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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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How Much Guilt Is About Right?

By Ken Christiansen

(presented as part of the UUMUAC Convocation on Nov. 4, 2023)

First, I want to share a brief timeline to bring context to the personal experiences I will be talking about today.

I have been engaging with race issues since 1965. That's when I joined a Lutheran volunteer ministry called the Prince Of Peace Volunteers. I was assigned to a storefront church that served residents of the Robert Taylor Homes Public Housing Project on the south side of Chicago. Robert Taylor Homes fronted two miles along State Street. With 27,000 residents, it was the largest Public Housing Project in the United States at the time.

I kept in touch with that volunteer ministry during my doctoral work at the University of Chicago Divinity School, 1966-70. From 1970-74, I was the full-time pastor of a United Church of Christ congregation in a small town 60 miles southwest of Chicago. From 1974 - 2008 I taught Religion and Sociology courses at Defiance College in Ohio.

I wasn't a member of a Unitarian Universalist congregation until 2009 when I joined the First Unitarian Society of Chicago. I now live in Jacksonville, Florida. My wife Karen and I were very active in a Unitarian Universalist congregation in Jacksonville until that congregation took a big turn toward authoritarianism several years ago.

While serving as a pastor in that small town in Illinois, I helped start a Chaplain Of The Day program at the small hospital that served several local communities. We began very ecumenically. We included all local pastors who wanted to join. The hospital was very happy for our efforts. Happy, that is, until one member of our new team, a fundamentalist Baptist, spent his first day as chaplain approaching miscellaneous patients who looked seriously ill, getting really close to them, and asking, "Are you Ready to meet your maker?" I think he was hoping his words would motivate the captive listeners to find God. Guilt can be motivating. The hospital promptly limited this pastor to visiting only members of his own church. We didn't have anything more to do with him.

We did have a psychiatrist come and talk to us about guilt. He distinguished

“Real guilt” and **“Neurotic guilt.”** Basically, he said that **“Real guilt”** is feeling bad about something we’ve actually done that is morally wrong. This can include bad feelings about things we’ve not done like allowing something bad to happen when we could have prevented it, but didn’t.

I suspect we can all think of situations where a guilty conscience motivated us to make amends for something we had done or failed to do. That is just part of life. When you slip up, own it. Reality can be hard to face. A message I heard from the psychologist John Bradford has helped me on more than one occasion. He said, “The only way out is through the pain.” Real guilt is something that can be objectively acknowledged and worked through. It can be difficult. But you know what you are working with.

“Neurotic guilt,” on the other hand, means having the same bad feelings in a response that is all out of proportion to the wrongdoing. This could mean feeling guilty about things we had no chance of averting. Or guilt for things for which we feel obsessively responsible without there being any reasonable basis. This can lead to a lot of anxiety, negativity, self-doubt, depression, worry, fear and low self-esteem. In other words, neurotic guilt can, and often does, just plain shut people down.

We need to ask, **how much guilt is about right?** At one extreme some people never feel guilt. We call them psychopaths and say they have an “antisocial personality disorder.” (There are some famous examples of that.) At the other extreme some people feel anxious, guilty and depressed nearly all the time. When they are not avoiding us, they walk among us hesitantly. They are suffering from what can be called “neurotic guilt” or “toxic guilt” or “false guilt.”

I am very concerned how much damage misplaced guilt can do. From 1980 to 1997 I taught a Cultural Diversity class every semester at Defiance College in northwest Ohio. Education Majors, Social Work Majors, Criminal Justice Majors and Religion Majors all took the course. Most of the students were white and from majority white communities. My challenge was to help them prepare to work successfully in diverse settings.

At the beginning of every class, we looked in depth at the history of prejudice, discrimination and oppression in our country. It was powerful. Somewhere in the first several weeks it invariably became clear that many or most of the Caucasian students in the class were feeling a lot of guilt. Not guilt for things they themselves had done. Rather, guilt for things members of their race had done historically. Or guilt for the advantages they or their racial ancestors enjoyed at others’ expense. Typically, these guilt feelings caused them to show signs of shutting down. They would carefully parse every response they made in class discussion. They acted very unsure of themselves. Open class discussion became difficult.

I did not see this development as healthy. I could only imagine how tongue-tied these students would be at the end of the semester and how limited they might be working in their chosen profession later in life. I felt a real need to help

them overcome these feelings of toxic guilt.

My response was to share what I observed to be an empowering message. “If you have done any of the horrible things we have been studying, you need to figure out how you are going to make things right. If on the other hand you haven’t done those things, get angry about them instead of feeling guilty. Get angry at racism and oppression. Let that anger motivate you to observe what is going on in your community. Be compassionate and empathetic. Work with others to change discriminatory laws and policies. It is very rare that you can change things by yourself. But you can join multiracial coalitions that do have the power to change things. If there aren’t any multiracial coalitions in your community when you get there, you can help build one.” I found this message to be very helpful to my students. And to class discussion.

How does all of this apply now in the Unitarian Universalist Association? Like I mentioned earlier, I didn’t join a UUA congregation until 2009. That was a year after Karen and I retired and moved to Chicago so Karen could attend Meadville Theological Seminary. That’s also when I met Finley Campbell. Finley made sure I had opportunities to see what was going on in the Unitarian Universalist Association.

The first thing I noticed was the segregation between black and white participants in UUA organized events. Meetings of the Allies For Racial Equity (ARE) were all white. Meetings of the Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM) included everyone not white. Several years later I researched what messages these two groups were sharing at their annual meetings. The curriculum for members of the Allies For Racial Equity concentrated on all the horrible things white people did to non-white people in American history. Everything they said was true. Members of the Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries, on the other hand, learned about positive and empowering aspects of their cultures. Again, all true. I was amazed and perplexed at the differences.

That is when it came home to me. There are two very different ways to be antiracist. One way brings people from all backgrounds together in coalitions to change discriminatory laws and policies. That was the path used by Dr. King with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and John Lewis with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. I think of this as “integrated antiracism.” Or “asset-based antiracism” where everyone from any background is considered a potential asset to the cause. This type of antiracism accomplished major changes in our country in the Civil Rights Movement. It continues to be effective when people work together for positive change. Many UUs are experiencing this today in Church Based Community Organizations.

The other way to be antiracist is to focus on white guilt. That is where the UUA landed. How we got here is a long story quite beyond the scope of this talk. Suffice it to say that beginning with steps taken at the 1968 General Assembly, “segregated antiracism” or “guilt-based antiracism” has become the official policy of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Racism is seen as a white people’s problem with white people needing to fix it. The role for black UUs is to encourage white UUs to study the history of white racism – and get white UUs to acknowledge their “White Privilege” and their involvement in “White Supremacy Culture.”

We need to ask again, “How much guilt is about right?” The leaders of the UUA Antiracism Program seem to think more is better. That is the only way I can understand their approach to “White Supremacy Culture” and “White Fragility.” I see their approach as inflicting as much Toxic Guilt as possible on white UUs. It has worked. White guilt has been a cash cow for organized Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in the UUA. It has also motivated many liberal white UUs to thoroughly doubt their own judgment on matters of freedom, reason and tolerance. These Enlightenment values are now identified as part of White Supremacy Culture.

What has been promoted by the UUA is a very Manichean picture. All black people are victims and all white people are oppressors. This assumption is reflected in the structure of “*Widening the Circle of Concern*,” the final report of the UUA Commission On Institutional Change released in 2020. That report was based on a research study in which about 5% of the approximately 19,000 Black, Indigenous and People Of Color who belonged to the UUA at the time participated.

The research questions are interesting. They were presented with the following words: “The Commission on Institutional Change requests personal accounts and stories about how racism has affected individuals and groups within Unitarian Universalism at the personal, institutional, or systemic levels ... [The] Commission asks you to respond to the following questions with specific examples. Here are the questions.

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

In what ways have we, as a faith community, been living outside of our values and commitments?”

These questions solicited only negative responses. No questions were asked about experiences in general or possible positive experiences.

The results of this so-called research study were used to justify recommending the complete reorganization of the Unitarian Universalist Association which is now underway. I think it is a valid conclusion to say that the current restructuring of UUA is powered in large part by white guilt, both felt and imposed.

How do we respond to this? The first task is to understand the challenges we face. Hopefully this presentation has been a step in that direction.

“*Widening The Circle Of Concern*,” Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change, June, 2020. This report is available at https://www.uua.org/files/pdf/w/widening_the_circle-text_with_covers.pdf.

Allan Pallay, *REVIEW OF THE CLAIM THAT WHITE SUPREMACY IN UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CULTURE HARMS BLACK PEOPLE, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND PEOPLE OF COLOR THAT IS IN THE REPORT “WIDENING THE CIRCLE OF CONCERN”*, a draft paper dated March 31, 2021. Pallay reports that the number 19,000 is based 158,186 members of UU churches in 2014 given in the UUA website <https://www.uua.org/data/demographics/uua-statistics>; and 12% of UUs identifying as non-white in a 2014 survey by the Pew Research Center shown in the website at <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/unitarian/>.

“*Widening The Circle Of Concern*,” p. xxiv.

Universal Values Expose the Tribalism of Wokism

A Review of "Left is Not Woke" by Susan Neiman (2023)

By Dick Burkhardt

Neiman is not just a first rate philosopher of international stature (an American living in Berlin) but a plain speaking and courageous "leftist and socialist". She sums up her truth: "What concerns me most here are the ways in which contemporary voices considered to be leftist [the woke] have abandoned the philosophical ideas that are central to any left-wing standpoint:

- (1) a commitment to universalism over tribalism,
- (2) a firm distinction between justice and power,
- (3) a belief in the possibility of progress [note that "progress" here refers to civic and moral affairs, not technology]
- (4) a commitment to doubt.

What has often mobilized the right are the war-like passions of tribalism, now mirrored by the woke as an identity politics "of symbols instead of social change". This searches out "identities that are most marginalized and multiplies them into a forest of trauma" (p 5) - to be blamed on more dominant, hence more oppressive, identities.

That is, the woke say that my lived experience is that my culture has been victimized by yours, so you are obligated to figure out how to dismantle the oppression in your culture, or at least to make proper amends. But what if a substantial portion of the supposed oppressor group, such as "whites", has strong evidence that they too have been victims, but based on different power dynamics, such as "market fundamentalism"? How can we dig up the roots of injustice which spread far below the surface markers of identity?

Neiman proceeds to demonstrate that woke "theories not only have strong reactionary roots; some of their authors were outright Nazis" such as Carl Schmitt and Martin Heidegger (p 8). She reminds us that even the Bible warns against the dangers of tribalism – "envy, strife, and war are the usual consequence". Don't be fooled, she says, by the leftist-style language used by the woke or how they misrepresent Enlightenment values and

goals as their neoliberal corruptions.

The core principle of the Enlightenment, even the concept of “humanity” itself, is to demonstrate the moral and civic superiority of universalism over tribalism, thus of classical liberalism over identity politics, of universal aspirations over the beliefs and practices which pit one cultural group against another.

Neiman’s analysis is that “Identity politics embodies a major shift that began in the mid 20th century: the subject of history was no longer the hero but the villain” (p 15). The problem is that, instead of a balanced view of history, the woke have created a victimhood culture. This is perceived by many as a “victimhood Olympics”, with blame and insults directed at people of purported oppressor identities, with victimhood even becoming a status symbol. Working in Germany, Neiman sees the stark parallels between the “anti-Jewish” blame game of the Nazis and the “anti-white” blame game of the woke, recalling the long and sordid history of identity politics through the ages, all too-often bloody or even genocidal.

In addition, she rejects the doctrine of “cultural appropriation”, citing the noted Nigerian scholar Olufemi Taiwo. He argues, logically, that “trauma, at best, is an experience that provides a connection to most of the people on the planet, but ‘it is not what gives me a special right to speak, to evaluate, or to decide for a group’”. That is, this doctrine is a “politics of self-expression rather than social change” (p 18). Neiman calls us to “return to a model in which your claims to authority are based on what you’ve done to the world, not what the world did to you” (p 19).

Again, interest group politics can’t match the breadth and depth of universal values and justice. The real danger here comes from false claims of universality used to mask particular interests. Neiman concludes that “The left-wing turn to tribalism is particularly tragic because the early civil rights and anti-colonialist movements resolutely opposed tribal thinking in all its form” (p 26). And “Initially, Black Lives Matter was a universalist movement”, faltering when its most visible aspects descended into a sometimes chaotic and harsh identity politics.

This is a key reason that Neiman refuses to declare herself a “white ally” – because BLM and similar groups are based on identity, making them interest groups, without the

deeper solidarity that would come from universal values. However, she says that it is important to understand that universal human rights are aspirational claims, not existing reality or dogmatic or creedal assertions. This promotes rational, evidenced-based dialogue instead of moralizing, blame and shame rhetoric.

As an example, I've noticed that the constitutions of poor countries often have magnificent declarations of both human and social rights which are rarely achieved in practice. Rather than accusations of hypocrisy, attitudes of "work in progress" are far more productive, in fact, even for rich countries like the US.

Another aspect of the Enlightenment universality was its strong attack on Eurocentric attitudes, Voltaire's "Candide" being a prime example of how they mocked typical European prejudice. Neiman explains how these broadsides did not defeat the 19th century European colonists but did put them on the defensive. They tried to justify their colonial projects by claiming they were bringing Enlightenment values to peoples they treated as heathen. Modern imperialists, such as the neocons, use the same justification, like when they claimed that the 2003 invasion of Iraq would bring Western-style democracy to that country.

The reality, of course, is that values cannot be imposed – they must be learned and nurtured, usually through multiple generations. Even some indigenous critiques influenced the Enlightenment, such as those of the Wendat, Kandiaronk, from Canada, cited by Graeber and Wengrow and highlighted by Neiman. She also notes the courage behind these critiques: "Nearly all the canonical Enlightenment texts were banned, burned, or published anonymously" (p 40) or couched in abstract language, such as Kant's repudiation of slavery: "Kant's categorical imperative, which expresses the basic moral law, states that people should never be treated as a means" (p 44).

Neiman concludes her defiance of the woke doctrine proscribing cultural appropriation: "Even walking awhile in the steps of a culture that isn't yours will reveal your common humanity" (p 56). Then she digs deeply into the writing of Michel Foucault in a most impressive chapter on "Justice and Power". First off, she acknowledges that Foucault did have some valid insights, but she objects to how these were turned into nihilistic dogma. For example, "In the modern era, said Foucault, power is hidden and diffuse, expressed through a network of structures we rarely perceive. There is no point we can locate and challenge, especially since we are implicated in the very networks that constrain us." (p 61).

Actually, the well-educated can and do challenge injustice at a plethora of points but the edifice is so well constructed and maintained by the ruling class that these challenges must be strong, persistent, wide-spread, and coordinated to lead to ultimate success. Foucault dismisses this “incremental approach”, casting the problem as requiring revolution or violence: “Isn’t power simply a form of warlike domination?” (p 64), despite the sordid history of even the most “just” wars. Even worse, Foucault’s notion of justice is of the biblical sort: “justice always seeks to reward people according to merit, punish them according to fault”, further rationalizing self-righteous and punitive responses.

Foucault’s power-hungry cynicism is even more overboard in the quote: “One makes war to win, not because it is just” (p 65). Moreover, “He steadfastly refused to give reasons for his political judgements, claiming that reasons were nothing but self-serving rationalizations” (p 66). Here Neiman is exposing the deep fascist roots of postmodern philosophy and political theory. This expresses exactly the oppression many of us experience in institutions captured by woke identity politics.

It is not the postmodern, but the Enlightenment thinkers, who “knew how often oppression is justified by claims of supposed natural order, and they were determined to use reason to subject those claims to rigorous scrutiny”. For example, “every time you argue that an economic, racial, or gender inequality is not inevitable, you are using your reason to question those who insist inequalities are natural” (p 67). In addition, “Enlightenment philosophers were perfectly aware that reason has limits; they just weren’t prepared to let church and state be the ones to draw them” (p 68). Today we would add a myriad of “influencers” and “experts” to church and state, hence the need for critical thinking skills.

And in the public arena, Neiman declares that “reason’s most important function is to uphold our ideals” (p 68); that is, to make them practical and achievable. Moreover, “the distinction between reason and violence undergirds the distinction between democracy and fascism” (p 70). Finally, “a world in which that model [of self-interested power] was truly universal would be a world in which everyone behaved like Donald Trump” (p 91).

To summarize, Susan Neiman observes that “the woke themselves have been colonized by a row of ideologies that properly belong to the right” (p 127). To regain a real, not delusional, hope she calls us to reinvigorate the hard but universal values of the Enlightenment. And it’s not just a regime gazing into the abyss, disoriented and floundering this way and that. It’s a civilization facing ecological overshoot and collapse: “grasping at the straws” of

miraculous technologies to stay afloat, or "tilting at the windmills" of conspiracy to shift the blame, or retreating into comfortable mirages of safety.

WINK'S TESTIMONY

By Rev. Richard Trudeau

"Racism is just as bad as it ever was, it's just gone underground," says the Rev. Al Sharpton. For 30 years this position has been shared by national UU officials, and forms the bedrock of their social-justice thinking. To their minds racism is at a crisis level, and this emergency justifies their repeated violation of the UU Principles.

But their "bedrock" is really sand. Though racism is unquestionably real, it is in no way "as bad as it ever was." As Dr. Campbell has said, legislated racism ended in the 1960s, and institutional racism, though persistent, has declined continuously ever since.

The other day I came across a striking reminder of how far we've come. I've been reading the blog (twyman.substack.com) of a retired lawyer, a black man, with the remarkable name of Winkfield F. Twyman, Jr. He goes by "Wink."

Wink has been re-reading the classic *Black Like Me*, an account by white journalist John Howard Griffin who, after having his skin temporarily darkened, traveled throughout the Deep South in 1959 and reported his experiences. (*Sepia* magazine financed the project.) In his blog Wink lists over 40 ways in which his own recent experiences differ from those recounted in the book. Here are five.

** In 1959 it was difficult for a black man to find hotel accommodations in New Orleans. Today, I can stay wherever I like in New Orleans. I do not give my race a second thought.*

** In 1959 a black man could expect no friendly banter from a white sales clerk. My experience with sales clerks in New Orleans runs the gamut. Some are talkative, others pre-occupied, and still others are sullen. The race of the sales clerk doesn't matter. Nor does my race matter to the sales clerk.*

** In 1959 there were all-white bars in New Orleans. If you know of any today, contact the U.S. Dept. of Justice.*

** In 1959 most blacks could only find postal jobs, teaching jobs, or preaching jobs. Today blacks can be found at all levels of employment in New Orleans.*

** In 1959 "You can live here all your life, but you'll never get inside one of the great restaurants except as a kitchen boy." I have no personal knowledge of that world. I have dined in and enjoyed some of the best places.*

Wink is not arguing that racism doesn't exist today, only that the situation has greatly improved in 60 years. The supposed crisis of racism on which UUA social-justice policy, and Al Sharpton's income, have been based for 30 years does not exist.

Wink concludes, sadly, "There is one way in which things have not changed since 1959. As soon as a color-conscious activist sees one, one will be a Negro and that's all they'll ever want to know about you. The activist will look at a black person but not see the individual."

“Save the World”

You want to save the world?

First, Save yourself!

Peripheral energy:

Angry, Anxious, Fearful, Frantic.

Centering energy:

Calming, Healing, Restoring, Saving.

Social action - Without prayer life:

Ineffective, Dangerous.

Refreshing water, Pure love,

Flows outward, From the center.

The world is in

Constant need of saving.

Please save oneself

Before saving others.

Vernon Chandler
Praying in the Zone © 2023.

**Letter to the UUA Board & President
on the Crossroads White Supremacy Trainings**
by Dick Burkhardt

Why is the UUA still promoting the notorious anti-white workshops of the “Crossroads Anti-racism Organizing and Training”? See below. In 1999 Rev. Thandeka gave a prescient GA talk on “Why Antiracism Will Fail”, decrying the dogmas used in the trainings by Crossroads and the Peoples Institute. Later UU World Editor David Reich lampooned these absurdities in his book “The Antiracist Trainings”. And, judging from the description given below, damaging dogmas, not facts and best practices, still reign supreme with Crossroads.

The only factual part of the claim below for a “white dominant culture” is that a majority of the US population is still of predominantly European descent, if a rapidly diminishing majority. But there is no evidence that this majority is engaged in racially motivated domination or oppression, which is implied by the phrase “white supremacy” in the workshop title. In fact, the surveys I’ve seen suggest that white supremacy in the US, as commonly understood (attitudes and practices of white racial superiority), is down in the 1% range (a reviled fringe movement). It’s influence in UU communities and institutions is nil, given our progressive history on racial matters.

In fact the claim “*The Commonplace Nature of White Supremacy*” is a blatant falsehood. If so, the COIC report certainly would have documented it, as that was one of its tasks. Instead this report wielded “White Supremacy Culture” (WSC) as an accusation, refusing to provide a credible definition or associated evidence. One place it suggested “white-centered practices” but never documented any practices which could be verified as centered around white racial identity, let alone giving evidence that such identity was responsible for any oppression. The only verifiable fact would be a determination that it was a mostly white group doing such practices. But blaming any issues on ancestry would be a “prejudice based on race” – the very essence of racism – **anti-white racism** in this case.

This is precisely why so many justice-oriented UUs, such as myself, are offended by both the Crossroads language and the blatantly false doctrines behind this language: **It constitutes an extreme racial insult and reflects very, very badly on the UUA.**

I’m talking not just about “science denialism” and a whole-sale abandonment of our 4th principle, but **an ethical disaster zone, a moral collapse, an organization so deeply indoctrinated in the conspiracy theory of WSC, that it cannot tell right from wrong.**

And who are the real winners here? The authoritarian Right, of course, who need only point to all the crazies on the Left. That’s why the US House went Republican and why even an increasing number of blacks are voting Republican. It’s a key reason, along with the Ukraine and Gaza wars, why Trump has been surging, not Biden.

And the big losers are the UU congregations infected by this craziness, or with ministers who’ve been indoctrinated. Many of these have suffered big losses of membership or budget. Other congregations have simply become unwelcoming to those seeking

a liberal religious home but are fed up with the insulting language and doctrines of today's identity politics and the nasty cancel culture thus engendered.

I say, no more indoctrination: Cut ties to Crossroads and all similar groups. If you think it is that important, then let's have well-balanced and well-informed debate instead of Orwellian manipulations.

**Sermon: Whose Church Is It Anyway?
The Rev Ms Denise D Tracy**

On Sunday evening July 15, 1838 Ralph Waldo Emerson spoke to the graduating class of Harvard Divinity School. In this address he suggested that individuals had spiritual insights and that each person could approach the divine and build an individual faith and connection to God. Emerson questioned the vitality of the church, the Unitarian Church, and questioned the rituals of the institution. Many religious historians say that this speech known as "The Divinity School Address" is the most important speech on religion ever delivered in America.

The Chapel at the Divinity School, where it was delivered has a plaque on the wall, saying that Emerson delivered the Divinity School Address in this room.

After delivering the address Emerson left for Concord and would not be invited to return to Harvard nor to Unitarianism for over 30 years.

If you ask many people who is the most influential Unitarian thinker ever to live...or if you ask folks how they first heard of Unitarianism...many first-time visitors will say that they were reading Emerson's Transcendental writings or his essays and were curious about our faith. These days our denomination claims Emerson as one of its finest theologians. Emerson's Transcendental colleagues Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller created a new faith in America. But for 30 years Emerson was persona non grata- and like J.K.Rowling's Voldemort, Emerson was the man whose name could not be spoken.

Emerson is much like Luther, who nailed his 95 thesis' to the church door and began the Reformation. Emerson did the same for our faith. Emerson suggested that each of us can use our life experience to know divinity. Over time, his ideas became the theological stance of our faith. One of the reasons most people love U-U-ism is the idea that each of us is able to build our own theology.

In 1961 at the time of merger there was another divide. Unitarians, by this time, had become Humanists and did not so much follow either Jesus or God. The Intellect was the prime mover of Unitarian faith. Unitarians were Dr's, lawyers and academics. The Universalists, however, were much more standard in their beliefs. In the 1880's Universalism was the fastest growing religion in America. They were passionate evangelicals of the heart. They preached in factories, in fields and in the places where the common folks lived. They preached the idea that there was a loving God and that everyone was forgiven. The merger of these two faiths meant that there had to be brokered a faith statement that surrounded and included all believers. Combining the Unitarian's mind and the Universalist's heart. The merger

almost didn't happen.

The 1961 statement of faith adopted for merger had such phrases as the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God. This was fine for about 15 years, then women began to assert equality as leaders and enter ministry. The Women and Religion Resolution was passed in 1977 at the General Assembly. Its purpose was to change our denomination to make it more inclusive to women---from top to bottom. A committee was appointed. I was on that committee. From the beginning, the 7 of us on the original Women and Religion committee, had an eye on the sexist language in the 1961 faith statement from the merger.

At the first W&R conference in 1979, the group was asked if they felt women were included in the 1961 faith statement. No was the answer. The 1961 statement was edited to use inclusive language. This statement was presented at a workshop at GA in 1980. It was sent out for congregational study in 1982, voted on in 83, voted to be studied again....and finally in 1984 was voted on, unanimously, at the GA, provisionally. A year later, in 1985, it was adopted. So from 1977 to 1985---8 years--- the words of the principles were discussed and reworked. It took an eternity.

This is the cost of congregational polity. Things move slowly. I hated this process. I wanted it to happen now! The reality was that in taking time there was growth, understanding and in the end the faith statement was adopted unanimously., by 2,000 people at GA. The Principles have become the core faith statement of most of our churches and people. Our kids have learned 7 principle songs and we recite the principles in worship.

The sources were added in the 90's as a way of, again, deepening our roots.

Three years ago, the UUA set up a commission to review the principles. This commission came back with a new Article II which basically says that the principles and the sources are racist and hierarchical and must be erased. Their new design for our faith is a type of flower with what are called primary values around the word love.

I am all for new ways of seeing our faith. However, I do not feel that the Principles and Sources need to be erased. I also do not feel that they are racist or hierarchical. Yes, the words are written on page in linear style, this does not ascribe negative values to the words. Every book I have ever read is linear.

In my Ministry I used the Principles to welcome people of color, LGBTQ, trans, divorced, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Atheists, agnostics and pagans, etc because the principles say that all are welcome.

The new Article II was presented to the UUA Board last October and was the subject of the UU World in May just before the June GA. At GA there were 900 suggestions for revisions and editorial suggestions. 9 were welcome with speakers allowed 90 seconds to respond. And this to me is the heart of the problem.

The UUA has been taken over by a group of people who do not see the value in the time it takes to be a congregational system. We are rushing to a decision and we are not taking the time to study and agree on the changes suggested. There is tremendous division. At GA last June people were walking around confused because many people had not been aware such a change was even being suggested.

The UUA is at its smallest size in numbers of members and congregations, it has the smallest numbers in Sunday school enrollment and has the lowest financial support by congregations since the merger. The pandemic has stressed local congregations. This is not the time to take such radical action.

In essence there is a change in the very structure of the UUA. There are those who feel that our denomination needs to change from being a bottom up---congregationally powered organization. Instead they want the UUA Board to be "in charge" of our Association of congregations. We are already on the road to this change. The UUA Board now nominates the nominating committee. This year there were 4 Board positions open as well as the Presidency. One name was presented for each position. All the people presented for election were in agreement with the adoption of the new Article II, including the new President. There were no sessions on what these folks believed because there was no need. In past years candidates held sessions and discussions. Then the vote was held. With only one name for each position---they were sure of being elected, so there was no discussion.

The new Article II was passed and will likely be finally adopted this coming June in a totally virtual GA. This year we are supposed to be studying Article II. But the discussion presumes adoption and also assumes that the Principles and Sources will be erased. We are not being given the time to edit and review nor do we have the real choice whether we wish the principles and sources to be erased.

There is tremendous unhappiness about the process.

In the past 3 years--A minister who wrote a paper about the lack of process in the UUA was ejected from the UUMA and defrocked. 35 retired ministers resigned from the UUMA in protest. As a result, a new denomination (The North American Unitarian Association) has split off from the UUA and has begun working to defend the fifth principle, the one on democracy--and there is a group called Save the Seven Principles---working to keep the Principles as part of our faith.

I worked as a congregational consultant for 17 years. I mediated church arguments. When there is unhappiness, the process needs to be slowed down. The different views need to be surfaced, distributed and discussed. The leaders need to take a neutral stand and allow the voices of all to be listened to. A middle ground needs to be articulated. This is exactly what is not happening. At GA one of the Moderators in her first time at the mike said we all needed to vote for Article II to continue discussion. (She was not neutral and did not mean a full discussion.) I wrote her and told her she needed to resign because she only represented one point of view. She told me she did not need to be neutral.

I joined the UUA 52 years ago. I did so because as frustrating as congregational polity is, I love that our pulpits are free and so are our churches. I have no power. I am retired. I cannot vote. I am afraid if Article II passes our faith will be forever fractured.

Article II carries within it changes that will forever alter the purpose and character of our faith. We are not a denomination. We are an association of congregations bonded by our belief in democracy and individual freedom. The power of the UUA rests in the local church and should remain so. It is my hope Article II will be voted down so that process will be slowed, studied and we will move toward listening to one another and preserving our faith for future generations.

Amen. Shalom. And Blessed Be.