

WHY LOOK AT RACISM IN THE UUA?

PRESENTATION BY THE REV. LESLIE TAKAHASHI,
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GUIDELINES VISIONS INC.

- Try on ideas
- Use “I” statements
- Both/And statements
- Okay to disagree; Not okay to shame, blame or attack
- Ok to be messy
- Take responsibility for your own learning/Ask for what you need
- Share the air space

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

<http://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/commission-institutional-change>



COMMISSION'S WORK

- Ground its work in theological reflection and seek the articulation of a liberating Unitarian Universalism which is anti-oppressive, multicultural and accountable to the richness of our diverse heritage.
- Oversee an audit of racism within the Unitarian Universalist Association practices and policies to set priorities and make recommendations for anti-oppressive strategies (including hiring and personnel practices and governance structures) and that will advance our progress towards building the Beloved Community and hold the Association accountable.
- Collect stories of those who have been the target of harm or aggression because of racism within existing UUA culture and to identify the aspects of that culture which must be dismantled to transform us into a faith for our times.
- Examine and document critical events and practices at all levels of the Association, congregations and related ministries which spotlight areas for redress and restorative justice and illuminate the expectations placed on religious professionals of color in the transformation of our faith.
- Identify promising practices for recruitment, retention and formation of religious leadership which spans the spectrum of race, class and age and which reflects an ecclesiology of an inclusive faith.

AND WHY WE ARE HERE.....FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS.....(FROM SANKOFA ARCHIVE MLTS)

- 1785 – Gloster Dalton (d.1813) was one of the 85 signatories of the Charter of Compact of the Gloucester Universalist Society.
- 1801 – Amy Scott was one of the incorporators of the First Universalist Society organized in Philadelphia.
- 1845 – “a free colored man, who with his family are members of the Mt. Olympus” Alabama Universalist Society.
- 1860 – Rev. William Jackson of New Bedford, who would later serve as chaplain of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry under Unitarian Col. Robert Gould Shaw and later the 55th, announced his conversion to Unitarianism at the AUA Autumnal meeting. They “took up a collection and sent him on his way.”
- 1870 – Francis Ellen Watkins Harper (1825–1913) abolitionist, writer, lecturer and friend of Peter Clark joins the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia.
- 1887 – Rev. Joseph Jordan (1842-1901) starts a Universalist mission in Norfolk, VA.
- 1889 – Jordan becomes the first African American to be ordained as a Universalist minister.



FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS.... (RESEARCH OF REV. DR. MARK MORRISON-REED)

- 1893 – Fannie Barrier Williams (1855-1944) a member of All Souls Church in Chicago delivers “The Religious Mission of the Colored Race” at the World Parliament of Religion. Frederick Douglass attends All Souls regularly during six months he is in Chicago for the Columbian Exhibition; earlier he had attend All Souls in D.C.
- 1895 – Hester C.Whitehurst Jeffery (1843- 1934) national organizer for the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACW), suffragette and friend of Susan B.Anthony joins the First Unitarian Church of Rochester,
- 1905 – Fannie Barrier Williams and Celia Parker Wooley found the Frederick Douglass Center, the first interracial social center in Chicago.
- 1906 – Don Speed Smith Goodloe (1878-1959) entered Meadville in 1904 and graduated in 1906.Uncertain of finding a ministerial position he returned to teaching and in 1910 became the first Principal of the Maryland Normal School No. which would become Bowie State College. Goodloe’s son Donald later became a member of All Souls in Washington D.C.
- Clarence Bertrand Thompson (1882-1969) received fellowship with the American Unitarian Association (apparently without mentioning his race) and served for three years as Minister of the Unitarian Church of Peabody, MA.
- 1912 – Rev. Egbert Ethelred Brown (1875-1956) after a two year course of study at Meadville he returned to Jamaica BWI and founds a congregation.



AND YET WE STILL HEAR TODAY....

“Black people wouldn’t like
Unitarian Universalism.”



AND FROM A FEW DECADES AGO...

HISTORY: EMPOWERMENT CONTROVERSIES

- 1964-65 – Viola Liuzzo and Rev. James Reeb are killed participating in Civil Rights activities. UUs both see them as heroes or as inappropriate agitators.
- 1967 – Black Unitarian Caucus formed.
- 1968 – The General Assembly passes a business resolution to recognize and finance a black empowerment group, the Black Affairs Council, at \$250,000 year for four years.
- 1969 – Controversy erupts because of renegotiation of the commitment. Majority of black UUs and allies walk out of General Assembly. Lawsuits etc. ensue.....
- 1970s and 1980s – Conversations about race cease, talk is instead about urban ministry.

THE PAST THAT DID NOT PASS

“Black empowerment” “walkout” “racist”...the words we use, the language we have to describe the periods of the late 1960s and early 1970s, are loaded. So why, for example, do we use the term “Black Empowerment Controversy?” It seems to make the anguish of that time the fault of a relatively small group of African-American Unitarian Universalists rather than the result of the white Unitarian Universalists’ encounter with race and racism. The term “White Power Controversy” would be more accurate in many ways and would direct attention to the broad Unitarian Universalist movement, and its need for healing and transformation, rather than to the small, marginalized group of “black” people and their allies.

Rev. William Sinkford, first time as UUA President

FROM EMPOWERMENT: ONE DENOMINATION'S QUEST FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

- “To what extent...the Unitarians and Universalists were able to identify the ‘oppressed’ within their midst—and thence, to identify with them—was and is still problematic. The question of color to a religious association that aspired to be color-blind rankled.....
- So the debate continued. And still continues. After fifteen years, the UUA is, with the same issue still unresolved, a house divided. On the surface, the controversy seems to have subsided; Unitarian Universalists are again what they were before the upheaval and acrimony of the late sixties and early seventies; they are again, if not comfortable, at least settled in their principles—those regarding tolerance, integration and the democratic process. And yet, what are Unitarian Universalists to make of the retreat religious liberals have made from their earlier overt commitments to racial equality and social justice, the disillusionment of many members of color within their midst, the perceived apathy of many toward the persistence of institutional racism in the Association, the all-too-evident failure of Unitarian Universalist churches and fellowships to attract people outside the middle class?”

Commission on Appraisal (1983)

AND EVEN MORE RECENT HISTORY: THE JOURNEY TOWARDS WHOLENESS ERA.....

- 1980 – UUA Board conducts a racism audit to identify policies and practices which impede good race relations (sound familiar???)
- 1984 – Task Force on Racism publishes its findings, urging the creation of a group to work towards ending racism in our movement and in the larger society. UUA Board appoints the Anti-racism Monitoring and Assessment Team, new start congregations.
- 1985 – Black Concerns Working Group given charge of “ending racism with \$5,000.”
- 1988 – The African American UU Ministers group formed (less than 10 members)
- 1988 – Mark Morrison-Reed publishes “How Open the Door” curriculum

JOURNEY TOWARDS WHOLENESS CONTINUED (FROM *THE ARC OF THE UNIVERSE IS LONG*)

- 1990 – Board of Trustees directs UUA administration to develop a feasibility plan for racial and cultural diversity and then develops a list of changes to achieve diversity in 10 years!
- 1992 – Journey Towards Wholeness Resolution to become an anti-racist association
- 1993 – Thomas Jefferson Ball held and AAUUMM members ask, “Should blacks wear rags or chains?”
- 1994, 1995 and 1996 – Racial Justice Days are held at General Assembly.
- 199? – Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries formed
- 1995 – LUUNA formed as an alternative to DRUUMM for Latina/o people
- 1996 – A pilot of 16 congregations begin anti-racism training.

JOURNEY TOWARDS WHOLENESS (CONTINUED)

- 2000 – DRUUMM Youth and Young Adult Caucus formed
- 2001 – Bill Sinkford elected president
- 2002-03 – Conferences for youth and young adults of color
- Religious professionals of color gather and discover that sharing and support allows some to survive in the system.
- 2005 – Youth of color are treated with disrespect throughout General Assembly, including being asked by older white UUS to take their luggage in from hotels, having people refuse to get in elevators with them, etc.
- 2005 – Allies for Racial Equity created.

AND THEN WE HEARD

“DON’T CALL ME A RACIST.”

What this represents is a failure to understand different levels of oppression which exists on the following levels:

- Personal
- Institutional
- Cultural



WHAT WOULD YOU TELL A YOUNG PERSON ABOUT THIS TIME IN OUR HISTORY? (FROM ARC OF THE UNIVERSE....)

I would tell them that if this faith community realized if it was to live fully into the principles it espouses, it had to confront its own systems of oppression and racism and change from within.

Richard Speck, District Executive UUA



WE HAVE NOT LACKED IN ASPIRATION....

Leadership Council Vision Statement (2008)

With humility and courage born of our history, we are called as Unitarian Universalists to build the Beloved Community where all souls are welcome as blessings, and the human family lives whole and reconciled.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO A YOUNG PERSON....

My hope for the future is that the adults take this work as seriously and passionately as the youth and young adults. I've met some passionate adults but most of them are not doing the work in churches.

Elandria Williams, then DRUUMMYAYA

Today co-moderator of the UUA with Mr. Barb Greve

AND MORE FROM *ARC OF THE UNIVERSE*

- What continues to challenge my personal faith is wondering whether our Association will ever move beyond its European norms. We would probably all agree that a life of faith cannot be nurtured in the face of endemic evil. But it is more difficult to see that it is also impossible for many people of non-European heritage to be nurtured by an upper middle-class Eurocentric norm blessed by self-satisfaction. Someday I am going to update W.E.B. DuBois book, *The Ways of White Folks*, to focus on the cost of Eurocentrism and of cultural indifference in a multicultural society.”

Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley, 2002

TODAY: THE WHITE SUPREMACY TEACH-IN

- 2016 Election heightens concerns for marginalized people, many of whom flock to our churches.
- Resignation of Peter Morales, Harlan Limpert, Scott Taylor, Don Southworth witnessed and commenting extensively on social media
- White Supremacy Teach In—product of a coalition of people of color wanting to address the issue of systematic racism and white-centering
- Revelations of large settlement packages offered to three white male staff members
- UUMA Conversation around White Supremacy/General Assembly

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

DERRICK BELL

-
- The term “white supremacy” as it is being used in the Unitarian Universalist Association today comes out of the legal scholarship of Derrick Bell (taught in over 20 law schools in the nation).
 - Developed out of legal scholarship, looks at the interactions between societal norms and expectations and patterns in institutions and the impacts of laws.
 - Identifies that existing power structures are based on white privilege and white supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color
 - Brought into relief again in an era of Black Lives Matter.
 - Used by a range of institutions, including the more conservative Duke Divinity School.

MYTHS AND REALITIES

MYTHS

- That this is a political and not a religious or faith issue.
- That the concerns of white people don't matter or are unimportant.
- The purpose is to shame or attack.
- That is this is a way of managing language.
- That it requires dominance of black people.
- That everyone has equal access to power.
- That the conversation about white supremacy caused a racial division in UU.
- That being colorblind is enlightened.

REALITIES

- To not be able to hear the ways we have not fully included and in fact have injured those marginalized in our midst means we do not recognize the promise of our faith.
- That the concerns of people of color are often simply just not heard.
- The purpose is to engage people in a new lens of understanding.
- The goal is to create a dynamic where we can hear one another's realities and create new truths and fully live into our faith.
- That people who have been historically dispossessed or marginalized do not have the same power.
- The conversation has never gone away, it has been underground and is now out.

SOME FACTS FROM 2017

- The UUA's 5 regional leads who supervise the 55 members of the UUA's congregational life staff were all white ministers.
- People of color make up no more than 11% of any rank of UUA employees except service workers where they are 84%.

HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF

- The incident which gave rise to the White Supremacy Teach-In were not isolated and were part of centuries-long conversations.
- Over those centuries, people of color have felt unseen, asked to fit into the dominant white culture.
- Multiple times the Association has pledged itself to the conversation—and abandoned it when the conversation got uncomfortable.
- The conversation about white supremacy culture picked up where we abandoned the conversation about anti-racism. (“Don’t call me racist.”)
- The inability to differentiate between institutional and personal racism is key—a person can have right intent and still collude in current institutional practices. (Turning the other eye, etc.)

WHITE SUPREMACY TEACH IN-

When my people of color, indigenous people and white antiracist colleagues—people who I know and love and have worked with for many years—use the term *white supremacy* to describe Unitarian Universalism, I've learned to listen. I've learned to open my heart, approach the conversation with curiosity, and try to understand why the term makes sense. I've learned people don't use this term merely to be provocative. They don't use it to be mean. They don't use it to make white people feel guilty. They use it to make sense of their own painful experiences within Unitarian Universalism. They use it to help themselves and others understand why decent, compassionate, loving, justice-seeking white people can nevertheless do and say things that are hurtful, often with no awareness. They use it to help themselves and others understand why spiritually open, love-centered, justice-seeking institutions can fail to practice stated commitments to diversity, multiculturalism and antiracism. In using this term, no one is calling anyone else a *white supremacist*. No one is likening the UUA or our congregations to the KKK or the Alt Right. But they *are* pointing out how our institutions center white people, white identity, experience, culture, ministers, history and spirituality; and how it makes them feel excluded, 'less than,' and invisible. When a hiring pattern favoring white people for high level positions becomes apparent, it is evidence that a deep-seeded white supremacy is operating. Not a hateful, violent white supremacy, but one that nevertheless has a painful impact on the lives of people of color in our denomination.

Rev. Josh Pawalek

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

- 1983 Commission On Appraisal Report: “Always, the first step towards reconciliation is awareness.” Be open to hearing the voices of those whose experience is not “colorblind”
- Educate yourself through media, reading and readily available resources (2017 UUA General Assembly) NOT by buttonholing people of color in the social hall or other church settings
- Try on noticing the ways things may reflect implicit bias
- Be willing to be an advocate for changing policies and practices which enforce a dominant culture

INTENT VS. IMPACT

- Intent– What is meant by the actor
- Impact– What is experienced by the recipient of the action
- Sometimes intent does not change final outcome

MAYBE IF WE UNDERSTOOD MODERN RACISM THEORY.... (VALERIE BATTS) © VISIONS, INC. 2011

“HISTORICALLY INCLUDED

- Old fashioned “isms”
- Modern “isms” Well-intentioned, sometimes subtle behaviors that continue the historical power imbalance

HISTORICALLY EXCLUDE

- Survival Behaviors
- Internalized oppressions: Internalizing attitudes about inferiority or differentness by members of historically excluded groups – The reaction to unhealed mistreatment over time

MODERN RACISM (© VISIONS, INC.)

TRADITIONALLY INCLUDED

- Dysfunctional rescuing
- Blaming the victim
- Avoidance of contact
- Denial of differences
- Denial of the political significance of differences

TRADITIONALLY EXCLUDED

- System beating
- Blaming the system
- Antagonistic avoidance of contact
- Denial of cultural differences
- Lack of understanding of the political significance of oppression

Political significance includes the social, economic, historical, psychological and structural impacts of oppression

OR THE TRAITS OF WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE.... (JONES AND OKUN 2001)

DOMINANT CULTURE

- Perfectionism
- Sense of urgency
- Defensiveness
- Emphasis on quantity
- Worship of the written word
- Paternalism
- Either/or thinking

ALTERNATIVE

- Culture of appreciation
- Realistic workplans and time tables
- Know organization cannot prevent abuse
- Quality and valuing of process
- Honor different ways of knowing/expressing
- Clear and known decision-making
- Both/and thinking

WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE (JONES AND OKUN 2001)

DOMINANT CULTURE

- Power hoarding
- Fear of open conflict
- Individualism
- Progress means bigger, more
- Objectivity
- Right to comfort for those in power

ALTERNATIVE

- Power sharing
- Recognition of conflict as necessary
- Collaborative, delegation
- Seventh Generation thinking, hidden cost
- Recognition everyone has a world view
- Recognition growth means discomfort

WORK OF THE COMMISSION TO DATE

- Call for stories on impacts of racism
- Southern Regional Lead Hiring decision interviews
- Truth and reconciliation processes
- Theological reflection
- Racism audit contract
- Request for proposal on analysis of religious professionals of color experience

PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE COIC WORK

- Unitarian Universalists and the practice of Unitarian Universalism need to call us to live into the fullness of the theology we inherit and proclaim.
- Transformation is needed at all levels of our Association of Congregations to abandon dysfunctional cultural expressions of our theology and polity.
- The covenants which bind us together both within our own faith and to our partners in the world are frayed and broken by the domination of white supremacy culture among us.
- To keep Unitarian Universalism alive, we must privilege the voices which have been silenced or drowned out and dismantle elitist and exclusionary white privilege which inhibits connection and creativity.
- In this effort, we should be guided by the bright spots of creativity and learning where multicultural and multigenerational new expressions of our faith are found.



HOW WE WILL WORK

- We are a volunteer commission with primary duties outside this work.
- We intend to do and model this work in a way that is sustainable for us.
- We will be issuing regular communications and we ask you to pay attention.
- We will be seeking stories and accounts to inform our work, please monitor our web page and our website and other social media.
- In communicating with us, we ask that you use our group email which is commission@uua.org.