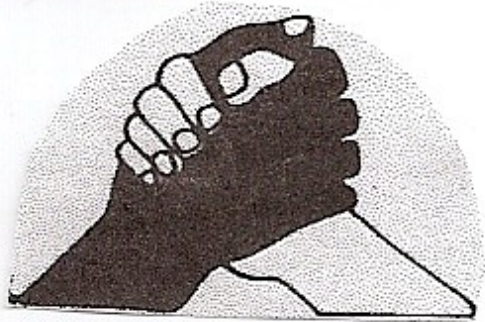


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MAC Arrow

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.

We also seek to defend our UU Principles against those who seek to undermine them.

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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UUism Is Not What the Officials Decide

Rev. Richard Trudeau

In seminary one of my professors said that Unitarianism and Universalism were "religious manifestations of the Enlightenment." By "the Enlightenment" he was referring to the cultural revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries that resulted in a commitment to values of free thought, free expression, reason, logic, and evidence.

Authoritarianism ("what I say, goes") is antithetical to Enlightenment values. Yet, national UU officials are behaving in an unmistakably authoritarian manner. They even imply that Enlightenment values are somehow "white supremacist."

This attitude seems to be a consequence of their realization that the racial-justice ideology ("dismantle our white supremacy culture") to which they have become committed cannot be defended by logic or evidence.

National UU officials seem to genuinely believe that they can transform UUism into whatever they decide. This means that these officials *are not Unitarian Universalists*. It's not that UUism is evolving into a new, higher form of which they are prophets. It means, rather, that they have lost faith in their own religion, faith that endures in UUMUAC and most of our congregations, and which, as ever, is founded on Enlightenment values of free thought, free expression, reason, logic, and evidence.

Comment on the Proposed UUA Business Resolution on Bylaws: "Renewing UUA Bylaws for Theologically, Innovative, and Mission-Focused Governance" by Dick Burkhart

(<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/board/packets/board-packet-february-14-2022>)

The current UUA Bylaws are certainly quite detailed, and a few major issues need to be resolved, but overall, I have found them to be very well thought-out. One major issue is the long-time tension between the positions of President and the Moderator, an issue requiring extensive dialogue and debate. Another is the withdrawal of UUA Board support for Affiliate Organizations, in contradiction to their continued presence in the Bylaws and the lack of General Assembly agreement to this withdrawal, or even of organized dialogue and debate.

Another major problem arises when the Bylaws are to contain primarily the overall structure of the UUA and the purposes of its various parts, not the details of rules or policy. In this case, there needs to be new mechanisms, specified in the Bylaws, for the oversight and approval of the detailed policies, rules, and operations adopted by those various subgroups of the UUA. Such approval also needs to contain options for dialogue and appeal regarding issues that might be raised by member congregations or related organizations.

A key problem with this withdrawal of direct authority from the General Assembly is that it requires a good deal of trust by the member congregations, especially trust that the various subgroups will adhere carefully to standard principles of ethics and integrity, in addition to the Seven Principles, and not pursue disguised agendas or doctrines that subvert our principles or ethics. There have been severe violations of such trust in recent years, with no transparency or accountability to the member congregations.

The proposed framework for Bylaws revision illustrates some of these issues.

a. “Reflect our theological commitment to liberation and inclusion” is simply not true. That is, our theological commitment in Article II is to our Seven Principles. Personally, I would strongly endorse “liberation and inclusion” if properly interpreted. For example, I’ve long been a supporter of the liberation theology based on the nonviolent resistance of the historical Jesus (“love your enemy”, “turn the other cheek”) against imperial Roman rule and how he was inclusive of even the demeaned of his era (“Samaritans”, “prostitutes”, “tax collectors”).

But I am also fully aware that the current usage of these terms derives from the theology of Critical Race Theory / Whiteness Studies, which has been the guiding light behind the ARAOM work of the UUA for over a generation, though unacknowledged and even more entrenched today, despite its many manifest failures. Like it or not, the dominant theological background of Critical Race Theory is Marxism (the Marxist focus on “class” is replaced by the CRT focus on “race”, with the oppressors labeled as “white” instead of as bourgeoisie, and the “oppressed” as “BIPOC” instead of “as workers”). Marxism, of course, is strongly associated with the violent Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent development of a totalitarian society in the Soviet Union.

Thus it is no accident that the current cancel culture associated with Critical Race Theory echoes certain aspects of the Soviet era in Russia, especially the slander and the Orwellian perversions of language to justify it, among other humiliations used to target dissidents. Robin DiAngelo’s accusations of “white fragility” in her workshops echo both the humiliations of Maoist “struggle sessions” and the assignment of psychiatric disorders to dissidents by Soviet authorities. This is because the majority of Americans today (and the vast majority of UUs) are non-racist, contrary to the central dogma of whiteness studies, which some even liken to a conspiracy theory - to blame all the ills of society on this racial identity that Critical Race Theorists assign to people of European descent. At least Marx had the sense to see that economics plays a far greater role in oppression than secondary cultural factors like race, with religion often being a more dominant cultural factor.

b. “Provide accountability to our long-standing anti-racist and anti-oppression commitments.” Again, I’m all for “anti-racist and anti-oppression” work when understood in traditional terms (multiracial unity and social justice based on democratic principles), but this usage is in the context of Critical Race Theory, as is demonstrated by the presence of the word “accountability”. The context of the current Bylaws reflects the standard definition of racism (“prejudice or discrimination based on race”) and its commitments focus on opposing discrimination and segregation, not on the sweeping theology of Critical

Race Theory. There is not a single reference to "accountability" in the context of race now because it is assumed that all accountability is to the congregations via the democratic process (Rule G-2.1).

Thus we know immediately that the phrase "provide accountability" is referring to something outside the democratic process. Indeed, according to the definition of "accountable" on the 8th principle website (www.8thprincipleuu.org) all "white UUs" are to be held accountable to "caucuses" of UUs of color, but those caucuses are accountable only to themselves. "Effective mechanisms" for this accountability are requested but no democratic process is even hinted at. As I read it, this means that people of color, or at least their self-selected representatives, are to be a "protected class", above "the rule of law", so to speak. In other words, we're looking at oligarchical rule, not democracy, on all matters related to race, which would be almost anything according to the theology of "systemic racism". Nor is this just speculation, as I've concluded that this oligarchical rule is already present today in the UUA, with cancel culture being the "effective mechanism" of enforcement.

Thus I would replace the (a) and (b) guidelines by "The need for a thorough investigation of how the religion of Critical Race Theory has been able to engineer a hostile takeover of the UUA and how to restore the democratic process and our Seven Principles, thus opening the new dogmas of race and gender to uncensored dialogue and debate and eliminating both totalitarian manipulations and outright assaults on our once "free and responsible search for truth and meaning".

Guidelines (c) – (g) seem much more reasonable to me, with the exception that the "diverse leadership" in (g) should include not just racial and ethnic diversity but also theological, socio-economic, vocational, and political diversity. In addition, (g) should note the need for additional measures of oversight and democratic accountability for details of rules and policy to be left out of the Bylaws.

Notes From An Exit
by Dr. Kenneth Christiansen

To begin the story, eleven years ago, my wife Karen and I joined what we found to be a very positive and uplifting community of UUs at Buckman Bridge UU Church (BBUUC) in Jacksonville, FL. This congregation was a liberal island in the midst of a very conservative sea. It was lay-led and had a much higher energy level for volunteer service than any other congregation of which I have been a member. Over the years, many other liberal individuals and families who moved to Jacksonville found us and the congregation grew.

Saving the middle for later, here is the end of the story. For a variety of reasons Karen and I resigned our membership in BBUUC this past July. What I am sharing next is the message I sent to the dozen or so members of BBUUC who expressed concern when we left.

BBUUC members and friends,

BBUUC has meant very much to Karen and me over the past decade. In the past several years, however, the national UUA has changed greatly. There are new pressures we both find very unnecessary and unwelcome.

There is one issue I would like to share regarding our departure from BBUUC. The UUA has been extraordinary for its sensitivity to the feelings of people of color, people who are disabled, and people who are transgendered. The Commission On Institutional Change spent three years soliciting stories of harm experienced by people of color in UU congregations. The Standing On The Side Of Love campaign became the Side With Love campaign with respect for people who are disabled. To clarify gender identity, all UUs are now encouraged to share the pronouns by which they wish to be addressed in most or all communications.

Nonetheless, when it comes to white UUs, sensitivity is lacking. There is no hesitancy to tell white UUs that they are, knowingly or unknowingly, supporters of “White Supremacy Culture.” We who take seriously the current meaning of “White Supremacy Culture” in the United States today feel gaslighted. There is no doubt in the larger society today that White Supremacy and White Supremacy Culture mean something very evil and sinister. The choice by the leadership of the UUA to assert that the UUA is “swimming in a sea of white supremacy” (UUA President Susan Frederick Gray in an open UUA Board Meeting in May of 2021) is incomprehensible.

Combine this with the words from UUA owned Beacon Press’s bestselling book ever, *White Fragility*, by Robin DeAngelo, “a positive white identity is an impossible goal. White identity is inherently racist; white people do not exist outside the system of white supremacy.” (p. 149) These messages to white UUs are aggressive slams, slaps in the face, moral put downs.

What do I support? Approaches to antiracism that make judgments based on a person’s actions and the content of their character rather than on the color of their skin or ethnic origin. Approaches to antiracism that target unjust laws and institutional policies rather than white identity. Approaches to antiracism based on collaboration across racial and ethnic lines and utilization of all the talent and skills available. That kind of antiracism has won significant gains for racial justice in many times and places. That includes Jacksonville’s Interfaith Coalition for Action, Reconciliation and Empowerment (ICARE) Church Based Community Organization in which many BBUUC members participate.

White parents need to consider the self-identity development of their children. Do they want them to learn that they are inescapably racist because of their skin color and must always work uphill to only partially overcome the shame and disgrace of that identity? Or do you want them to grow up with strong sensitivity to racism and injustice in the world combined with a personal sense of power that they can achieve change by working together with others from any background to identify needed changes and go all out to achieve those changes? Which message do you want your children to hear on a regular basis?

* * * * *

What happened in the middle of the story? And where to next? These are topics Karen and I will address during the UUMUAC Third Wednesday Vesper Service on Zoom in May. Here are some spoiler highlights.

Karen and I both held leadership positions at BBUUC. Being CPE certified, Karen became a volunteer Chaplain shortly after we joined in 2011. She continued that post until we both decided to leave in July of 2021. Along the way she recruited and provided the training for an effective volunteer Pastoral Care Team. She also became an ICARE Team Leader.

In April of 2014 we both attended the ICARE Nehemiah Assembly. We witnessed local history being made as a large (over 2,000), integrated, core of members from 38 religious congregations in Jacksonville confronted the school superintendent, the mayor, and a mental health CEO to make specific desired improvements in their organizations' delivery of public services. I subsequently interviewed the Lead Organizer for ICARE to learn how it worked and how we could join. In August, Karen and I and several others presented a proposal for BBUUC to join ICARE to the church Board and it was passed. BBUUC's ICARE Justice Ministry Network membership grew from 16 in 2015 to 37 in 2021. We brought over 90 people to the Nehemiah Assembly in 2021.

ICARE involvement at BBUUC provides a significant contrast to UUA antiracism projects initiated at BBUUC beginning in 2019. ICARE is antiracist in a very practical way. It discerns real issues of discriminatory laws and practices at the local level by itself and at the state level by working with similar groups in other cities. It researches what can be done for positive change. It mobilizes people power to create the necessary tension with officials to motivate them to make the changes. Both white people and black people are seen as real assets to the cause.

By contrast, UUA antiracism programs stress a generalized White Supremacy Culture, overwhelming white guilt, and segregated identity development. The entire problem of racism is seen as inside the white soul which must be purified. Only Black, Indigenous and People Of Color (BIPOC) are seen as unambiguous assets to the cause. White people must be monitored by people of color "to do what they say they will do" whatever that is. There is no direct attention to discriminatory laws and policies.

Have you guessed how I got in trouble?

My first infraction was to include a story in the March, 2021, ICARE Council report about a conversation that happened in a Zoom breakout room during an ICARE Board meeting. A member of one of the African Methodist Episcopal churches in Jacksonville asked me what Unitarian Universalism was all about. I blocked. My elevator speech before that time highlighted how UUs can be Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Pagan, even Athiest. The one thing that held them together in my experience was a strong commitment to compassion that reached out to justice issues among other things. That night, in that breakout room, all I could think about was how according to the new UU dogma, all white people are supporters of White Supremacy Culture. I couldn't give an articulate answer to the question I was asked. (Who would want to belong to a church deeply submerged in White Supremacy Culture?)

That Council Report went to the Board. The virtual pastor's report in the Board minutes included the words "BBUUC conflict developing related to Gadfly Book's perspective." The die was cast.

My second infraction happened when forty-year veteran of UU ministry, Rev. Kate Rohde, was kicked out of the Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association (UUMA) and lost her ministerial credentials for Facebook posts disagreeing with the party line. I took twenty minutes at the next Council meeting to present the details and my feelings about what was going on. The only response was from our virtual minister. "She was bullying people." (In the UUMA, "bullying" means arguing a point the other person doesn't want to hear. Do people ever disagree with you on your Facebook pages? Do you have the power to get them fired for thinking that way? If you had the power, would you use it? That is what happened to Rev. Rohde.)

My last and final infraction was to send an email to about 25 people who had attended either of two Candidate Forums held for UUA Board Candidates. Karen organized a Forum for Jay Kiskel, and our virtual minister organized a Forum for Sam Trumbore. The email I sent after those forums and just before the annual General Assembly included Allan Pallay's statistical analysis of *Widening The Circle Of Concern* along with a brief statement of my own panning the validity of the research in that volume. Our virtual Pastor's response was swift. Henceforth I could only address these issues with her, with the Board President, and one other person she named.

Karen had already decided to leave BBUUC and I was finally ready. Why didn't we stay and fight it out? The simple answer is that few if any BBUUC members wanted the congregation to split. I didn't either. In conservative Jacksonville, FL, liberal UUs quickly become each other's family. And most BBUUC members were not prepared to understand the issues if we did continue the fight. Sermons and classes for congregational leaders stressing white guilt and how much harm was being done to BIPOC people hadn't happened yet.

Karen and I resigned from BBUUC on July 13, 2021. We both spent a lot of time with our oldest son before he died of cancer on Sept. 18. After that I prepared for and underwent my second knee replacement surgery. By February of 2022, I was ready to rejoin ICARE. Two very capable Team Leaders had taken over ICARE at BBUUC when we left. They invited me to reconnect with ICARE at BBUUC which I readily did.

To our virtual minister, that couldn't happen. In late February 2022 she sent an email ordering that I stop participating with any BBUUC organization until or unless I apologized to a small committee for causing "harm" and committed to support UUA policies and antiracism programs. (When repeatedly approached by an individual to support the 8th Principle which I did not favor, I resisted. I was later told I had "harmed" that person.)

Since participation in ICARE is based on congregational membership, the door was now closed for participating in ICARE with BBUUC. Karen and I decided to implement a plan we had been thinking about. We created the Seven Principles Fellowship. It is currently a House Church but has potential for growth! We picked up several members before holding our first meeting. ICARE is glad to have us.

As mentioned above, tune in on Zoom for the May 2022 UUMUAC Vesper Service for an occasion where we can talk about where things might go from here for persons and families who recognize the spiritual bankruptcy of much of the current UUA programming.

An Eye-Opening Expose: Critical Race Theory and the Origins of Cancel Culture
a review by Dick Burkhardt of
Race Marxism: The Truth About Critical Race Theory and Praxis
By James Lindsay (2022)

Lindsay really digs into the origins of dogmas / conspiracy theories at the heart of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and why they are so damaging. He explains what's really going on behind all the propaganda, using the words of the most influential theorists behind the current practices (Praxis) of CRT, going back to Karl Marx himself. The connection is that in traditional Marxism the focus is on class conflict ("bourgeoisie" vs "proletariat") whereas CRT shifts the focus to race ("white" vs "black") as the overriding explanation for all the injustices of modern society.

Of course, this is unhinged from reality as economic interests have always been the driving force underlying exploitation, most notably in slavery itself. This flight from reality is why more authors are now likening CRT to a fundamentalist cult, analyzing it as a "belief system" that is not only dogmatic in nature but which rewards believers (the "Woke") while severely punishing the heretics (via "cancel culture"). Lindsay himself has made a detailed case (at his website www.newdiscourses.com), based on a legal definition of religion, that CRT should be legally recognized as a religion, along with its ancestral cousin, Marxism.

Thus CRT would be free to hold those beliefs but not to impose them on the rest of us, either via stealthy perversion of governmental policies or in-your-face hate-speech. The latter is the principal form of cancel culture, especially on social media, whereas the former appears unannounced - in disguise to takeover organizations in education and other settings. John McWhorter totally agrees with Lindsay, calling this new religion "Woke Racism" in his latest book, pointing out that the core dogmas are actually racist (mostly anti-white, but some anti-black too), exposing the anti-racist claims of CRT as a pretext for power plays and totalitarian tactics.

This book makes a special point of focusing on the doctrine of mind control, popularly known as "wokism", but in the jargon of CRT as "critical consciousness". Note that the word "critical" here has a meaning diametrically opposite to its customary usage in the phrase "critical thinking skills". That is, a "Critical Theory" is a philosophical, not a scientific theory, and it promotes a certain, very narrow kind of consciousness – a way of analyzing how a society is thought to function, such through the lens of power or the lens of race.

In CRT this woke consciousness combines the lenses of power and race: presuming that there is a white race that is organized to use its power – based on the racial identity labeled as "whiteness" by CRT – to oppress people-of-color, especially the black race. In other words, "white supremacy" rules the world. Lindsay cites CRT guru Charles Mills, who makes this conspiracy theory the first sentence of his book "The Racial Contract" (1997): "white supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today". Note: I had pointed out my review of this book to Lindsay, also how all this functions as conspiracy theory.

As a sweeping generalization, not reflective of present-day reality and targeting people of predominantly European ancestry, this wokism is, of course, racist in itself. This explains McWhorter's description "woke racism", also called "neo-racism" by himself and others. The leaders – the woke – are a select group of people who claim extraordinary insight, and thus privilege, called "The Elect" by McWhorter.

In praxis the Elect have not only an elite philosophical role but a governing role in that white society is required to hold itself accountable to the Elect, who are only accountable to themselves. In addition, the Elect apparently self-select a core group, then add or subtract by an unspecified process of consensus among themselves, forming a kind of oligarchy of like-minded individuals, hardly a recipe for democracy or human rights.

Lindsay does not address this issue of accountability, but he does conclude that the fundamental purpose of the entire woke endeavor is just to spread wokism – feeding off white guilt and actively suppressing dissent. Popular authors from whiteness studies, such as Robin Di-Angelo, carefully avoid all practical measures toward racial justice, regarding true racial justice as residing only in a distant utopia, right in line with traditional Marxist thinking.

The actual underlying concept is that there is power in numbers so that the woke can expect to benefit individually – through higher status, better paying jobs, etc. Indeed they have enjoyed spectacular success until now, but the backlash led by Lindsay, McWhorter and others is spreading rapidly, especially as a widening circle of people have been affected by cancel culture, more workers are objecting to phony diversity training, and more parents are objecting to the indoctrination of their children by “race reductionism” (in the words of Toure’ Reed).

This is the kind of book where you can easily skip around, avoiding the quagmire of European philosophy explained in the middle chapters, if that’s not your bag. Nevertheless, Lindsay goes to great lengths to make sense of it, and I was startled to learn that Hegel was a profound racist and nationalist, a lover of “men of action” like Napoleon, and very much in the elitist tradition going back to Plato.

This tradition interprets the world in terms of abstract ideas or ideals, hence the term “idealism”, which suggests soaring visions of “The Good” to some but a grab-for-my-wallet skepticism to others. Thus Hegel influenced not only Marx (directly), but also Hitler (indirectly), and many of us have become a lot more skeptical of that whole intimidating mess known as philosophy.

Also illuminating is the influence of the “Cultural Marxism” of Italy’s Antonio Gramsci, whose conclusion from the failure of traditional Marxism in Europe was that it should switch to taking over core cultural institutions, such as education, law, media, churches, etc. CRT has followed this party line religiously in its praxis, presuming that our problems come from dubious concepts like “implicit bias” and can’t be solved by learning from and extending the kind of practical measures taken during the Civil Rights Era.

However, research has shown that both implicit bias tests and training have failed to predict or change behavior, despite it’s being a plausible concept. This is another example of why ideology, CRT or otherwise, should never be allowed to override social science. But much of the educated public doesn’t know the results of objective research because “media outlets have become CRT propaganda agencies” (p 226).

But CRT strategy goes far beyond propaganda, into totalitarian tactics, such as “the generation of polarizing controversy, and then using the ideology to convert the strongest sympathizers, indeed fanatics, to their cause while demonizing those who oppose...it tears apart the entity it vampires in this way” (p 228). Lindsay cites how Critical Legal Studies was seriously damaged by early promoters of CRT who attacked white legal studies scholars as racist at a 1986 workshop, despite their deep commitments to the work of antiracism.

Another tactic of language: “When a Critical Theory calls something ‘systemic’ [as in systemic racism] what it really means is that it has an all-encompassing Marxian conspiracy theory about that thing” (p 233). Another of tactic of ideology: “those who don’t agree with CRT are explained as people who fail to understand the true nature of systemic oppression because of their privilege” (p 235).

But if they are persistent, they will be “targeted for psychological abuse and slander” (p 238), familiar from Stalinism, Maoism, and many cults. Such nasty behavior was approved by the Marxist guru Herbert Marcuse, idol of the 60s – 70s New Left, and taken to heart by DiAngelo and others.

Going further, Lindsay advises that “every Woke term conceals an agenda” (p 241). For example, “diversity” requires “conformity”. That is, “*diversity* becomes conformity after passing through the lens of *intersectional positional thought*” (p 242) with only the woke being authentic and able to understand such language. Likewise, “inclusion” is automatic for the woke but all who reject Critical Theory must be excluded.

And besides such inversions of meaning, another trick-of-the-trade is the Kafka Trap, where denial of an accusation is regarded as proof of the accusation (from Kafka’s novel *The Trial*). This is the essence of accusations of “white fragility” by DiAngelo but is a direct quote from Kendi as well: “Denial is the heartbeat of racism” (p 247). A related example is when a skeptical Professor Bret Weinstein asked for evidence of racism at Evergreen College, he was accused of racism.

The prime targets are “good white people”, “especially liberal white women” (p 248) – those most susceptible to guilt tripping. Even if you declare yourself to be a “white ally”, you are still suspect because Derrick Bell’s *interest-convergence theory* asserts that your declaration must have been motivated by cynical self-interest, so you will always be treated in a condescending manner by the truly woke.

Lindsay concludes that with the acolytes of CRT, “no compromise is possible... just tell them No” – don’t become an ally - because the “Theory they are applying does not have good intentions” (p 254) – it will use you, then discard you, at its convenience, if you let it. Again, all this is rooted in doctrine: “systemic power dynamics [that] destroys any hope of a common sensibility from one human being to another” (p 257).

Remember: “CRT wins by breaking systems, as well as capturing them” and by portraying any resistance as “victimization of a protected racial class” (p 259). But “real values will bring people together in commonality. Inverted values break them apart” (p 260). Thus, the cultural wars and extreme political polarization are signs that our values, not just theirs, are getting out-of-whack. Even transparency will make a big difference – because CRT feeds off not just white guilt but also off disguised dogmas and conspiracy theories of race. This book will help you pull back the mask. And remember the Polish proverb: “Never try to cure what you don’t understand” (p 272).

Consider Defunding the UUA – by Jack Reich

Apropos of dissent within our UUA, i want to tell you that i am a member of the Board of my fellowship in DeKalb, IL. I asked for time on the agenda at our last meeting, and distributed this in advance by email. The idea was just to raise it for discussion; we vote on our budget in May. I am interested in your reactions, and suggestions for improvement. I hope that more congregations will begin considering defunding the UUA.

[Board members: This is on the agenda for today and explains my position:]

Dear Friends,

I am proposing that we take a radical step - cutting the UUA out of our budget for this year. It is not a recommendation i make lightly or without awareness of its import. But the UUA has failed, and is failing, us, and reducing our funding for them is our best option. Let me explain.

I have been a UU for over 48 years now, and going to G.A. for 46! In that time i have missed 2 - out of 46, none recently. I was present and voting in 1995 when we added the 7th principle, and i was there three years ago when the Rev. Todd Eklof was banned from G.A. - he was the host minister - essentially for writing a book with some opinions others disliked. I have seen the UUA argue, debate, and change - but never anything like what is going on today.

The UUA has been captured by a radical group that wants to make fundamental changes in the nature of contemporary UUism and the agreements individual congregations make with the "parent" body. I put "parent" in quotes because we really have no such relationship. Each congregation is independent and is its own law - that is the meaning of "congregational polity", one of our bedrock principles.

These "radicals" want to change that. They want to make the UUA our "parent", with them in charge of our theology and principles. This is not the UUA i joined, and not a UUA many of us are interested in. The most consequential changes being proposed by the Commission On Institutional Change, created by our President a few years ago, can be found in the Report of that body, the COIC, as well as proposed changes to our bylaws by the Article II Study Committee, which is undertaking a mandated 15-year review of our Purposes, Principles, and Bylaws.

And there is a proposed 8th Principle, which has already been adopted by a number of congregations, and will come before the entire G.A. by next year.

So what's the problem? The problem is that these radicals want to make drastic changes in the relations between the UUA and its congregations, changes not warranted by any outpouring of sentiment from the members nationwide. The people demanding change are out to create a revolution in the UUA, making individual societies beholden to groups of unelected, self-appointed guardians selected entirely from "marginalized" groups, who will have power to hold us "accountable" for the "promises we make". They may determine each society's fitness to be recognized by the UUA! Is this what you want? Me, neither.

This has come about through a patient and continuing reshaping of our governance. We now have a nominating committee that nominates for Board positions only the number of candidates to fill empty slots - they are even thinking of reducing Presidential nominees to one - which means there are no contested elections; the Committee chooses the Board and the President - not individual UUs in the parishes as it has always been done.

Furthermore, they have shown by recent actions that they have ditched our traditional values - such as freedom of speech, responsible order, the pre-eminence of conscience, and replaced them with worship of one idea: the moral bankruptcy of white superiority culture, which they say UUism reeks of, and the necessity for whites to be "decentered" so that marginalized persons can provide leadership, since they know what is best for themselves.

Now, you don't have to take my word for it; there are whole groups on Facebook devoted to beginning to respond to these revolutionary notions and the disastrous changes they want to implement, such as "Gadfly, continued" and the "Fifth Principle Project". There are groups such as the UU Multiracial Unity Action Council - the ONLY racially integrated group fighting within the UUA today for racial justice - that have denounced these proposed changes and are leading the fight against them.

It would be bad enough if all they wanted to do was change our entire way of governance - i mean, they already got one G.A. to abandon the use of Robert's Rules at plenary sessions because it was devised by white men and therefore MUST reflect white supremacy culture! But what they want to do is put all the congregations under the thumb of a group of dissidents who want the power to decide if your congregation is keeping faith with the new orthodoxy - or not - and could bring disciplinary measures to bear. Am i kidding? No, i am not; this is what we are facing here. As Dave Barry might say, "I am not making this up!"

Further, the UUA has acted toward some individuals in ways which call into question their whole commitment to values we have long regarded as sacred. A founder of the Black Lives of UU, to which the UUA Board voted some \$5.3 million with no strings as a sort of reparations - recently resigned from the Board and Vice Moderator position. The Moderator is our top job, the chair of the Board and head honcho at General Assembly. This woman had previously answered a rather inoffensive blog post by a well-known, loyal, UU blogger with an online video which is one of the most vicious, bigoted, racist screeds i have ever witnessed in my life* - and was cheered on by adoring fans: "teach it, Leslie! Go, Girl!" Saying that white men weren't going to be comfortable in church anymore, and could just stop their "fuck-shit behavior" - HER words, not mine. And THEN she was nominated to be on the Board as Vice Moderator. This is how they propose to create the Beloved Community?

After Todd Eklof began handing out his new book for free at the G.A. he was hosting, the social justice coordinator for the UUA was so offended that she got together a petition, which was signed eventually by about 500 of our white ministers, MOST WITHOUT HAVING READ THE BOOK, including ours, condemning the book and the minister, in violation of the UUMA's own policies about how to treat other ministers in public. (This is the book Lon Clark** bought 18 copies of to try to interest people in a discussion.)

This is an ongoing, major scandal, on which many ministers have taken the position that free speech can be weaponized, that words in a book can harm people, and that those harmed don't have to explain themselves. I am ashamed of our minister for having signed this letter, but also of many more experienced clergy who should know better. Several dozen well-known ministers have resigned from the UUMA over this, and the fight goes on.

So i am saying, THIS IS WHAT THE UUA IS DOING WITH YOUR MONEY, and if you think it's great, go ahead and piss more of it down their pipeline. But i'd rather see us withhold our usual contribution (which by the way helps solve our budget shortfall problem) and instead write them a letter explaining why, and publicize it throughout the denomination, as more and more congregations begin to rebel against the course the UUA is laying out for us, saying "Not so fast". Or we can strain mightily to raise our "fair share", and throw good money after bad, to people who want to change the whole character of the religious association you thought you had joined, without any consensus of the parishioners.

Faithfully yours,

Jack

**Comments on the Pacific Western Region annual meeting of Feb 4 – 6, 2022
By Dick Burkhart**

The Pacific Western Region (PWR) will be incorporating as a 501-c3 with its own Board of Directors. The 4 member districts have already been dissolved or soon will be (Pacific Northwest, Pacific Central, Pacific Southwest, Mountain Desert). Most other UUA districts around the US have already dissolved, and 3 of the other regions have no board – they are just agencies of the UUA. The UUA will also pay the staff of the PWR.

Concentration of power. I do favor the regions for some purposes but think we still need districts, clusters, etc, to build local community and vitality.

The proposed bylaws of the PWR are still being revised but have been written to incorporate the COIC report and proposed 8th principle. A draft is expected to be made available later this spring.

Susan Frederick-Gray gave the opening address on Friday night via zoom, focusing on “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” (DEI) and on our Flaming Chalice. The “flame” originated as a “symbol of resistance to the Nazis and of safe passage to refugees”. The “chalice” symbolized “hospitality and mutual aid”. She went on to declare that “justice” means using “power to stand against obstructions to love”.

Of course, she never mentions that, under her leadership, DEI has come to mean a new kind of “Conformity, Bias, and Exclusion”. In particular, certain practitioners of our 4th principle (“the free and responsible search for truth and meaning”) have been targeted for persecution, even outright exclusion. This has come from interpreting the word “responsible” to mean conformity to certain ideologies and biases of race and gender. Instead of “Beloved Community” and “justice’, these individuals have experienced cult-like / totalitarian censorship and oppression.

Saturday morning, Paula Jones gave her pitch for the 8th principle, stating that 153 churches and related organizations had endorsed it. But she did not cite a single one that had an open and honest debate, instead of an emotional pitch. Then she went on to promote “Sociocracy” and “Community of Communities”. Nothing new here except the verbiage.

Sociocracy refers to governance based on consent, something that can work well in small groups of like-minded people with time on their hands. But it can fail spectacularly in larger or divided groups, or where dissidents feel pressured to go along with the consensus or where a faction engages in manipulations to create an apparent consensus or band-

bandwagon. The latter describes exactly what Paula Jones is doing.

The Community of Communities seeks to replace individualism by conformity to community standards or consensus - another power play. One of her principle demands is that people adopt identities and thus engage in identity politics. The unspoken subtext is racial politics along the lines of Critical Race Theory, especially whiteness studies.

Paula Jones foresees younger people as increasingly adopting antiracism as a key identity and practice, then joining the UUA. She cited UUA leaders like SF-Gray, Carey McDonald (executive vice president), and Greg Boyd (former Board member). I foresee a much different path for future generations, one where racial identity will fade into an artifact of the past, as racial mixing proceeds apace and global problems come to the fore. Unlike Jones, I want to bury the “one drop rule”. I think she’s barking up the wrong tree.

My overall impression, after this weekend, is that the UUA has sunk into a traditional evangelical view of the world – one focused on individual salvation through a racial awakening – a dead-end for a spiritual organization that once thrived on tackling the great issues of the day. The only outside issue cited by Gray was voting rights, where UU-the-Vote made a contribution, while ignoring the larger issues of inequality, democracy, ecosystems, globalization, etc.

The Emperor’s New Clothes Meets Absurdist Agitprop

By James Anderson

A Review of “Widening the Circle of Concern” (Or, more accurately “Widening Covenantial Coercion”)

Many years ago, there were religious leaders so very fond of their enlightened ideology that they spent all their time congratulating themselves on their elevation. They did not trouble about their congregations. They did not care to go to those who thought differently. They only went out when they had the chance to show off their enlightened ideology.

One day (Oct 17, 2016), two skilled tailors came to town. They said that they knew how to weave White Supremacy Culture ideology of the most beautiful colors and patterns. The truth of this ideology would be invisible to everyone who was unfit for the job they held, or who was very simple in character.

“This must, indeed, be a splendid ideology!” thought the Board of Trustees. “If we had such a suit, we might at once find out what members of our kingdom are unfit for their job. We would be able to tell the wise from the foolish! This stuff must be woven for us immediately.” They gave large sums of money to both the weavers in order that they might begin their work at once.

The day before the board meeting began, trustees participated in an all-day training in multi-cultural, antiracist, and anti-oppressive work. Several trustees said the training was powerful and influential in helping them reimagine how the board makes its decisions. “We were able to successfully make a decision without using Robert’s Rules of Order... We made a decision that we all understood without [first] perfecting the language, so we managed to challenge white supremacist decision-making.”

So the decision was made and the ideology was prepared and all the people standing by, and those at the windows, cried out, “Oh! How beautiful is our new ideology! What a magnificent historical narrative there is! How powerfully the evidence proves that our religion is awash in White Supremacy Culture!” No one would admit that this much admired ideology could not be seen because, in doing so, they would have been saying they were either a simpleton or unfit for their job.

Some, like Mel Pine, questioned these developments and even dared to use the word “coup.” This did not go well.

Then, in March of 2017, the Trustees hired a white man for the Southern Regional Lead position. One of the “finalists” who was not hired was a Person of Color. This did not go well either.

Leslie Mac, a member of the Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism organizing collective, wrote, “Just when I think the UU Faith has made some strides, I feel the pull the white supremacy in the faith snap the back of my neck. It feels like whiplash. It is PHYSICAL. It is SPIRITUAL. It is PAINFUL. And those in power should be ASHAMED at themselves for perpetuating and cultivating Anti-Blackness as the default setting of the UUA.”

But then, the leader of the High Council, himself, resigned because of all this and said:

I have every expectation that my words will be twisted and misinterpreted. However, I cannot remain silent. The two topics which compel me to speak are the acceptance and repetition of a false narrative and, as a result of that narrative, the terrible way a number of colleagues have been treated. First, the narrative of the event which triggered all of this (the selection of... a regional lead in Congregational Life) is simply false. The commonly accepted story is that an eminently qualified Latina was not hired for a position because she was passed over for a white male. The narrative is that she was not hired because she is a Latina. Let me be as clear as I can be: this is simply false.

And when the Trustees held the annual convention of their Kingdom in 2017 they appointed a “commission” to investigate concerns around this controversy.

The Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association on Wednesday, June 21, appointed the members of the newly created Commission on Institutional Change, whose focus will be an examination of the impact of white supremacy on Unitarian Universalism. The commission has been created in response to the hiring practices controversy at the UUA.

So, the narrative presented by the tailors of this beautiful new ideology was “false” according to the resigned leader of the High Council, whose views on this matter ought to

have been considered. But, no, the Commission on Institutional Change — who were also skilled tailors of the invisible — did not care to investigate this at all. They began their “study” with their already predetermined conclusion that the Emperor was fully clothed in the finest ideology and anyone who disagreed was either not fit for their job or a simpleton.

They actively sought biased input, asking only the question:

In what ways have you or your group or community been hurt by current racist and culturally biased attitudes and practices within Unitarian Universalism?

Clearly and obviously this kind of “sampling” is something that would cause any objective study in any other Kingdom to be laughed into oblivion. But these weavers weren’t interested in “studying” or “sampling” — only in weaving a document to support their predetermined conclusion. They knew that they had very little to worry about in this Kingdom of timid and fearful white liberals. One of the authors waved away some quiet “concerned” mutterings with a tut-tut saying their beautiful and skillful weaving,

operates within a domain of knowledge, philosophy, that operates with a different logic than social science.

This document they wove doesn’t even really deserve the “agitprop” label — even though that is its only purpose — it is really very incompetent, even as agitprop. (At least the Stalinists were brutally efficient with their’s.) But, nonetheless, the Emperor’s lackeys wave around a bound copy of this absurdist incompetent agitprop in the face of those who, even very timidly, wonder about the Emperor’s wardrobe.

It is a waste of time to go into the absurdities of this “report” for they are numerous and obvious and tediously incoherent. But many, many in the Kingdom believe in them utterly. And they will not release their tense grip upon this “report” because to do so would show themselves to be timid, fearful, victims of a skillful con. They so desperately want to believe themselves in possession of an elevated and enlightened ideology that to admit such folly would be utterly devastating.

However, it is clear, that those who point out the Emperor’s nakedness are severely punished. A “gadfly” who did this was pilloried by 500 members of the Emperor’s court before they had even read the book he wrote. Then he was excommunicated and disfellowshipped as a warning to any who might dare to speak the obvious truth that the Emperor was not clothed in any way and that the beautifully woven ideology was truly empty and invisible.

Chicago Children’s Choir **By Wesley Hromatko**

“Chicago Children’s Choir is built on the belief that, through music, we can forge meaningful, empathic connections with people from every background.”

---<https://www.ccchoir.org/programs/tours>

Still want to believe that the world could sing in harmony? It’s hard to think that small efforts could bring together a conflicted nation and world, but they have in one of the most effective UU founded programs.

The now mighty, multiracial, multicultural and independent Chicago Children’s, the biggest children’s choir offers the most extensive children’s musical education in the country had its beginning in the Civil Rights Days of the 50’s and was gathered in 1956 from a handful of First Unitarian and Southside neighborhood children by assistant minister Christopher Moore for a children’s choir of twelve. Moore grew up with an international inter racial approach to religion as the son of UUSC worker Matilda Moore who worked with Navajo Reservations and in Nigeria. Today the choir draws from 92 Chicago schools and affects 57 Zip Codes and 29 Nations. It serves 4900, ages 8 to 18, 40 per cent African American 36.9 Latinx, 16.6 Caucasian, 4.3 Asian and Islander, and 3.2 multiple heritages in 144 Choirs, and has a 100 per cent graduation rate. Some 79 per cent attend by scholarship. There are over 50,000 alumni affecting communities. The sea of choir members in their red jackets is as moving as their performances. Google the choir’s name and find

them performing on You Tube. You will also find an interview of their founder director with late Chicago Pulitzer winner, author and WFMT radio personality Studs Terkel.

Arriving in Chicago for seminary at Meadville/Lombard and the University of Chicago, the door was still locked but First Unitarian was open and running. The Children's Choir was there and gathering. Already they were breaking into snatches of song, and they took me in and sat me down. This was the start of a connection with the choir, I helped organize a number of tours where the children stayed with church hosts. Then the choir centered on First Unitarian and when the choir was rehearsing in Woolman Hall the buildings filled with music. The music ranged from Spirituals and folk to Classical and Leonard Bernstein. It's hard to forget the beat of the drums with their performance. Church buses are associated with evangelical mega churches, but when the children gathered from over the city a fleet of buses would converge on First Unitarian down the narrow streets of Hyde Park clogged by student and faculty cars.

Choir teams sang in Unitarian Universalist churches from large cities to small towns like Hanska, Minnesota. The big, shiny, silver touring bus would park beside a church with its top up to the eaves and the children with their red jackets would pour out, sometimes tired, but still singing. The choir today has a wide international presence. One of the best features of the choir performances when the choir was part of the program of the First Unitarian Church was that children stayed at the homes of church members. The choir still has a Hyde Park Neighborhood Choir at First Unitarian.

The choir sang with the Vienna Choir Boys Chicago Symphony, Chicago's Lyric Opera and Joffrey Ballet and even at Carnegie Hall. The list of well-known performers is really too long to cite in its entirety, but it has sung with Renee Fleming, Pavarotti, Andrea Bocelli Yo-Yo Ma, Bobby McFerrin, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Queen Latifah & Beyonce. The choir has performed for former Presidents Clinton and "Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, former Chinese President Hu Jintao, former South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak, Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso."

Contact with other ethnic groups and nations still forms a foundation of the choir's philosophy which is about building bridges not walls. The choir's idea is supported by recent research detailed in "Survival of the Friendliest" by Brian Hare and Vanessa Woods who maintain that we have evolved by selection to be actively sociable and cross group boundaries. Competition for survival comes from team work. They contend that changing behavior and contact will change attitude. Attitude doesn't change behavior, A greater willingness to accept intermarriage and greater diversity has come from people being exposed to diversity. The same acceptance of diversity and friendship still applies from current research at UCLA. The best way to ensure human survival has been contact and cooperation that are furthered by the Chicago Children's Choir.

“Of Cults and Mind Control”

a review by Dick Burkhart of

The Cult of Trump: A Leading Expert Explains How the President Uses Mind Control

By Steven Hassan (2019)

Hassan was once himself sucked into a cult (the “Moonies”) as a young man. Now he asks all of us to be on the lookout for the warning signs – how any of us, no matter how smart or informed we think we are, could be sucked in, just like he was. In this book Hassan summarizes and builds on his earlier work “Combatting Cult Mind Control” to illustrate how Donald Trump is one of history’s great masters of the mind control techniques of cult leaders.

Hassan gets at the essence of cults by noting that they are characterized by classical mind control techniques, which could be used for therapy but are instead abused, yielding damaging social outcomes. The “big lie” is the best-known technique, so much so that Hassan says that “Deception is the life blood of a destructive cult...Cult leaders use a variety of confusion techniques but a major one is delivering a dizzying amount of information, much of it contradictory and false, so that it overwhelms critical thinking” (p 51). “When it comes to lies, Trump seems almost peerless...The bigger the lie the greater the disorientation...a person begins to question their own perception of reality” (p 52).

These techniques are typically engineered by a cult leader, like Rev. Moon or Trump, but this is not a necessity. With Trump, his well-documented “malignant narcissistic personality disorder” explains much of his cultish behavior, but in this age of social media a group of individuals united by a powerful ideology can propagate cultish behavior far more easily than in the past. We see it in the anti-vax movement and in a wide variety of speculative theories, from 911 to QAnon to critical theories of gender and race.

As to the latter, I was just looking at John McWhorter’s book on “Woke Racism” and noted his list of 10 confusing and contradictory statements that form the “catechism” of “third wave racism” as he sees it, revealing “not a philosophy but a religion”. Others have noted that “cancel culture” has been an enduring feature of cult-like religions, going back to the Spanish Inquisition and even early Christianity. Here Trump is also a master, not only by attracting true believers, but canceling them by firing or insulting them when they fail his unstated loyalty tests.

Hassan notes how his loyalty was always being tested in the Moonies and how this drove his dishonest and unethical behavior (anything goes to bring in new members or more money), not to mention his exhaustion and eventual burnout. In critical theories and the like, the ever-evolving loyalty tests have been referred to as “political correctness” and followers are kept in line by the constant threat of being “called out” if they miss a beat.

Other key mind control techniques, long known to gurus of all sorts, not just Trump, include “absolute confidence”, “grandiosity”, and the “trust me” intimacy of the “confidence man”. Again, Trump is a master manipulator. But “fearmongering tops the list” (p xiv), often in the form of scapegoating various supposedly nefarious groups. Jews are the best-known historical example, but with Trump it was people like Muslims and Mexicans, supplemented by the usual rightwing bugaboos - globalists, radicals, socialists, Hollywood actors,

liberal media, etc. “The ultimate goal is to make people dependent and obedient” (p xvi).

To rescue a person from a cult (Hassan’s business) is not so easy. He’s learned that “attacking a person’s beliefs is doomed to fail...I had to develop a process to help people recover their individual faculties and ultimately, their true, or authentic selves.” This means encouraging warm relationships outside the cult – “to build trust and rapport – while raising essential questions”, leading eventually to a renewed self-confidence in their own “capacity for critical thinking” (p xix).

Hassan also reviews key points from his earlier book: People are most susceptible to cults at disorientating stress points in their lives, such as entering or leaving college, a job, or a relationship. His BITE model, gives a structure to cultism: (1) B is for behavior – followers are required to observe certain dress, diets, slogans, or rituals, (2) I is for information – followers are flooded with cult-generated propaganda while access to outside sources is denied or demonized, (3) T is for thought – followers undergo intensification indoctrination in lectures and workshops, with mind-numbing repetition or mantras, sometimes referred to as brain-washing, (4) E is for emotion – followers are taught that they are the chosen or the elect – to feel pride in membership, while great fear of outsiders is instilled – the world is portrayed as a dangerous place that only the cult can fix.

Several more chapters explicated Trump’s life in detail, showing how he developed into becoming a cult leader. Though I knew the broad outlines, the rich details here was fascinating. Other chapters look at the history of psychology in the US and how Trump fits in to techniques such as hypnosis, trances, meditation, anchoring, framing, storytelling, modeling, confusion, disruption, double binds, projection, fear, repetition, etc.

Media gets a whole chapter, especially Trump’s symbiotic relationship with Fox News and how rightwing personalities like Rush Limbaugh set the stage. Another chapter went into behind-the-scenes influencers like Roger Ailes, Vladimir Putin, and the Christian Right. Then Trump’s followers are analyzed. They are always looking for heroes and villains.

A great many followers are evangelical Christians, others didn’t like Hillary or were disenchanted with liberals. Those who had experienced authoritarian leadership, such as in certain churches, and felt dumped on by society (many workers) were primed for Trump. The alt-right is the most dangerous faction behind Trump but there are also plenty of QAnon conspiracists, gun devotees, etc.

Finally, Trump’s own people, once escaped, have referred to him as a cult. His former lawyer Michael Cohen says that his relationship to Trump was “something akin to a cult”. His former staffer Omarosa Newman declaring “I’ve escaped from the cult of Trumpworld. I’m free”. It’s like our society has been suffering a mental breakdown and we all need to be pinching ourselves to see if we’re still sane and not clinging to the aura of Trump or one of the many cult like alternatives.