

Jim Key
UUA Moderator and
Chief Governance Officer

April 2017

Report to the UUA Board of Trustees

Narrative

The recent turbulent events and resignations have resulted in a great deal of heartbreak, uncertainty, and anxiety throughout our movement. People of color throughout our Association, particularly Religious Professionals of color, UUA staff particularly those on staff have been deeply affected.

I want to thank our Sources of Authority for communicating with the board and me. We have received hundreds of emails representing thousands of UUs, Religious Professionals, congregations, and organizations. We have heard your offers of encouragement and suggestions for moving forward. These appropriate communications sent directly to the board at board@uua.org and me at moderator@uua.org are consistent with our Linkage duty and have been greatly appreciated. We encourage them.

I want to thank the staff throughout the Association for their steadfastness through out these uncertain times. I shared the following at the UUA All Staff meeting on Thursday, April13:

“There is no way I can find words to express my personal thanks and those of the board for your response to these difficult weeks of turbulence. Even though heart broken and shattered, you have managed to continue to do the necessary work of our Association.

Thank you for the bottom of my heart, particularly to the people of color on staff for holding the center. While it has been a difficult month for me, I have not worried about the high functioning of the staff here and across the regions.”

I want to thank the board for being open to the notion of shared leadership on which we ultimately came to consensus. Watching hearts and minds being changed, and feeling my own responses change, is

encouraging as we assess “the operation of white privilege and the structure of power within Unitarian Universalism as well as the power structure and power-mapping within Unitarian Universalism.”¹ This reconsideration of the power structure resulted in consensus once again. On Monday, April 10 in Executive Session of the Board, Monday, April 10, we reached consensus, approved and announced our Interim Co-Presidents:

“Moved: In pursuit of the UUA Interim Presidential Transition Plan the Board appoints a co-equal, three-person Presidential Transition Team to serve together and in collaboration to fulfill the obligation outlined in the Plan: Sofia Betancourt, William G. Sinkford, and Leon Spencer.

Sofia Betancourt will serve as Interim Co-President for the Commission for Institutional Change, William G. Sinkford will serve as Interim Co-President for the roles of President as outlined in the UUA Bylaws, and Leon Spencer will serve as Interim Co-President of Constituent Outreach. All will serve in a Pastoral Care role.”

It is understood that working with the Board, they will develop a set of working agreements describing their particular roles and responsibilities and the undergirding norms, which will enable and govern their portfolios during this interim presidency.²

Sarah Lammert, Interim Chief Operating Officer, and I met with the newly named Interim Co-Presidents on April 11, 13, and will meet again as the Leadership Transition Team on April 19 and 20 as they “develop a set of working agreements describing their particular roles and responsibilities and the undergirding norms, which will enable and govern their portfolios during this interim presidency.”³

I warmly welcome this team to their new roles and pledge to meet with them as often as needed as they serve unselfishly during this interim period. I am grateful to their families and the institutions they serve for sharing their gifts with us at this critical and time.

¹ UUA Interim Transition Plan, approved by Board of Trustees at April 6 Board Meeting

² Motion approved at April 10 Board Meeting

³ Ibid

Finally, I want to address the other emails I have received regarding the Letter from the Moderator I published on April 6 regarding the term White Supremacy. It reads in part:

“We are well aware that to many of you the term “white supremacy” seems harsh and even inaccurate when applied to our beloved faith. Some of you are asking, “What will the outside world think if we describe ourselves as white supremacist? Isn’t this just one more misguided example of liberal guilt at play?” In a word, no.

The term white supremacist once referred exclusively to individuals and organizations that openly espoused the superiority of white people. In recent years the term has come to refer to a culture, or a social narrative that places the needs, desires, stories, well being, and the very lives of white people over and above those of people of color. It is the water we swim in. It is so much a part of our lives and of the life of our Association that it has just become business as usual. We have chosen to use the term and to endorse the teach-in called for by many of our religious educators because we are absolutely committed to staying awake to the challenges before us. White supremacy is a continuum. When we refuse to acknowledge our place in that continuum we risk being lulled back into complicity. Not this time friends.

Forward together. Not one step back.”⁴

I have and will respond to those who still object to the use of the term along these lines:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us on the use of the term “white supremacy.” We are a faith that holds many truths and draws on many sources of wisdom. We open our doors to many people. One truth is that we are a people who have spent years working hard on racial justice and anti-racism, who try our best to live our values in ways that decrease racist violence, and who support movements such as Black Lives Matter and immigrant justice movements.

Another truth is that our predominately white denomination exists within a racist society. White supremacy is in our history,

⁴ Letter from Moderator, April 6

woven into all our institutions and our culture. It is in our UU history, institutions, and culture. We name it so we can face it and change it, as author James Baldwin says. We are fully human; holy and flawed, doing our best to right the wrongs of white supremacy both within Unitarian Universalism and in the wider world. I recently used the term white supremacist once referred exclusively to individuals and organizations that openly espoused the superiority of white people.

In recent years the term has come desires, stories, well being, and the very lives of white people over and above those of people of color. It is the water we swim in. It is so much a part of our lives and of the life of our Association, that it has just become business as usual. We have chosen to use the term and to endorse the teach-in called for by many of our religious educators because we are absolutely committed to staying awake to the challenges before us. White supremacy is a continuum. When we refuse to acknowledge our place in that continuum we risk being lulled back into complicity. Not this time friends."

We hope that this information is helpful. Here are some additional resources:

White Supremacy

Pyramid: <https://www.democraticunderground.com/118756320>

Characteristics of a white supremacy

culture: http://www.csworkshop.org/PARC_site_B/dr-culture.html

Definition of white supremacy: http://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/What_Is_White_Supremacy_Martinez.pdf

White Supremacy Teach-in April 30 and May 7:

<http://www.blacklivesuu.com/uwhitesupremacyteachin/>

I encourage the board to use a similar reply should you received inquiries directed to you and direct to the teach-in link above.

BLUU - Since our historic October board meeting when the Board approved a commitment of \$5.3 million to Black Lives Unitarian Universalism (BLUU), I have been in conversation with Takiyah Amin,

Lena Gardner, and Royce James of BLUU. They have the BLUU portfolio of researching organizational options and requirements as well as financial management considerations.

As I reported in January, the BLUU leadership requested that the board and staff slow down the process begun in October. BLUU leadership and I have agreed to stay in relationship as organizational and financial plans become clearer. We hope to meet very soon with the BLUU leadership team noted above, joined by Tim Brennan and Mary Katherine Morn. This team was established as a result of my invitation confirmed by the boards at our January meeting. I will keep the board apprised as we have additional information to report.

Presidential Candidates Forums – Working with the Board Secretary, Chair of Election Campaign Practices Committee, and Congregational Life staff, I have facilitated three forums reported above in Eugene, OR; Bethesda, MD; and Charleston, SC. I have another scheduled in the MidAmerica Region at Oak Brook, IL on April 29. The Rev. Manish Mishra Marzetti will facilitate at Woburn, MA for the Northeast Region on April 21, and the Rev. Leslie Takehashi will facilitate at Walnut Creek, GA for the Western Region on May 6.

Moderator Nominating Committee – I have asked Rev. Chip Roush to convene the newly appointed committee at GA in New Orleans. They will report to the board in October.

I am hopeful and optimistic that we, as a movement, all of us, can accelerate our living into the Beloved Community that we so long for with our interim leadership in place.

Congregational and other visits

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| February 5 | Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists, Williamsburg VA, participated in building dedication |
| February 11 | Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda MD, participated in Leadership Reception |
| February 25 | Facilitated the Presidential Candidate Forum and lead a class in <i>Governance as Leadership</i> , Pacific Northwest District, Eugene, OR |
| April 1 | Facilitated the Presidential Candidate Forum, Central |

East Region, Bethesda MD

April 8

Facilitated the Presidential Candidate Forum,
Southern Region, Charleston SC

April 13

Reported UUA Board actions and introduced the
Interim Co-President Team