, I would have left the organized faith completely. The community we have built and continue to build, the organizing we've done together and the ways in which we support each other and other UUs are invaluable and in some ways beyond description. Not having grown up in a church, BLUU is what I always imagined a loving spiritual community to feel like."

- Lena K Gardner

"From the time I became a Unitarian Universalist minister more than 20 years ago, I have dreamt of a ministry that brought together the spirit of Black religion and the insight from our faith. Black Lives of UU is bringing those dreams to life."

- Rev. Carlton Elliott Smith

"BLUU has brought me back home. Nowhere else have I felt surrounded with affirmation, love, and purpose so completely. We are making strides and connecting voices while holding each other dear in a way that is open and free of bias. BLUU is doing the work that has returned me to the faith and filled me with pride and joy...to be a UU."

- Dr. Royce James

BLUU has allowed us each to **LIVE MORE DEEPLY INTO OUR FAITH**

Our Challenge

Centering, Trusting and Funding Black Leadership

Acknowledging the Value of Black Programming

Supporting Economic Accessibility

Growing Accustomed to Discomfort

Reaffirming Distinct Spaces for Important Conversations



Our Opportunity

Healing Spaces - Online & In Real Life

Black UU specific pastoral care

Ongoing partnership with non Black UUs of color

Resource for white Anti-Racism work in our faith

Authentically Black worship

Direct support in times of racialized congregational conflict

Attention to the Economic needs of Black UUs

Increased connection to Local Black Movement Spaces

Ability to Introduce Our Faith Authentically to More Black People



Our Opportunity



**The Clearing is the
institutional manifestation
of a space to meet the
unique needs of
Black Unitarian Universalists.**

Our Invitation

SHORT TERM ASK:

Immediate access to \$300K to support our work in 2017

- Black Lives of UU Convening:
March 2017, NOLA
Black UUs will meet together to shape what BLUU should look like, how it should operate & what our collective goals are.
- Making The Clearing a reality
- General Assembly 2017
- #ReviveLove Tour 2017



Our Invitation

LONG-TERM ASK:

\$5 Million in long-range funding for Black Lives of UU

*These funds will allow us to create real change in our faith and to fully realize the potential of organizing **ALL UUs** for justice in the world.*

We believe **THIS** Faith & **THIS** Board is ready to make a substantial **INVESTMENT IN BLACK LEADERSHIP** within the broader context of an interdependent web that can hold us all.

Our Courage



BLACK LIVES of UU

The Clearing

UUA BOARD PRESENTATION

This Board is ready to lead with COURAGE.

Creating REAL change requires
doing things DIFFERENTLY....

Thank you for your continuing partnership.
With COURAGE and VISION - we have already won.

CONVERSATION

