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MAC Arrow

Unitarian Universalist
Multiracial Unity Action Council
(UUMUAC)

“For the Unity of the
light and dark skinned
people of the world.”

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The Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus to carry out and foster anti-racist and multiracial unity activities both within and outside the Unitarian Universalist Association through education, bearing witness and other actions, and expansion of our membership both within and outside the walls of our congregations.

The Vision Statement

We envision our congregations, denomination, and society as not being color blind but color appreciative; as judging and treating members of the world’s rank and file by the content of their character, not the color of their skin or their cultural heritage; and as treasuring diversity in the context of the “Beloved Community.” We call this vision Multiracial Unitarian Universalism.

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Comment by Dick Burkhart on the UUMA Letter

Removing Rev Todd Eklof's Ministerial Fellowship

I have heard that those present had different interpretations of the LREDA story that was cited to remove Rev. Todd Eklof's fellowship. In any case, this was only a minor part of Eklof's book, "The Gadfly Papers". It now looks like this LREDA dispute was just an excuse to go after Eklof, given the record of biased and unethical behavior against Eklof by the leadership of the UUMA. An objective outside investigation is in order since core UU values are at stake.

This is an extremely serious incident which reflects very badly on the UUA. In fact the campaign against Eklof has had all the hysteria of a "witch hunt", as described by the well-reasoned and compassionate book "The Coddling of the American Mind" (Lukianoff and Haidt, 2018), the primary subject of Eklof's first chapter.

Note: The UUMA terminated Rev Rick Davis as Eklof's "good officer" (a kind of legal representative) for pointing out the UUMA's violations of their own procedures and codes of conduct. At the same time the UUMA did nothing to investigate the role of ministers in the slander against Eklof. So he has good reason not to trust them.

This is in addition to the fact that many ministers and UUA leaders and staff have now openly endorsed anti-white doctrines and practices, as developed and promoted by Critical Race Theorists like Robin DiAngelo ("white fragility") and Charles Mills ("white supremacy"). These doctrines directly violate our 7 principles by flipping anti-black prejudice to anti-white prejudice. Both kinds of prejudice fail our ideals due to lack of respectful engagement to reveal moral common ground, the kind of engagement both preached and practiced by Rev Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. The basic doctrine adopted by the UUA ("all whites are racist") was first identified by Rev Thandeka (a revered female African American UU elder) in 1999 as both anti-UU and set up for failure.

These doctrines were Eklof's real target – he devoted the whole of chapter 3 to debunking DiAngelo's ideology (Johnathan Church and Valerie Tarico give even more incisive critiques). The British academic Mike Cole discredits Critical Race Theory, especially Mills' provocateur-type ideology, from a Marxist anti-racist point of view. And I've been appalled at how Mills' half-baked ideas and incendiary language have been used to throw gasoline on the fires of the cultural wars, hardening the political gridlock, blocking progress on everything from race to the climate crisis.

Why I am choosing to not join the Beloved Conversations discussions

by Kenneth Christiansen, D.Min.

To the leaders of the upcoming Beloved Conversations discussions in my UU congregation:

I would much prefer to share the following news in person. As an English professor colleague at Defiance College, Defiance, Ohio, where I taught for 34 years used to remind the rest of us frequently, "The printed word doesn't smile." Unfortunately with the Covid-19 pandemic, meeting in person is not possible at this time.

I will not be joining the Beloved Conversations discussion group. I could stop there and share nothing more of what I am thinking. It would be safer. It would not rock any boats. It would also ultimately fail as a strategy for remaining a full emotional participant in the life of our religious congregation insofar as I have already written many words that are critical of the race relations approach taken by the UUA (and some other groups) since the early 1990s. More of these words will be published soon.

What is the problem?

1. The assertion of guilt connected to one's racial identity is an extremely dysfunctional motivator for courageous action in any area of life.

2. The use of the White Supremacy Culture (WSC) metaphor extends rather than contracts the distance between Caucasian and African American members of our community and of the UUA at large.

3. The WSC metaphor significantly distorts the big picture. The big picture in this country is not white against black as strongly evidenced by the racial composition of the marches calling for police reform that have continued across the United States and world for many days now since the police murder of George Floyd. Much more evidence supports an understanding of the big picture as a divide between those who hold great wealth wishing to protect their positions of power from limitations that fairness in civil society desired by the rest of us might impose upon them. The strategy of divide and conquer in many areas of life has functioned very well to suppress our better intuitions.

Several concepts in addition to WSC were lifted up in the fellowship hour where we first discussed Beloved Conversations. The concept of White Fragility illustrates the first problem enumerated above. When white people are told that the values of liberal culture developed since the Enlightenment are the pillars of White Supremacy Culture, a defensive reaction can be expected. The labelling of this defensive reaction as "White Fragility" places the onus of the situation completely on the person whose personal values have been condemned. The logic is tight. If one objects to the assertion that they are "swimming in a sea of white supremacy," does not accept that mantle, it is taken as evidence that they are "fragile" and not willing to accept the assertion that they, as part of the white race, carry in their being a full measure of racism. Something is wrong here.

The conflict between the strategies advocated by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X – "integrationists" vs. "nationalists" in the words of Dr. James Cone – are with us today. Black Nationalists limited involvement in confrontational politics, rather choosing self-isolation where self-determination can be maximized. Integrationists on the other hand built racially inclusive coalitions to confront power. This divide fractured the Unitarian Universalist Association in what has been called the "Empowerment Controversy" of 1967-69. The importance of mentioning this today is that the practice of self-isolation embraced by Black Lives UU (BLUU) continues a major historical movement that celebrates the values of black culture and black self-determination in a positive way. The dilemma created by the choice to self-isolate within a larger community is, what do you do with the rest of the population? How do you relate to them without allowing them to threaten your self-determination? The assertion that all Caucasians are implicated in a "sea of white supremacy" appears to be a major part of the answer. Continuing relationships with Caucasians in the organization is conditioned on their acceptance of the white supremacy paradigm.

Discussion of the third problem mentioned above, the "big picture" issue, goes way beyond the scope of what can be covered in this letter. The book, *Democracy In Chains*, by Nancy MacLean, is the best source I have found for understanding the anti-democratic and racially divisive forces that have increasingly gained control over what has been called the American Experiment. To repeat something said above, the real conflict is not between white and black. Rather it is between a relatively small ruling class and the rest of us. Only by banding together as equals in a common enterprise can we hope to create the real Beloved Community we need on both a national and local basis.

Returning to the upcoming Beloved Conversations discussions, I strongly affirm the hopes you have expressed to build greater community within our fellowship around the issues of race.

Proposed Eighth Principle

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

Critique of the Eighth Principle

By Dick Burkhardt

If there should be a new Principle, it seems to me that it should (1) Fill an a major gap in the current Seven Principles, being especially important in comparison with other gaps, and (2) Lead UUs in a vital new direction, one that we expect will be fundamental to the needs of future generations.

As to (1), the goal of nurturing a multicultural community is addressed indirectly by the last two Principles and by the last four Sources. What would be really new would be building such a community within our congregations, not just our larger communities, by recruiting congregants from diverse cultural backgrounds. The proposed wording suggests this but is not explicit about it. The problem is that in practice this has been much easier said than done and the wording does not suggest a promising avenue of approach.

The only hint provided as to how to transform ourselves into a multicultural community is that we should address racism and oppression in ourselves and our congregations. The problem here is that there is no evidence of significant racism or oppression within UUs or their congregations. To the contrary we are widely regarded as some of the most open minded, least prejudiced, and justice-oriented people in the US, and have some of the most democratically run congregations in our society.

Instead there is strong evidence that the primary obstacles are of class (predominately well-educated middle to upper middle class) and of culture (European and Judeo-Christian heritage, plus modern humanism, science, and citizenship). Few people of other cultural backgrounds find Unitarian-Universalism to be very welcoming unless they've had bad experiences with their own cultural heritage and are seeking to build a new theology and spiritual practice in ways that feel comfortable in the context of our existing Principles, Sources, and practices. Other denominations provide a more ready-made set of beliefs and practices to people who are ready to jump, often accompanied by a warm welcome. We tend to let new people find their own way, rather than offering a helping hand, especially when we're worried that we might be imposing our own version of UU.

As to (2), learning how to contribute better to a more globalized, multicultural world would seem to a vital direction. However, based on sheer numbers, in practice this will depend far more on how we interact with other cultures and communities, and the development of mutual understanding, than on how many of "them" we can bring into our own membership. Such outreach, along with the development of relationships of solidarity and brotherhood/sisterhood, will gradually make our congregations more welcoming, especially to cultures and ethnic groups who are eager to assimilate into US society with few theological hurdles.

There is even some danger in attempting to recruit others who are not be in full agreement with our Principles and Sources, people who are more interested in converting us to their views or causes, sowing discord, where an arms-length relationship would have been better.

However, others would argue that it would be far more productive to adopt a principle that would focus us on key issues of the 21st century. Example: not just "respect for the interdependent web", but "nurturing a global society based on regenerative systems and ecologies for many generations to come". In fact, this would be a strong basis for finding commonality with forward thinking individuals and groups from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We'd be leading the way instead of fighting a rear-guard action, that, as worded, doesn't even make much sense.

Why Anti-Racism Will Fail

by Thandeka

(1999, but still timely)

Two events compel me to make a public statement against the anti-racist theology and programs of our association. The first event occurred two years ago, when General Assembly passed a resolution calling upon the Unitarian Universalist Association, its congregations, and its community organizations to become anti-racist, multi-cultural institutions - terms that have a special meaning and history in our Unitarian Universalist context. To this end, the UUA Board of Trustees was urged to establish a committee to monitor and assess this process.

The second event occurred last spring when Bill Murry, president of Meadville Lombard Theological School, asked me to present a public lecture at GA on my new book *Learning to be White: Money, Race, and God in America*. I accepted this invitation, knowing I would have to speak out against an official UUA program, something I do with great reluctance. But otherwise, my own work might be mistranslated here at GA into yet another talk about white racism. As I hope to show, such racial talk is counterproductive to the social justice mission of the real vision of our religious movement.

And so I must begin my remarks with a critique of the anti-racist programs described by the "Journey Toward Wholeness Path to Anti-Racism," the information packet developed by the UUA's Faith in Action Department for Diversity and Justice. The packet itemizes the steps we need to take to develop an anti-racist UU identity, none of which we're told, can be skipped if one wishes to become an anti-racist. The first step is to take an anti-racism training workshop led by an authorized trainer.

I took one of these workshops and read the accompanying material. As a result of these experiences, I learned three things:

One: All whites in America are racists.

Two: No blacks in American are racist. They're prejudiced just like everybody else, but they lack the power of institutional resources to force other racial groups to submit to their will. Thus they can't be racist because racism in this conceptual scheme is defined as prejudice + power.

Three: Whites must be shown that they are racists and confess their racism.

Based on my experiences of the training and on my work with some of the antiracism advocates at the UUA on a racial and cultural diversity task force, I concluded that the anti-racist strategies have three basic problems:

First: They violate the first principle of our UU covenant together to actively affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Second: They make an erroneous assumption about the nature and structure of power in America;

Third: They misinterpret actions resulting from feelings of shame and powerlessness as evidence of white racism.

Now in more detail:

Problem #1: The UUA's anti-racist programs tend to violate the first principle of our covenant together.

Evidence. Anti-racists assume that congregations and their leadership mirror - and I use the anti - racist language here - the larger society's racism by excluding people of color as well as other socially oppressed groups such as gays and lesbians, people with disabilities, "Third World" citizens, etc., through the congregations' often unexamined policies, practices, teachings, and decisions.

What these anti-racists fail to notice is that most of our thousand or so churches are closed to virtually everyone regardless of race, color, class, or creed. Half our congregations have fewer than 250 members. A great many of them function as clubs. A case in point. One white friend told me that the former white minister of his UU church left after the congregation met to decide whether he should be ordered to shave off his new beard.

Rather than recognize that our congregants often find all difference threatening, anti-racists conclude that these congregations stay small and virtually all white because of the members' racism. With this caricature in place that UU congregants are - like all whites - racists, the anti-racists then, through careful and protracted training, call upon these congregants to confess their racism. Thus the anti-racists have created what they describe - whites who have learned to think of themselves as racists.

The theological principle behind all this is expressed in Joseph Barndt's book, *Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America*, which was sent to me, complements of the UUA anti-racism program to reinforce the lessons of the anti-racism workshop. Barndt, a white Lutheran minister, conducts anti-racism trainings for the UUA. Barndt's belief that all whites are racists is based explicitly on the Christian doctrine of original sin, which claims that through Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden human nature was corrupted - a doctrine linked to the Trinitarian claim that only through the death of Jesus and with the assistance of the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit can human nature be saved. In every age, Christian theologians have found new language to explain this doctrine. The anti-racist doctrine is just such a recent example.

As Unitarian Universalists we reject this doctrine in its pure form, but we have inadvertently brought it into our midst by using anti-racist rhetoric informed by Barndt's Christian dogma. Barndt, for example, tells us we're "Enslaved by sin and freed by grace," - classic Christian Trinitarian language. In other words, only a Savior can free us from sin and human imperfection because we humans lack agency to help ourselves. Following this Christian doctrine to its logical conclusion, Barndt thus urges whites to seek forgiveness for their racism and, to quote him verbatim, face the fact that "our [meaning whites'] unwitting and unwilling imprisonment in racism . . . continues even after we have repented, confessed, and been forgiven" (45).

In short, Barndt insists that whites will always remain sinners because their nature is corrupted. They are thus slaves to what Barndt calls - and again use his language - the original sin of racism

Lacking all agency, they thus can't effect their own salvation. In short, they need a savior. And in the Barndt theology, this savior isn't Jesus but, in a brash leap, "people of color." Listen to what he says:

Leadership and direction can only come from [people of color because they] understand racism far better than we do, and they know what needs to be done to eliminate it. Thus, the first step toward breaking the chains of this prison [for white people] is to recognize that we cannot be in charge of the changing" (99).

When it comes to specifics, though, Barndt and his colleagues call for no other action on the part of the white sinner except confession. Surely the moral passivity advocated by such a theology is one reason why anti-racism programs can claim so few concrete results.

Further, the doctrine of human helplessness goes against the entire sweep of our religious traditions. As Unitarian Universalists, we affirm human moral agency and reject the orthodox, Protestant trinitarian dogma that makes the crucifixion of Jesus the justification for our salvation in the eyes of God. The first principle of our covenant together is a pointed rejection of this Christian doctrine of original sin. Rather than affirming that human nature is corrupt, we celebrate it as inherently worthwhile and filled with dignity. This affirmation sets aside the need for a Messiah to sacrifice himself to redeem a corrupted nature.

William Ellery Channing declared as much in his 1819 sermon "Unitarian Christianity," which Unitarian Church Historian Conrad Wright calls, "our party platform." Listen to what Channing said in this sermon which marked Unitarianism as a distinct religion from its orthodox Trinitarian kin. Channing, of course, uses the non-inclusive language of his era:

all virtue has its foundation in the moral nature of man, that is, in conscience, or his sense of duty, and in the power of forming his temper and life according to conscience [N]o act is praiseworthy, any farther than it springs from [human] exertion. We believe, that no dispositions infused into us without our own moral activity, are of the nature of virtue, and therefore, we reject the doctrine of irresistible divine influence on the human mind, molding it into goodness, as marble is hewn into a statue (79-80).

In our tradition, we are always active agents in our own salvation. This is core to our teaching as Unitarian Universalists. So why have we accepted a doctrine of race that indicts 95% of our congregants as helpless, passive sinners?

To answer this question, we have to turn to the second problem I have found in UU anti-racist strategies: the errant assumption that white America works for white Americans. Any one who cares to look will quickly discover that it doesn't - at least, not for the vast majority of them. The privilege that, according to the antiracists, comes with membership in white America, actually belongs to a tiny elite. Let me illustrate this point.

Imagine that business and government leaders decreed that all left-handed people must have their left hand amputated. Special police forces and armies are established to find such persons and oversee the procedure. University professors and theologians begin to write tracts to justify this new policy. Soon right-handed persons begin to think of themselves as having right-hand privilege. The actual content of this privilege, of course, is negative: it's the privilege of not having one's left hand cut off. The privilege, in short, is the avoidance of being tortured by the ruling elite. To speak of such a privilege - if we must call it that - is not to speak of power but rather of powerlessness in the midst of a pervasive system of abuse - and to admit that the best we can do in the face of injustice is duck and thus avoid being a target.

My point is this: Talk of white skin privilege is talk about the way in which some of the citizens of this country are able to avoid being mutilated - or less metaphorically, to avoid having their basic human rights violated.

So much for the analogy. Here are the facts about so-called white skin privilege. First, 80 percent of the wealth in this country is owned by 20 percent of the population. The top 1 percent owns 47% of this wealth. These facts describe an American oligarchy that rules not as a right of race but as a right of class. One historical counterpart to this contemporary story of extreme economic imbalance is found in the fact that at the beginning of the Civil War, seven percent of the total white population in the South owned almost three quarters (three million) of all the slaves in this country. In other words, in 1860, an oligarchy of 8,000 persons actually ruled the South. This small planter class ruled over the slaves and controlled the five million whites too poor to own slaves. To make sense of this class fact, we must remember that the core motivation for slavery was not race but economics, which is why at its inception, both blacks and whites were enslaved.

Second, let us not forget the lessons of the 1980s. As former Republican strategist Kevin Phillips reminds us in his book *The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath*, "For all workers, white-collar as well as blue-collar, their real average weekly wage - calculated in constant 1977 dollars - fell." Third, let us also not forget that today, numerous companies are opting to lower standards for job qualifications for their work force rather than raise wages and thus cut into profits.² Jobs paying \$50,000 a year or more have twice the share of the job-loss rate than that they did in the 1980s.

The result of these contemporary economic trends is the most acute job insecurity since the Great Depression. As economist Paul Krugman has pointedly argued in the November 3, 1997, edition of the *New Republic*, the modern success story of America's booming economy rests on the bent backs of the American wage earners. The economy is booming because wages, the main component of business costs, are not going up. And wages are not going up because the American worker is presently too fearful to stand up and make demands. Downsizing has shaken worker confidence. Unemployment insurance last only a few months, and the global labor market has undermined the American worker's bargaining power. These basic economic facts, Krugman argues, have created one basic psychological fact for the typical American worker: anxiety.

A strong economy no longer means job security for most white middle-class Americans -- and they know it. This awareness, however, has not produced a rebellion against the rich but, rather, frenzied attempts by downwardly mobile middle-class whites trying to keep up the appearance of being well-off. Such appearances, however, include a penalty: debt. As Harvard social theorist Juliet B. Schor reminds us in *The OverSpent American: Upscaling, Downshifting, and the New Consumer*:

between a quarter and 30 percent of all American households live paycheck to paycheck; and In 1995, one-third of families whose heads were college-educated did no saving.

I do not call this economic condition in white America white skin privilege. I call it white middle-class poverty. Talk of white skin privilege is a distraction from this pervasive problem in white America. Talk of white privilege, to paraphrase a statement of Martin Luther King Jr. can feed the egos of poorer whites but not their stomachs.

So why have white UU's accepted a doctrine of race theory that is economically naïve, sociologically counterfactual, and racially damning? The answer is that by and large we haven't. In so far as we have, it's because the talk of privilege inflates some egos.

As we know, Unitarian Universalists are, collectively, the second wealthiest religious group in this country. Our members are also the most highly educated. This means that 49.9 per cent of us are college graduates and that our median annual household income is \$34,800.

In other words, members of our association tend to have a big brain and a small purse. UU's also tend to be politically active, environmentally conscious, nature-oriented, and live in the suburbs. This is not the profile of the power elite. It's the profile of civil servants, school teachers, small business persons, and middle managers. In effect, middle America - the group of professionals who keep America running by training its children, maintaining government, and paying taxes.

Two hundred years ago, the Unitarian part of our tradition had a very different profile, as Conrad Wright notes in his essay "Ministers, Churches, and the Boston Elite." Between 1791 and 1820, Unitarianism was called "the faith of the well-to-do, urban New Englanders." Harriet Beecher Stowe noted in the 1820s [that], "All the literary men of Massachusetts were Unitarians. All the trustees and professors of Harvard College were Unitarians. All the elite of wealth and fashion crowded Unitarian churches." Calvinist Jedidiah Morse described his liberal opponents as "a formidable host...combining wealth, talents, and influence."

But that was then and this is now. Today, most Unitarian Universalists are not affluent. Yet we seem fond of describing ourselves in this manner. We find this hinted at even in the Commission on Appraisal's 1997 report on congregational polity, *Interdependence*, which presents one of church historian Tex Sample's generalizations about the cultural left: "They are mostly affluent." The members of the Commission go on to tell us that Sample's description is in general quite consistent with the demographic and psychographic profiles of the members of our association. I am increasingly persuaded that most of us do indeed imagine we're well off. I'm also persuaded that some of us impoverish ourselves trying to live out this myth of our lives.

The truth is that to be white in America and not affluent is for many persons - embarrassing. No contemporary writer has chronicled the story of this middle-class shame better than Juliet B. Schor in her book *The Overspent American*. Schor notes that if debts are subtracted from assets, the typical middle-class American household's net worth is less than \$10,000. Does this mean that even though almost three-quarters of UU's own their own homes, their net worth might still rank a great many of them as members of America's middle-class poor? I suspect so.

The simple truth is that most middle-class white persons, including UU's, are not part of the economic ruling elite in this country. They have not amassed structural power and control. Our UU anti-racist rhetoric, however, claims that they have. Such a claim seems to produce three kinds or categories of ego responses in white UU's.

First category. For some, it is an ego boost. Bereft of real power and prestige in the eyes of America's ruling elite, what a tweak of the ego to have a so-called person of color tell you that you are all-powerful. Who could resist? Loads.

Thus the second category. Some egos are deflated. The egos of whites who are not racists, but have sometimes acted in racist ways in order to retain membership in their own social groups. I will use a story from my new book to make this point about a minister I will call Dan. Although Dan is not a Unitarian Universalist, but a well-heeled Boston Presbyterian minister, I will use his story because he is much like the many goodhearted liberal white UU's I have met who are neither white supremacists nor racists.

One day, over lunch, Dan recounted an experience that helped shape his racial identity as a white. In college during the late 1950s, Dan joined a fraternity. With his prompting, his chapter pledged a black student. When the chapter's national headquarters learned of this first step toward integration its ranks, headquarters threatened to rescind the local chapter's charter unless the black student was expelled. The local chapter caved in to the pressure and Dan was elected to tell the black student member he would have to leave. Dan did it. "I felt so ashamed of what I did," he told me, and he began to cry. "I have carried this burden for forty years," he said. "I will carry it to my grave."

The couple at the next table tried not to notice Dan's breakdown. The waiter avoided our table. As Dan regained his composure, I retained mine. I could see his pain. I felt empathy for his suffering but was troubled by his lack of courage. Dan's tears revealed the depth of the compromise he had made with himself rather than risk venturing beyond the socially mandated strictures of whiteness.

I realized that being white for Dan was not a matter of racist conviction but a matter of survival, not a privilege but a penalty: the pound of flesh exacted for the right to be excluded from the excluded. Dan's tears revealed the emotional price of his ongoing membership in the "white" race.

Although he is not a racist, Dan might make a confession of racism to a UUA anti-racism trainer because this would be the only way to mollify the trainer and also because racism is the only category he would have to express a far deeper loss and regret: his stifled feelings and blunted desires for a more inclusive community. But Dan did not cry during our lunch together in the restaurant because he was a racist. He cried because his impulses to moral action had been slain by his own fear of racial exile.

The anti-racist charge of white racism gives persons like Dan a way of addressing their moral failure of nerve without having to face a harder truth that they acted in racist ways not because they were racist but because they were afraid of being rejected. The charge of racism does not heal this condition or even describe it. It simply punishes a person for being broken.

The third category affected by anti-racist rhetoric I will call the silent majority. These Unitarian Universalists know that the anti-racist rhetoric that pervades our religious association runs counter to the economic realities of this country and their own lives. I believe that these persons simply dismiss the rhetoric as insulting to their intelligence and walk away. This doesn't help us build a strong, vibrant religious community. Quite the contrary. This is the way in which our community is broken. One withdrawal at a time.

Enough. This anti-racist rhetoric and its fall out must be stopped. I have three suggestions.

First, read. Start reading groups in your local congregations that will help you figure out how to talk sensibly about the link between race and class in America. Learn how the creation of the so-called "white" in this country was a means to exploit this person's labor. Discover what white Americans have in common with other people of color and work on a language that takes into account the fact that the racial socialization process in this country makes racial victims of us all.

Second, empathize. Learn to replace moral judgment with loving compassion. All of us have made decisions and acted in ways that compromise our moral integrity. Use our collective power as a religious movement to help each of us heal our crippled ability to relate with the full integrity of our humanity. Create new rituals in your Sunday services that allow persons to feel the healing power of a beloved community.

Third, organize. Build coalitions using your new vocabulary and your new commitment to empathize and work with other UU congregations and other liberal religious groups who are also tired of race-talk separated from talk about class issues. I believe that we have the power to transform America because of who we are: We are Middle America. Transform this group and you transform the country because we are the majority. All we need is the moral courage to practice what we preach. And we will generate this moral courage through love.

W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880* (1935; reprint, Cleveland: Meridian Books 1964), 26. (See Herman Schlueter, *Lincoln, Labor and Slavery* (1913), 86)

"Seek the Moral Common Ground, Not the Political Middle Ground"

a review by Dick Burkhardt of

Beyond the Messy Truth: How We Came Apart * How We Come Together

By Van Jones (2017)

Van Jones takes both the Left and the Right to task for fomenting the cultural wars and political gridlock. His call is to drop the "politics of accusation" and initiate a "politics of confession", where "all sides can start to own up to our own roles in creating this mess" (p xv). His strategy is to develop a "bipartisanship from below", based on the common ground that he himself has found, from initiatives to end mass incarceration to stopping the epidemic of opioid deaths.

Van Jones, a renowned African American liberal activist and now CNN journalist, grew up in the rural South with mentors from across the political and racial spectrum. He is a living rejection of "identity politics", a rare man, who sought out and formed an alliance with Newt Gingrich (hated by the Left) to make real progress toward criminal justice reform. Few can match Van Jones' political depth and humanity (he's Christian in the best sense).

Yet Van Jones does come up a little short on historical depth. He needs to read Peter Turchin, the eminent scientific historian of the rise and fall of regimes and empires, and how limits-to-growth is already impacting planet earth and all humanity, with much worse to come. Common threats open up the space for common ground, but first they must be understood and engaged, instead of succumbing to the delusion of continued economic and technological growth as our savior.

But Van Jones comes across as a superb politician, seeking to cut across party lines to get things done. Nor is this new, as when I heard him speak a dozen years ago, I thought I was listening to the next President of the United States. He tells liberals to embrace not just the "historically marginalized" but the "newly marginalized" (p 25), such as big sections of the white working class. And to seek common ground with people of faith. "We can disagree with conservatives. But we should stop disrespecting them" (p 39). End the "circular firing squad": "when people use confrontational tactics in their own coalitions, then you have a movement that is too injured internally to play a healing role externally" (p 54). "The country is waiting for a pro-democracy movement that can inspire it and not just critique it" (p 57).

Addressing conservatives, Van Jones gets right to the point: "The Trump administration is discarding your traditions and heritage. When will you come to your own defense?" (p 66). As to free speech, for both sides: "We want students to be physically safe, but emotionally and intellectually strong" (p 69). As to Christian domination: "My ability to follow the social gospel depends on my right to religious freedom" (p 73). "Tribalism is at risk of taking down conservatism and perhaps America with it" (p 76). "As long as race prejudice is allowed to hijack conservatism, the party of Lincoln will never be the party of color-blind meritocracy" (p 79). "If conservatives want allies to foster a rebirth of American patriotism, you need look no further

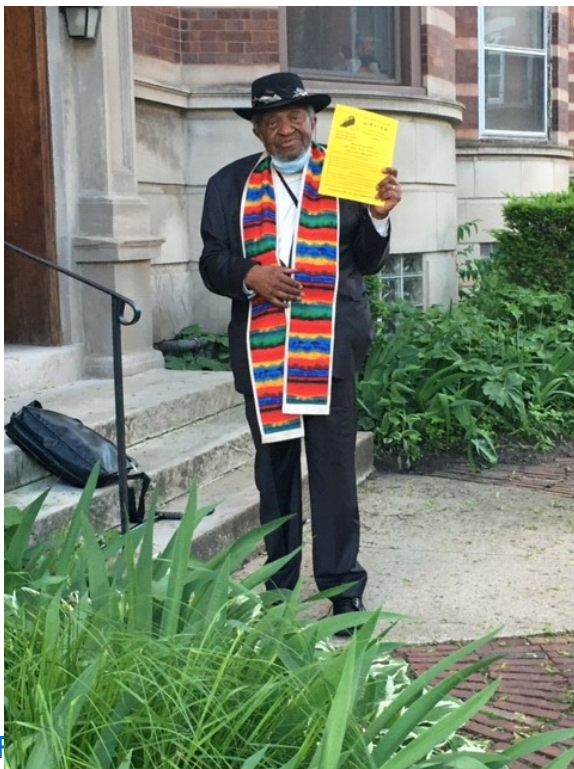
further than the immigrant communities that you have long stigmatized” (p 81). As to voter suppression: “I would also think that a conservative who respects democracy would want voters to pick their elected representatives, rather than the other way around” (p 84). “Republicans built an army to win the culture wars. Now, having sacked Rome, they’re facing tough problems” ...“Mitch McConnell’s legislative priorities were negative, not positive” (p 87). “You accuse the Democrats of letting down our poor urban voters. But the modern conservative movement is structured to ignore its rural and suburban base in the same way” (p 88).

To add a much-needed dimension to this simplistic liberal vs conservative analysis, Van Jones considers class. This yields the four-way politics of the 2016 election: Liberal elitism (Hillary Clinton), Conservative elitism (Jeb Bush), Liberal populism (Bernie Sanders), and Conservative populism (Donald Trump). Yet studies concluded that identity was even more important the class in Trump’s narrow victory: In other words, an apparent big win for racism and white supremacy. To his everlasting credit, Van Jones digs up the real lesson: “If we work to address people’s legitimate economic concerns, it follows that they will be less vulnerable to the politics of fear and anger” (p 108).

To top it off, Van Jones quotes Nelson Mandela, “If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.” (p 122), meaning, to seek the moral common ground, not the political middle ground (p 184).

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Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell, spokesperson for the UUMUAC, returning from participation in the multiracial Interfaith March for Black Lives Matter and Against Racist Police Brutality, sponsored by the Rev. Chris Harris of the Golden Star Church of God in Christ. Over 1200 multiraciists took part in the peaceful march.

Three Diversity Initiatives and Why They Failed

By Ray Arora (originally printed in the *Areo*)

As a person of color, racial discrimination and minority representation, especially in the arts, are important issues. Everyone deserves a voice and the arts provide a valuable medium for genuine stories—especially those that subvert the mainstream. However, the latest efforts to promote diversity and combat racism have not only been demonstrably ineffectual, but further exacerbate friction in race relations and marginalize minority voices.

Two weeks ago, Barnes & Noble announced their new *Diversity Edition project* intended “to raise awareness and discussion during Black History Month.” These intentions are perfectly sound, but Barnes & Noble’s proposal was shockingly superficial: they planned on launching a number of classic literary works by white authors, such as *Peter Pan*, *Frankenstein* and *Romeo and Juliet*, with covers depicting visible minority characters. The disparity between the organization’s intentions and the impact of their actions was stark. How does replacing fictional white characters with POCs on the covers of literary classics promote minority authors? Wouldn’t it make more sense to celebrate works like Toni Morrison’s poignant *The Bluest Eye*, Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad*?

Recognizing minority artists is important: that’s why, for example, rapper Kendrick Lamar’s ground-breaking **Pulitzer Prize award** in 2017—for “capturing the complexity of modern African-American life”—felt so special and genuine. Aziz Ansari’s **Critics’ Choice Television Award for Best Comedy Series** for his brilliant Netflix series *Master of None* felt similarly rewarding.

After heavy backlash and accusations of *literary blackface*, Barnes & Noble **cancelled** their “Diversity Edition.” But incredulity at the clumsy proposition remains. Barnes & Noble’s shallow attempts at *diversity* are incredibly patronizing. People of color want more opportunities, not for their skin color to be commoditised and painted onto a book cover.

Such superficial attempts at diversity are one problem. Repudiating white people in the name of diversity is another. Yolanda Bonnell, an up-and-coming Canadian playwright of Ojibwe/South Asian background, has written a new play called *Bug*, which is now playing in Toronto, Canada. The aim of her play—to fight against the colonialism that has historically oppressed her community—is perfectly reasonable. Colonialism, racial oppression and slavery are unequivocally worth examining and art can provide a place for education.

The problem is that Bonnell has **urged** only people of colour to review her play. “There is an aspect to cultural work—or in our case, artistic ceremony—which does not align with current colonial reviewing practices,” Bonnell writes in her official statement. “In order to encourage a deeper discussion of the work, we are inviting critiques or thoughts from IBPOC folks only.” Ostracizing white people does little to encourage “deeper discussion” or unite people from different backgrounds. Indeed, many white people haven’t experienced the plight of immigrants like *myself*, the racism felt by visible minorities, or the struggles of low-class African-Americans in inner-city Chicago or Toronto. But, to better understand the dynamics of racism and discrimination, people must be exposed to diverse art by authors from different backgrounds. Exposure is the first step to understanding—but Bonnell’s radical approach only exacerbates the problem.

Excluding white people because of their alleged “colonial reviewing practices” doesn’t help the cause. Nor does insisting that all white people are innately racist by virtue of their whiteness. It is unlikely that anything could devalue the charge of *racism* or deepen racial division even more—but this is precisely what the “[Race To Dinner](#)” initiative is doing, as it offers to educate white women (since white men seem to be a lost cause) about their participation in upholding white supremacy over dinner, for the price of \$2,500. Their [front page](#) reads, “white women: We are talking about your complicity in upholding white supremacy.” Their *About Us* page explains: “Dear white women: You cause immeasurable pain and damage to Black, Indigenous and brown women. We are here to sit down with you to candidly discuss how *exactly* you cause this pain and damage.”

There is a multitude of empirical and philosophical issues with the gross oversimplification that whites are universally privileged over racial minorities. One of the primary measures of *privilege* is economic and yet “Race To Dinner” doesn’t acknowledge the racial complexity of America. *Several* ethnic groups in the United States *consistently outperform* whites. According to median household income stats from the US Census Bureau, South African Americans, Pakistani Americans, Filipino Americans, Sri Lankan Americans, Taiwanese Americans, Iranian Americans, Indian Americans, Lebanese Americans and Chinese Americans are just *some* of the minority groups that out-earned whites in 2017. While people in these groups certainly do face discrimination and barriers to success, whites are clearly not the dominant group. It’s more complicated than that.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has shown that, in 2017, Asians out-earned all other racial groups, including whites, who earned around 84% of what Asians earned. [Income statistics in Canada](#) show similar trends: whites significantly and consistently lag behind multiple minority groups, including South Asian Canadians, Arab Canadians and Japanese Canadians. The most pronounced disparities exist between minority women and white women—unsurprisingly, since minority women are the single [most educated group in Canada](#). Ignoring all of this data, and the [plethora of other data](#) in crime, education, and economic success—which shows whites far behind multiple minority groups—Race To Dinner fabricates the intersectional narrative that *all* black, brown and other minority groups in America are marginalized and suffering at the hands of whites.

Apart from the obvious empirical fallacies in the white privilege narrative, this sophistry dilutes and cheapens the charge of racism. When everyone is racist, no one is racist. Racism should be identified, condemned and rectified whenever it is encountered. But when all white women are racist, real racists get a pass. Such blanket statements lump good-hearted white people with legitimate racists and discriminatory individuals—yet, it does nothing to combat the evils of *actual* racism and xenophobia which I traumatically experienced in a majority white elementary school growing up, for example.

Certainly, more needs to be done to facilitate the integration of immigrants in the West and create more opportunities in inner-city minority communities. African-Americans, the target of many modern diversity initiatives, are disproportionately both victims and arrestees of crime, as Jill Leovy compellingly narrates in her award-winning book [Ghettoside](#). Criminal justice reform, better schools, more effective policing and vocational opportunities must be discussed and implemented. Other minority groups also suffer obstacles and hardships that many wealthy, privileged white folks do not. That alone justifies promoting minority voices. But superficially touting *diversity*, excluding white people for their *colonial* ideology, or stereotyping all white people as innately privileged and *racist* is regressive and counterproductive. It truly does nothing to empower and uplift minorities.

A Message from Geneva, Switzerland



I would like to share with the American people the sadness in my heart on hearing what happened in USA and wish to express much more: to not forget that violence brings back violence and it is not the way. I believe that Gandhi shown the good way when he applied "Non-violence is the first article of my faith, it is the last article of my faith" Let's get more intelligent about violence by sharing our real values. Men and women together, all nationalities, all ethnicities together. Let's make the change happen through right values. WITH MY BEST WISHES FOR ALL PEOPLE.

Rev. Renata Steinbrinck

Commentary by Bill Sacks

Some of the books Mark Whitaker mentioned June 12th in the Washington Post are indeed excellent. But Ta-Nehisi Coates's book *Between the World and Me* is a horror. There is an excellent review of Coates's book written by a multiracial pair of critics (Stephen Ferguson and Gregory Meyerson) demonstrating just how awful is Coates's essential thesis that ALL white people are responsible for the oppression of ALL black people. In other words, Coates pronounces racism to be a caste system, defined as one in which a sharp boundary is drawn between all people in each of the two categories, with no overlap. A class system, in contrast, finds some white and some black people in both classes – exploiters and exploited – even if the proportions differ. Class and caste don't occupy the same conceptual space; only class corresponds to the real capitalist world while caste corresponds to a fantasy world and masks reality.

Variations on Coates's theme continue to plague the print-and-screen-ways. In the same issue of the Washington Post that contains Whitaker's review are two other articles by black authors, one above the other – one saying that whites enjoy privileges (rather than white workers' suffering less intense exploitation and oppression *on average*) and the other blaming white workers (by implication) for racism. As the Ferguson and Meyerson review points out, white workers suffer from the secondary effects of racism instead of benefiting from it, and have an interest that goes far beyond morality in fighting racism alongside the black sisters and brothers – if they can be brought as a class to understand it. But some of these books are obstacles to such an awareness, while others help.

The key points to my mind are:

- 1) we have to hold in mind at the same time **proportions** and **numbers** (greater **proportions** of black working-class people are killed by cops and incarcerated while greater **numbers** of white working-class people are killed by cops and incarcerated),
- 2) the difference between a **right** and a **privilege** (just because black mainly working-class people are denied a right does not turn it into a privilege for white working-class people; it's still a right and a right denied),
- 3) that **less intense** exploitation and oppression of white working-class people *on average* is **not a privilege**, it's still exploitation and oppression, and
- 4) the proper comparator of the situation of white workers in a capitalist system is not the situation of black workers in a capitalist system, but rather what the situation of white and black workers could be in a nonracial communist working-class-run system.

New Youth Religion

by Bruce Grau

Young people have been leaving the Church in droves for the last decade. Unfortunately I think many have formed a New Religion. It has more of an awareness of social and economic concerns but is fundamentally grounded in timeless religious and self-centered themes carried over from the traditional Church, only renamed. For example: The Chosen are now The Woke; Empathy remains based on guilt; the Great Sin is privilege; the basic individual relationship with God is now being one with identity; nonbelievers are fragile, eternal salvation continues to be achieved through repentance of sins (your privilege) and acceptance of identity politics as the Savior. Arise ye wretched of the Earth!

Life under the Mississippi Plan: 1875-1885

By Earnest McBride

How much of Mississippi's past is contributing to the problems in the state today?

The 1860 Census reported 437,303 blacks and 353,901 whites in Mississippi. That black majority edge lasted well into the 20th Century.

After the Civil War, in March of 1867, Mississippi's black majority population gained the vote under Congressional Reconstruction. The right to vote was solidified with the passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870.

Black men had won half of the top political offices in Mississippi in November 1873 in what was called the Black and Tan Revolution. African Americans held the seats of lieutenant governor, speaker of the state House of Representatives, superintendent of education, 12 sheriffs' offices, membership in the U. S. House of Representatives and the U. S. Senate. All these positions were being filled by people who only a few years before had had been deigned as having no rights the white man was obliged to respect.

W. E. B. DuBois saw this period as a major historic landmark. In his classic study, *Black Reconstruction in America*, he was full of praise for this unheralded achievement. "Here for the first time," DuBois wrote, "there was established between the white and black of this country a contract on terms of essential social equality and mutual respect. The freeing of the nation from the strangling hands of oligarchy in the South freed not only Black men but white men." (*Black Reconstruction in America*, p. 210)

They were members of the Party of Abraham Lincoln, black Republicans in alliance with the white Republicans who remained faithful to the Union. Thusly, vote-wise black folk were assured a great deal of political leverage and the sharing of power. White Democrats, however, were determined to put an end to the situation where black voters held the same power over the state political institutions as they had. The Mississippi Plan was a devious array of tricks, acts of intimidation and murder devised to push blacks and their white allies out of political power and to bring back the old white political guard. The idea was to initiate a race war and then to shout down anyone who might complain to Washington about it and blame either the other person or the black victims for trying to start the very race war that the white terrorists had actually begun. It took ten years to make the plan work. Then, the solidly white-supremacist government was able to legalize what became known as the "Jim Crow" laws, the era of segregation.

Most historians refer to this critical turning point as the Revolution of 1875. A widespread group of white marauders, members of the Democratic Party, made their move before the elections of 1875. They launched terrorist campaigns in at least 20 counties to intimidate blacks into voting for Democrats or not voting at all and to run the white Republicans out of the state, either through fear or cold-blooded murder.

Any gathering of black people, whether at a picnic or a political rally, was subject to raids by white gunmen firing into the crowds without warning or the least concern for who would be killed. But the white Republicans, in some instances, suffered as much as their black allies. Since the terrorists' plan sought to push out all Republicans, they concentrated on intimidating blacks and annihilating whites who belonged to the party.

"It was a well-known fact that in 1875 nearly every Democratic club in the State was converted into an armed military company," John R. Lynch, the speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives and later U. S. Congressman wrote in his book, *The Facts of Reconstruction*. "To fully organize, equip, and arm such a large body of men required an outlay of a huge sum of money.

"Those who raised the money, or who caused it to be raised, no doubt had an eye to the main chance," says Lynch. "When the redemption of the State was an accomplished fact they, no doubt, felt that they were entitled to share in the fruits of that redemption. Their idea evidently was that the State should be made to pay for its own salvation and redemption, but the only way in which this could be done was to have the people's money in the State treasury appropriated for that purpose otherwise than by legislative enactment."

The terrorist efforts worked. Democrats won a majority of seats in the legislature in August 1875 and immediately began stealing State money to reimburse themselves. Now these were the same men of high standing who had accused the Republicans of ruining the state's finances where in truth there had been a strict accountability of the state's revenues before the Democrats shot their way into power.

The Democrats began impeachment proceedings against Republican Gov. Ames, his black lieutenant governor, Alexander K. Davis, and Superintendent of Education Thomas W. Cardozo. Of the three, only Davis opted to fight the effort to push him from office. He lost, while Ames and Cardozo had already resigned.

The frenzy of the lynch mobs and relentless slaughter of black leaders became a signature of the Jim Crow era, beginning about 1883. But even in this early phase of the Mississippi Plan, black men could be arrested under any pretense and practically sold into slavery to owners of large farms or enterprises to work off their fines.

In 1883, the Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional the Civil Rights Act of 1875. The 1875 law stipulated: "That all persons ... shall be entitled to full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of public accommodation." This left the doorway open to rigid laws separating blacks from whites.

The U. S. Grand Jury that investigated the turmoil in Mississippi reported in June 1876 on the methods used to disfranchise black voters: "We must say that the fraud, intimidation, and violence perpetrated at the late election is without a parallel in the annals of history."

The violent overthrow of the legitimate government of Mississippi was also denounced many years later by Blanche Ames, the daughter of former Governor Ames. "Was this...disturbance a sporadic thing, like any spontaneous riot or a mob?" she asked in her 1964 book on the past events in Mississippi. "It must be remembered that it was one of the maneuvers of the conspiracy. This revolution involved many Southern statesmen and leaders of whom Mr. Lucius Q.C. Lamar was the guiding spirit in Mississippi."

Lamar, a congressman and later senator and Sen. J. Z. George, were the two most prominent leaders of this movement to establish the Mississippi Plan. Lamar had gained the trust of the dominant white politicians of the North and constantly appealed to them to dismiss any hints of a racial war in Mississippi. He blamed the Republicans for having drawn the color line and trying to cause a war between the races.

Historian C. Vann Woodward promoted the theory that the Mississippi Plan became the American Plan by the end of the 19th Century. In its overseas invasions and adventures in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama and the Philippines, the U. S. used the Mississippi model to subjugate local racial majorities and to have white control over all government affairs in the new colonies. Wherever the U. S. went in the Third World, a system of segregation similar to the Jim Crow rules that existed in Mississippi was the order of the day.

In addition, two of the greatest examples of human rights violations found their roots in the Mississippi model. Both South Africa and Nazi Germany adopted the principles of racial separation and white superiority that had been central to the Mississippi Plan, C. Vann Woodward wrote in *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*.

