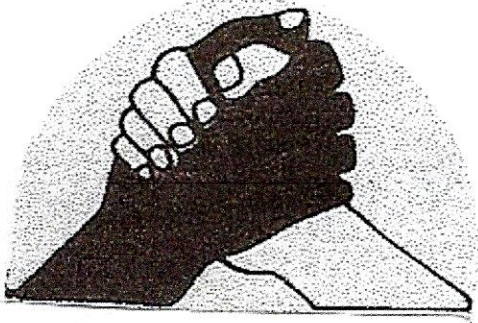

Vol. 2 Number 1 —Winter, 2020



MAC Arrow

Unitarian Universalist
Multiracial Unity Action Council
(UUMUAC)

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

Mailing Address: UUMUAC

1448 E. 52nd St., Box 267, Chicago, IL 60615

Editor’s email: uusj@sbcglobal.net

The Mission Statement

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

The Vision Statement

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

To unsubscribe please send a note to uusj@sbcglobal.net.

Long Term Damage When Ideology Defeats Ethical Principles

a review by Dick Burkhart of

Revisiting the Empowerment Controversy:

Black Power and Unitarian Universalism

By Mark Morrison-Reed (2018)

This insightful work attempts to be a balanced history of how the Black Power movement created enormous controversy within the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) in the late 1960s and early 70s. Yet more needs to be said about the lasting damage that reverberates to this day. I can only conclude that the combination of strong black identity, white guilt, and lack of historical perspective can be toxic, even in a religious association devoted to strong principles of ethical behavior. These days UUs even profess to be "(Standing) On the Side of Love", but mostly toward certain favored groups, and from a liberal Unitarian middle class white perspective, overpowering the more working class and less racially conscious Universalist heritage.

Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed is a long serving and well regarded UU African American minister, yet the "balance" he seeks in this book is mostly a balance of "causes" – ideologies and interests – not an examination of how the UU principles were honored or abused in this instance. I think this is symptomatic of the problems that have been magnified today in US society – that causes outweigh common ethics, basic principles, and historical perspective. As to the latter, it took 5 generations after the Civil War before Jim Crow was finally ended. Obviously MLK's project of "integration" would take at least another couple of generations to fully take hold, even with the best leadership. However, Morrison-Reed only cites the generations it has taken the feminist and LGBTQ movements to succeed, not possible obstacles to black empowerment or strategies to overcome likely hurdles.

Yet the Black Power activists, organized as the Black Affairs Council (BAC), were not interested in the hard, long, and frustrating generational work of realizing "equal rights". When their revolutionary vision didn't come to pass within a few years, they turned to unsavory tactics and political theater that made a mockery of the treasured UU "democratic process" and respect for "the inherent worth and dignity and of each person". As Morrison-Reed documents in great detail they adopted tactics explicitly designed to violate these principles, even to demonize the more moderate Black and White Action (BABA) group. This group had the backing of the Community Church of New York City, long the most integrated church in the UUA, far less susceptible to white guilt. Full disclosure: I have fond memories of Glover Barnes, the principle African American spokesperson for BABA, and later a fellow congregant and highly esteemed elder in the Rainier Valley UU Congregation in Seattle. I also knew another BABA activist, John Cornethan, an honored black elder at the nearby University Unitarian Church.

But it wasn't just BABA and many traditional UUs leaders who had strong negative reactions to BAC tactics, such as non-negotiable demands, enforced by contrived walkouts and boycotts, instead of respectful dialogue and due process. Even the African American women behind the domineering BAC men tried, but failed, to bring them down to earth. While the BAC narrowly won funding votes at the General Assemblies of 1968 and 1969, thereafter they narrowly lost votes despite the strong justice orientation of most delegates, as the BAC tactics became more uncompromising and their attitudes more self-righteous.

At one point the sympathetic Veatch Fund stepped in to continue the BAC funding, which went to certain worthy black empowerment ventures across the country, but not to several successful black social development projects already underway, causing more divisions within the very small ranks of UU African Americans. By the mid 70s the funding ceased and the BAC fell apart, with many BAC leaders leaving Unitarian Universalism in anger, as the backlash spread. My own UU mother switched to the UCC around this time, seeking a more spiritual home, less political, even though she had been a key lay leader in Tacoma in 1968, promoting better black / white relations

So, yes, even though the cause was good, the damage was deep and long lasting. True, more people of color have appeared in visible UUA positions, such as the Presidency and the Ware Lectures, but the goal, now called diversity instead of integration, is still illusive. Meanwhile the UU leadership continues to lack historical and spiritual depth on these matters, as is painfully obvious to many of us who have lived diversity versus wishing for it. Instead of "wise elders" who step in to defend the UU principles and guide us toward more constructive outcomes, we're experiencing a resurgence of racial ideologies, backed by white righteousness and guilt, producing a new black empowerment crisis in the UUA. The damage is already underway, most visibly in the resignation of the Hispanic UUA President, Rev. Peter Morales, in 2017, over a racially charged hiring controversy, and most recently with the censorship of Rev. Todd Eklof for distributing a book, "The Gadfly Papers", promoting dialogue on some of these very issues.

| Morrison-Reed does draws some useful lessons, such as "Hubris fuels tragedy; it does not lead to spiritual health" and "Once an adversarial model was embraced, sharing and willingness to be vulnerable ended", concerning the BAC, "leaving all sides feeling misunderstood, and battered, victimized, and betrayed" (p. 346). Concerning the white allies, "because they tended to feel angry, impatient, and righteous, they were unsuited to the tasks of persuasion and conciliation that are fundamental to a covenantal faith. Their decisions and actions were ideologically, rather than spiritually grounded. What enlivened them was the feeling that they were on the side of the oppressed" (p. 347).

Yet 50 years later too few in the UUA leadership have learned these lessons, or they have been intimidated by accusations of racism / white supremacy, or they have succumbed to dysfunctional ideologies such as "white supremacy culture" and "white fragility". A key enabler hasn't changed at all – the resurgence of white guilt – now due to Trump's attacks on minorities and immigrants. Thus many UUs have been distracted by Trump's scapegoating instead of focusing on the plight of the white working class, which was the group most damaged by the escalating inequality of the last 40 years, many voting for Trump out of desperation. Even the white underclass is not viewed as "oppressed" as most minorities – all those "deaths of despair" (opioids, suicides, etc.) must be their own fault, at least that is what "white fragility" would teach us.

So Morrison-Reed certainly understands what happened, yet he doesn't adopt some of this more explicit wording, presumably to avoid getting embroiled in today's black empowerment controversy.

Distribution of a letter of protest, by dissident UU ministers, to the UUMA over its censoring of Rev. Todd Eklof

The below/following letter protesting the censoring of the Rev. Todd Eklof by the UU Ministerial Association (UUMA) for his book "The Gadfly Papers", which he distributed at the 2019 General Assembly(GA) in Spokane. Rev. Eklof is the UU minister in Spokane and an outspoken advocate for ethics, reason, and justice. The protest letter was written by 9 senior UU ministers and co-signed by 40 others, pointing out that the censoring and associated unsubstantiated allegations against Rev. Eklof were a serious violation of UUMA ethics.

At this time the letter has not been officially published, but we are making it available to concerned individuals so that they may know that their concerns are widely shared. Please let us know if you too share these concerns, noting that Eklof's carefully-reasoned book is available on Amazon, in addition to an excellent book by Professor Anne L. Schneider detailing events at the Spokane GA and explaining the ideology of "White Supremacy Culture" behind the UUMA censoring: "A Self-Confessed White Supremacy Culture: The Emergence of an Illiberal Left in Unitarian Universalism".

Dear UUMA Board Colleagues,

This letter has been initiated by longtime UU ministers and joined by others of various tenures. While we ascribe to you no bad intentions, we believe your actions are an overreach of your authority and are in fact harmful to Unitarian Universalism and to the collegiality of the UU ministry.

We join the many voices, both clergy and laity that are expressing concern about your treatment of our colleague Todd Eklof, treatment that violates the collegial standards we have long agreed to live by. We are surprised and concerned that you unilaterally chose the confounding policy of censuring a colleague's writings, an action taken without due process: a formal complaint and an opportunity to answer it. Your reliance for authority to censure rests upon a single sentence in "A History of the Guidelines and Its Revisions," and is at best dubious.

We believe your actions violate our freedom of the pulpit, a freedom we believe extends to our writings. Those who initiated this letter find no violation of our covenant in Todd's book, only ideas which challenge particular approaches to anti-oppression currently in favor with many colleagues. All signatories believe that the changes you are making to our norms of ministerial collegiality and freedom of the pulpit are creating a deep divide amongst UU's and are resulting in an atmosphere of fear and distrust. Many good clergy are refraining from working together on common issues of importance, and long valued relationships are being damaged.

Our ethical standard is: *I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any colleague in public. In any private conversation concerning a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately. I will not solicit or encourage negative comments about a colleague or their ministry.* This norm has been violated by the mass letters and your circulation of them. They were violated in subsequent online conversations in which, for example, Todd was compared to the Nazis at Charlottesville. UUMA moderators refused to intervene in these attacks on Todd and on anyone who defends his right to speak, as they normally would do in *ad hominem* attacks. Many signatures on the letters and on online attacks are coming from colleagues who have not even bothered to read Todd's essays.

To our knowledge, none of these colleagues have engaged Todd in conversation about their concerns. Thoughtful rebuttal is what we wish to see held up as the norm for discussions among colleagues and modeled to seminarians, not public slurs.

Some of us have served on the UUMA executive committee. We hope you would see as your fiduciary duty the calming of passions and the re-establishment of collegial norms. We hope you would remind colleagues that open conversations lead toward truth. Instead you chose one side of a debate among people of good will and used your position to censure a colleague you disagree with. You have increased anger and distrust and have even engendered despair among many of our colleagues. Your practice of bullying and silencing has severely damaged the collegial climate that once sustained us through

difficult times. We trusted you to be our bulwark against the noxious national climate. This time of national turmoil is exactly the wrong time to back away from our collegial principles.

Ironically, your actions have discouraged dialogue on issues of race and other intersectional issues—issues we need to pursue in more depth by welcoming new approaches and new research. Fear and distrust make working together and working smarter far less likely.

Ibram X. Kendi in his book on anti-racism enjoins us who want to change anti-racist policies not to blame those who do not accept our formulations, but rather to examine how well we are communicating. He says that blaming others for anti-racism failure, rather than being flexible and critiquing our own ideas, leads to further racism and further failure. He suggests that resistance from people with essentially divergent aims is an occasion for perseverance, whereas resistance from allies is an occasion for re-evaluation. The strong anti-racism record of many of us—and indeed of Todd himself—suggests that those who are critics of your actions are in the latter group.

Rather than reviling colleagues who are not in agreement with you, you would best follow Kendi's suggestion and use the pushback as a useful critique that gives information about how other progressives are viewing racial justice work. Many ministers and other UU's of color feel that the mass letters and public condemnations are not only ineffective but even unethical. As these events become public, some laity are already responding extremely negatively to your actions, and we expect this response to only grow.

We ask that you give up your ideological censure and categorical dismissal of colleagues who differ from you. We seek, rather, a return to tolerance for honest and open-hearted sharing. We need leadership that will bring us together during this time of national threat, rather than dividing us and making us angry and fearful.

We ask you to engage with Rick Davis, Todd's good officer, along with a group of other experienced parish clergy, with the goal of *working in a climate of mutual respect* towards a healthier stance, one that honors our collegiality and our traditions. A commitment towards a just world does not require UU's to give up our core commitments to our liberal religious values and collegial practice—rather, this is the time for us to cling fast to our liberal religious values and refuse to support the current zeitgeist of blaming, fear, and division.

We write this letter in the collegial expectation of a quick response and the setting up of a meeting either on Zoom or face to face so that we might begin a process of reconciling our shared desire to move toward a more equitable world and at the same time maintaining our essential value of freedom of thought.

Those clergy in Fellowship who would be willing to sign on to this letter please send your name to Fourthprinciple@gmail.com. Although it will not be published, please identify where you serve or that you are retired from ministry.

Initiators:

Rev. Rick Davis
Rev. Marilyn Sewell
Rev. Doug Gallagher

Rev. Kate Rohde
Rev. Scott Alexander
Rev. Davidson Loehr

Rev. Mark Gallagher
Rev. Craig Moro
Rev. John Corrado

Co-signers:

Rev. Gary Kowalski
Rev. Cynthia Cain
Rev. Kathleen Korb
Rev. Elaine Bomford
Rev. Linda Whittenberg
Rev. Dr. David A. Johnson
Rev. Mary Hnottavange-Telleen
Rev. Margot Campbell Gross
Rev. Ken Phifer
Rev. Nancy Dean
Rev. Dr. Jay E. Abernathy, jr.
Rev. J. Mark Worth
Rev. John Burciaga
Rev. Alex Holt
Rev. Richard Trudeau
Rev. Jane Ramsey
Rev. Earl Holt
Rev. John Robinson
Rev. Dr. Neal R. Jones
Rev. William Graves
Rev. George Kimmich Beach
Rev. W. Bradford Greeley
Rev. Dr. Charles A. Gaines
Rev. Dave Hunter
Rev. Kit Ketcham
Rev. Harold Babcock
Rev. Rev. Neal W. Ferris
Rev. David Boyer
Rev. Stephanie Nichols Boyer

Rev. Daniel Budd
Rev. Dr. Vernon Chandler

A note of thanks from the Afghan Women's Fund

Coming to Chicago is a wonderful experience. Coming for many years, it feels like a second home. Genuine and Lovely hospitable friends, familiar faces being compassionate toward the world issues and ready to help gives me hope for a better world.

It is not always the sales of crafts and raising fund which is important but the connection with people and especially Unitarian congregations is very valuable.

Although the last two trips didn't bring as much funds raised as hoped, in the long run it is an expanding, lasting and ongoing relationships and trust which will further our causes.

Being against the war-machine and Military Industrial Complex bring compassionate people together but helping those who are affected by the war institutions will form a strong bond. I am hoping for that bond to get stronger and stronger.

Thank you all for your support, love and willingness to help.

Fahima Gaheez from Afghan Women's Fund

The Case Against Blaming Racism and White Supremacy

a review by Dick Burkhart of

Winning the Race: Beyond the Crisis in Black America

By John McWhorter (2006)

Professor McWhorter is a black academic and linguist, now at Columbia University, who doesn't buy into the Racism and White Supremacy rhetoric of many activists. In fact he calls it "therapeutic alienation" when black activists try to blame their ills on "whiteness". For him the few racial incidents he has experienced are "minor irritations", not existential threats, and he says that a majority of blacks would agree. Yet the black activists have dominated the public narrative, feeding off white guilt. This, he says, has been especially damaging to blacks in the workplace, where good social relations with whites and others are important for advancement.

This book is engaging, well-reasoned, and courageous, though somewhat verbose. As a black person he can critique other black people in ways that whites can't, at least not without being called a racist, which is the key reason he wrote the book – to promote dialogue over ideology. But it turns out he was too optimistic about the declining influence of the racist / white supremacy rhetoric. That is, he could not foresee the Financial Crash of 2008, the subsequent Great Recession, and the election of Trump, with all the stress this has put on the bottom 90% of all backgrounds. As Amy Chua says in "Political Tribes", today "every group feels attacked, pitted against other groups not just for jobs and spoils but for the right to define the nation's identity." Where I live in Washington State, a measure to reinstate affirmative action was defeated a week ago by a slight margin, with Asian opposition in the lead.

In his earlier book on "Losing the Race", McWhorter took blacks to task for "victimhood, separatism, and anti-intellectualism" after the Civil Rights era. In particular he says that affirmative action has outlived its usefulness and is discouraging blacks from competing with whites and Asians. Therapeutic alienation "provides a standing excuse for mediocrity" (p. 385). He also points out that even when Jim Crow prevailed, many cities had thriving black business districts and competitive black schools, so he asks, "Why not today?", when even middle class blacks lag behind. And why the dysfunctional black ghetto? Thus some minorities may have voted against affirmative action in Washington State because they view it as perpetuating second class citizenship in an era when classism far outweighs racism. Meanwhile the white working class has lost so much ground economically that it also feels it has been discriminated against.

Dancing with the Panthers: An Autobiographic Critique of the Black Nationalist Movement, 1965 – 1972

by Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell UUMUAC Chair/Spokesman

An Abstract of Part I

My autobiography will begin with my first type of nationalism, US American nationalism, created by the Depression, World War 2, and the first phases of the modern desegregation movement (1948 – 1953). I will then describe my initial contact with the Black Nationalist Movement during the period 1959 – 1967. During this time I heard Malcolm X at the University of Chicago, attended a Nation of Islam meeting in Chicago at which Lincoln Rockwell, the head of the Nazi Party USA was an honored guest and speaker, and was a none to avid reader of *Muhammad Speaks*, with its imitation of the anti-Semitic art of *Die Sturmer*, the Nazi-capitalists favorite racist paper. However, in 1964, I remember seeing Malcolm X speaking on TV about black contributions to US American culture. And he said something, which struck me like an epiphany. Sir, he said, we have contributed 300 years of unpaid labor. At this time he was drifting a way from the Nation of Islam.

Now, at this time I was a center – rightist on the issues of opposing racism, preferring the NAACP's approach.

Still, as a teacher at Morehouse College during this initial period I met or heard James Foreman and Donald P. Stone of SNCC, Vincent Harding who would become the head of the Institute of the Black World, Julian Bond (who was my student for one week and who was elected to the Georgia legislature – but was not allowed to take his seat because of SNCC's opposition to the Vietnam war), Howard Moore, SNCC's favorite attorney, and I also became a friend of Howard Zinn (I was a student of his during my senior year at Morehouse College, 1956). My closest experience with this period of the black power movement, not quite visible as a movement, was when I attended as a part of a documentary crew the Clay-Liston boxing match where Clay became a Black Muslim. I have a cameo part in the documentary, *Ali: the Greatest*, directed by my old buddy William Klein. In this film I defended Ali's black Muslimism. Indeed, I had the honor of defending Ali against the outrage of Norman Mailer when we debated before the fight. This was in 1965.

However, when the Black Power Movement kicked off in 1966 and the urban rebellions, beginning with Birmingham in 1963, became an emergent anti-racist force, I became an oppositionist, a neotom, as I was called by A. B. Spellman and Gerald MacWhorter, two of the black arts spokespersons in Atlanta at that time. I did a major essay in the *New South* journal called the "Ontology of Black Rage" in which I analyzed the literature of James Baldwin, Le Roi Jones, and Ralph Ellison, as manifestation of that rage which was fueling the Black Nationalist movement. Since I had both a column in the *Atlanta World* and a TV show over a local CBS TV station, I had a platform to oppose this movement, much to the outrage of John Holmes and Marian Wright and Lonnie King, leaders of, at first, the desegregation movement in Atlanta, and then of the Black Power Movement. I wrote a poem attacking the expulsion of whites from SNCC. All this came to a head when King Jr. was assassinated.

Since the funeral was going to be in Atlanta and since some of the black militants had announced that they would not permit whites to attend the funeral since "white America was guilty of killing their number one defender," I found it necessary, with the help of some of the white and black Morehouse faculty and students, to organize the Black Action Committee. We had a two-fold task: to oppose those community black nationalists who wanted to "burn down Atlanta, again," and those campus nationalists who were going to segregate the funeral. Despite some firebombing, we contained the community radicals and despite a march in which white faculty members had to walk at the rear of the march, -- when it was over, we had a fully integrated funeral.

We – the Black Action Committee and others -- spent the summer of 1968 channeling all this black power/black nationalist sentiment, mainly among the intelligentsia rather than the Atlanta working class, into trying to get an old classmate of mine, Maynard Jackson elected US senator of Georgia. This turned out to be a stepping-stone to having him elected mayor.

So in a sense that aspect of Black Nationalism, taking control/charge of predominantly black cities, was a success. I was a speechwriter and fundraiser for that effort. But what made it work was the biracial character of his support. However, the Black Nationalist leadership of the campaign had made a deal with the Atlanta power structure. If they would support Maynard's bid for mayorship and would support turning over the Atlanta School Board to black leadership, they would voluntarily abandon the school desegregation program. This leadership saw taking over the school system as a way in the predominantly black school districts to implement an education in black consciousness.

In the spring of 1968, after King's funeral, I received an invitation to speak on the Black Power Movement, at a small white college in Indiana, called Wabash College. It was a packed house and it was deemed a success. And through the multiracial efforts of the black students there, about six, and their white friends, both faculty and students, was invited to become the college's first full time black teacher. Exhausted from the struggles, which went on non-stop from April 68 to August 68, I took a one-year appointment. It also allowed me to have a normal relation with my Swiss wife, who had been passing for a black woman while we were living in Atlanta. She had become an active member of the SNCC vine city project and a close friend of Marian Wright, Donald P. Stone, and Julian Bond's sister., Jane Moore.

I found myself, through the Wabash network, speaking at a lot of different white colleges on what I called Black Humanism, since I was never fully won to black nationalism, neither as a geographic or cultural reality. But the progressive aspects of it, its opposition to white supremacy and white racism, especially as reflected in the humanities, I found bracing and liberating, but also as a way to uncover the humanism which had been corrupted by white power in my white brothers and sisters. It was at one of these speaking engagements that I met Margaret Johnson* a leader of the Indiana Chapter of the Black Panther Party.

I had had indirect dealings with the Panthers; reading about how these crazy guys had gone to the California state house armed with shotguns. Also, during the chaos of the preparations for the ML King Jr. funeral, when the Black Action Committee office was the center of activities, three members of the Party, with 50 caliber machine gun bullets around their necks, came to me asking politely for a place to have a recruitment meeting. Since the administration had disappeared, we assigned them the Danforth Chapel for their meeting. I was impressed with the quiet confidence they exuded, not like the blustering arrogance of the black power wing of the SNCC group.

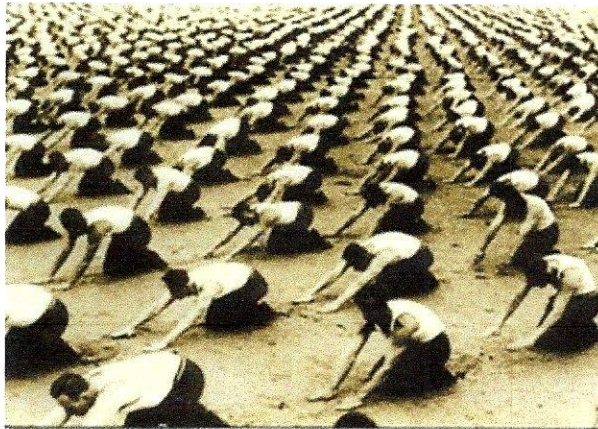
Here we were, through the workings of what some call dialectical materialism and what I call God, ending up having the leadership of the Party being paid \$500 to give a lecture at Wabash College. It was a mind-blowing event, as they laid out with passionate logic the rational nature of their ten-point program. And it was my privilege to "break it all down" to the majority of white and some black folks who were packing Baxter Hall to hear them speak.

After that night my life would change forever.

End of Part I

The Righteous and the Woke – Why Evangelicals and Social Justice Warriors Trigger Me in the Same Way

Posted on [January 24, 2019](#) by [Valerie Tarico](#) , reprinted with permission



I was Born Again until nearly the end of graduate school, a sincere Evangelical who went to church on Sunday and Wednesday with my family and to Thursday Bible study on my own. I dialed for converts during the "I Found It" evangelism campaign, served as a counselor at Camp Good News, and graduated from Wheaton College, Billy Graham's alma mater. I know what it is to be an earnest believer among believers.

I also know what it is to experience those same dynamics from the outside. Since my fall from grace, I've written a book, [Trusting Doubt](#), and [several hundred articles](#) exposing harms from Evangelicalism—not just the content of beliefs but also [how they spread](#) and shape the [psychology](#) of individuals and behavior of communities, doing damage in particular to women, [children](#), and religious minorities.

It occurred to me recently that my time in Evangelicalism and subsequent journey out have a lot to do with why I find myself reactive to the spread of Woke culture among colleagues, political soulmates, and friends. Christianity takes many forms, with Evangelicalism being one of the more single-minded, dogmatic, groupish and enthusiastic among them. The Woke—meaning progressives who have "awoken" to the idea that oppression is *the key concept* explaining the structure of society, the flow of history, and virtually all of humanity's woes—share these qualities. To a former Evangelical, something feels too familiar—or better said, a bunch of somethings feel too familiar.

Righteous and infidels—There are two kinds of people in the world: Saved and damned or Woke and bigots, and anyone who isn't with you 100% is morally suspect*. Through the lens of dichotomizing ideologies, each of us is seen—first and foremost—not as a complicated individual, but as a member of a group, with moral weight attached to our status as an insider or outsider. (*exceptions made for potential converts)

Insider jargon—Like many other groups, the saved and the Woke signal insider status by using special language. An Evangelical immediately recognizes a fellow tribe-member when he or she hears phrases like *Praise the Lord, born again, backsliding, stumbling block, give a testimony, a harvest of souls*, or *It's not a religion; it's a relationship*. The Woke signal their wokeness with words like *intersectionality, cultural appropriation, trigger warning, microaggression, privilege, fragility, problematic, or decolonization*. The language of the Woke may have more meaningful real-world referents than that of Evangelicals, but in both cases, jargon isn't merely a tool for efficient or precise communication as it is in many professions—it is a sign of belonging and moral virtue.

Born that way—Although theoretically anyone is welcome in either group, the social hierarchies in both Evangelical culture and Woke culture are defined largely by accidents of birth. The Bible lists privileged blood lines—the Chosen People—and teaches that men (more so than women) were made in the image of God. In Woke culture, hierarchy is determined by membership in traditionally oppressed tribes, again based largely on blood lines and chromosomes. Note that this is not about individual experience of oppression or privilege, hardship or ease. Rather, generic average oppression scores get assigned to each tribe and then to each person based on intersecting tribal identities. Thus, a queer female East Indian Harvard grad with a Ph.D. and E.D. position is considered more oppressed than the unemployed third son of a white Appalachian coal miner.

Original sin—In both systems, one consequence of birth is inherited guilt. People are guilty of the sins of their fathers. In the case of Evangelicalism, we all are born sinful, deserving of eternal torture because of Eve's folly—eating from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. In Woke culture, white and male people are born with blood guilt, a product of how dominant white and male people have treated other people over the ages and in modern times, (which—it must be said—often has been unspeakably horrible). Again, though, individual guilt isn't about individual behaviors. A person born with original sin or blood guilt can behave badly and make things worse, but they cannot erase the inborn stain. (Note that this contradicts core tenets of liberal, humanist, and traditional progressive thought.)

Orthodoxies—*The Bible is the inerrant Word of God. Jesus died for your sins. Hell awaits sinners. Salvation comes through accepting Jesus as your savior.* If you are an Evangelical, doctrines like these must not be questioned. *Trust and obey for there's no other way.* Anyone who questions core dogmas commits heresy, and anyone who preaches against them should be de-platformed or silenced. The Woke also have tenets of faith that must not be questioned. *Most if not all ills flow from racism or sexism. Only males can be sexist; only white people can be racist. Gender is culturally constructed and independent of sex. Immigration is an economic boon for everyone. Elevating the most oppressed person will solve problems all the way up.* Did my challenging that list make you think you might be reading an article by a conservative? If so, that's exactly what I'm trying to illustrate.

Denial as proof—In Evangelicalism, thinking you don't need to accept Jesus as your savior is proof that you do. Your denial simply reveals the depth of your sin and hardness of heart. In Woke culture, any pushback is perceived as a sign of white fragility or worse, a sign that one is a racist, sexist, homophobe, Islamophobe, xenophobe, or transphobe. *You say that you voted for Barack Obama and your kids are biracial so your problem with BLM isn't racism? LOL, that's just what a racist would say.* In both cultures, the most charitable interpretation that an insider can offer a skeptic is something along these lines, *You seem like a decent, kind person. I'm sure that you just don't understand.* Since Evangelical and Woke dogmas don't allow for honest, ethical disagreement, the only alternative hypothesis is that the skeptic must be an evildoer or bigot.

Black and white thinking—*If you are not for us, you're against us.* In the Evangelical worldview we are all caught up in a spiritual war between the forces of God and Satan, which is playing out on the celestial plane. *Who is on the Lord's side?* one hymn asks, because anyone else is on the other. Even mainline Christians—and especially Catholics—may be seen by Evangelicals as part of the enemy force. For many of the Woke, the equivalent of mainline Christians are old school social liberals, like women who wear pink pussy hats. Working toward colorblindness, for example, is not just considered a suboptimal way of addressing racism (which is a position that people can make arguments for). Rather, it is itself a symptom of racism. And there's no such thing as a moderate conservative. Both Evangelicals and the Woke argue that tolerance is bad. One shouldn't tolerate evil or fascism, they say, and most people would agree. The problem is that so many outsiders are considered either evil sinners or racist fascists. In this view, pragmatism and compromise are signs of moral taint.

Shaming and shunning—The Woke don't tar, feather and banish sinners. Neither—mercifully—do Christian puritans anymore. But public shaming and trial by ordeal *are* used by both clans to keep people in line. Some Christian leaders pressure members into ritual public confession. After all, as theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Nothing can be more cruel than the leniency which abandons others to their sin." Shaming and shunning have ancient roots as tools of social control, and they elevate the status of the person or group doing the shaming. Maoist struggle sessions (forced public confessions) and Soviet self-criticism are examples of extreme shaming in social-critical movements seeking to upend traditional power structures. So, it should be no surprise that some of the Woke show little hesitation when call-out opportunities present themselves—nor that some remain unrelentingly righteous even when those call-outs leave a life or a family in ruins.

Selective science denial—Disinterest in inconvenient truths—or worse, denial of inconvenient truths, is generally a sign that ideology is at play. Most of us on the left can rattle off a list of truths that Evangelicals find inconvenient. *The Bible is full of contradictions. Teens are going to keep having sex. Species evolve. The Earth is four and a half billion years old. Climate change is caused by humans* (which suggests that God doesn't have his hand on the wheel). *Prayer works, at best, at the margins of statistical significance.* But evidence and facts can be just as inconvenient for the Woke. *Gender dimorphism affects how we think, not just how we look. Personal responsibility has real world benefits, even for people who have the odds stacked against them. Lived experience is simply anecdotal evidence. Skin color is often a poor proxy for privilege. Organic foods won't feed 11 billion.*

Evangelism—As infectious ideologies, Evangelicalism and Woke culture rely on both paid evangelists and enthusiastic converts to spread the word. Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) and related organizations spend tens of millions annually seeking converts on college campuses. But many outreach activities are led by earnest student believers. Critical Oppression Theory on campus has its epicenter in gender and race studies but has become a mainstay in schools of public health and law as well as the liberal arts. Once this becomes the dominant lens for human interactions, students police themselves—and each other. Nobody wants to be the ignoramus who deadnames a transgender peer or microaggresses against a foreign student by asking about their culture.

Hypocrisy—Christianity bills itself as a religion centered in humility, but countervailing dogmas promote the opposite. It is hard to imagine a set of beliefs more arrogant than the following: *The universe was designed for humans. We uniquely are made in the image of God. All other creatures are ours to consume. Among thousands of religions, I happened to be born into the one that's correct. The creator of the universe wants a personal relationship with me.* Where Evangelicalism traffics in hubris cloaked as humility, Woke culture traffics in discrimination cloaked as inclusion. The far left demands that hiring practices, organizational hierarchies, social affinity groups, political strategizing, and funding flow give primacy to race and gender. Some of the Woke measure people by these checkboxes to a degree matched in the West only by groups like MRAs (Men's Rights Activists) and white supremacists. The intent is to rectify old wrongs and current inequities—to literally solve discrimination with discrimination. One result is disinterest in suffering that doesn't derive from traditional structural oppression of one tribe by another.

Gloating about the fate of the wicked—One of humanity's uglier traits is that we like it when our enemies suffer. Some of the great Christian leaders and great justice warriors of history have inspired people to rise higher (think Desmond Tutu, Eli Wiesel, Vaclav Havel, Nelson Mandela). But neither Evangelicalism nor Woke culture consistently inspires members to transcend tribal vindictiveness because neither, at heart, calls members into our shared humanity. Some Christian leaders have actually proclaimed that the suffering of the damned in hell heightens the joy of the saved in heaven. Some of the Woke curse those they see as fascists to burn in the very same Christian hell, metaphorically if not literally. They dream of restorative justice for criminal offenses but lifelong, ruinous retribution for political sinners: *Those hateful Trump voters deserve whatever destitution or illness may come their way. Unemployed young men in rural middle America are turning to Heroin? Too bad. Nobody did anything about the crack*

epidemic. Oil town's on fire? Burn baby burn.

I know how compelling those frustrated, vengeful thoughts can be, because I've had them. But I think that progressives can do better. Ideology has an awe-inspiring power to forge identity and community, direct energy, channel rage and determination, love and hate. It has been one of the most transformative forces in human history. But too often ideology in the hands of a social movement simply rebrands and redirects old self-centering impulses while justifying the sense that this particular fight is uniquely holy.

Even so, social movements and religions—including those that are misguided—usually emerge from an impulse that is deeply good, the desire to foster wellbeing in world that is more kind and just, one that brings us closer to humanity's multi-millennial dream of broad enduring peace and bounty. This, too, is something that the Righteous and the Woke have in common. Both genuinely aspire to societal justice—small s, small j—meaning not the brand but the real deal. Given that they often see themselves at opposite ends of the spectrum, perhaps that is grounds for a little hope.

Note: In this article I didn't address why, despite these discouraging social and ideological dynamics, I continue to lean left. In the frustration raised by excesses of Woke culture it is easy to lose sight of more substantive issues. Here is some of my list: The best evidence available tells us climate change is human-caused and urgent. Market failures are real. Trickle-down economics has produced greater inequality, which has been growing for decades. Inequality is a factor in social instability. Social democracy (the combination of capitalist enterprise with a strong social safety net) appears to have produced greater average wellbeing than other economic systems. Investments in diplomacy reduce war. Reproductive empowerment is fundamental to individual political and economic participation. The Religious Right more so than classical liberals control social policy on the Right. Government, when functioning properly, is the way we do things that we can't very well do alone.

I would like to thank [Dan Fincke](#) for his input on this article, and Marian Wiggins for her generous editorial time.

Valerie Tarico is a psychologist and writer in Seattle, Washington. She is the author of [Trusting Doubt: A Former Evangelical Looks at Old Beliefs in a New Light](#) and [Deas and Other Imaginings](#), and the founder of www.WisdomCommons.org. Her articles about religion, reproductive health, and the role of women in society have been featured at sites including [The Huffington Post](#), [Salon](#), [The Independent](#), [Free Inquiry](#), [The Humanist](#), [AlterNet](#), [Raw Story](#), [Grist](#), [Jezebel](#), and the [Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies](#). Subscribe at ValerieTarico.com.

Racism is Not about White Skin Privilege,

by Dr. Alan Spector, Purdue University Calumet, Professor of Sociology

The image of a police car appears in the rear view mirror as the driver of a car glances up. Proceeding for five or six blocks, the driver notices that the police car is still following. As the driver makes a right turn, the police car follows, and seven blocks further down the street, the driver is quite aware that the police car is still following behind -- no lights, no siren, no request to pull over....just following. While it may well be a coincidence, the driver may nevertheless start to experience anxiety. "Did I commit a traffic violation? Will I have to take a day off of work to go to court? Will there be a fine? Will I get points against my driver's license? Will my car insurance go up by several hundred dollars?" Anxiety. For perhaps 80% of the population in the U.S., this kind of experience creates anxiety. For much of the other 20%, however, the anxiety is much more intense. For the young black male driving through Gary, Indiana at 11 p.m., the anxiety includes: "Will my car be searched? Will I be humiliated? Will my car be damaged?"

Will I be roughed up? How should I act? If I'm quiet, the cop might think I'm being hostile. If I'm friendly, he might think I'm being sarcastic. My friend was arrested for disorderly conduct last week in a traffic stop. How should I act? What's going to happen now?"

Is the young black man acting "paranoid?" Or is he reflecting the reality more accurately than any sociology text book can do? Racism is not just a set of erroneous ideas. Racist oppression is a powerful material force in the world that does severe damage to hundreds of millions of people.

Many who oppose racist oppression and racist ideology and culture are skeptical of many on the Left who emphasize "class" in ways that ignore the particular effects of racist oppression ("class reductionism") or who use phrases like "black and white unite" without making clear that the unity has to be on the basis of fighting racism as opposed to a unity that calls on minority group members to tone down their struggle. And this skepticism has a material basis: there have been many instances in American history when labor and even socialist movements downplayed the struggle against racism or worse, even promoted racist policies against immigrant, Native American, and black workers. Racist oppression is a persistent reality with destructive material effects that can be measured in terms of infant mortality, unemployment, average family income, incarceration rates and a dozen other indicators. But acknowledging the existence of racist oppression -- that on average members of minority groups experience more oppression than members of the majority (so-called "white" SCW) group -- does not mean that members of the SCW have "White Skin Privilege." Rooted in psychology, rooted in material structure, rooted in class, extra-exploitation.

There are several problems with this term. For starters, rather than enhancing our understanding of the many ways that capitalism oppresses people, it oversimplifies it by separating class oppression from racist oppression the same way that the class reductionists do. If one understands class as a relationship rather than as a one-dimensional income variable, then one can understand that racist oppression and the ideology that reinforces it are related to material processes of exploitation and that flow from material inequality and the need to justify it, rather than seeing racist oppression as primarily flowing from racist thoughts that are somehow independently ingrained into the psyche of all members of the majority group. Racist ideas ARE deeply ingrained, but they are not inherent. This is evident by the inconsistencies of racist myths and the flexibility utilized by racists as theories shift into contradiction with previous racist theories.

A second problem is that racism is not just a "black/white" relationship or even a "white/not white" relationship. Do black autoworkers in the U.S. "enjoy" privilege over black autoworkers in South Africa? Members of minority groups can participate in racism. Generally, it is very rare that members of minority groups can enforce racism against members of the majority ("white") group. But members of minority groups can enforce racism against members of other minority groups and sometimes even cooperate in the racist oppression of the minority group that they might seem to be identified with. There are many examples of this in the first case, from Japanese mistreatment of Koreans to Israeli Zionist mistreatment of Arabs to some black U.S. soldiers attacking Vietnamese and Panamanians and a thousand other examples, and in the second case, of the alliance between the racist apartheid forces and black anti-ANC forces in South Africa, or the role of Louis Farrakhan today in the U.S.

Thirdly, the rhetoric of "white skin privilege" implies that wealthy black capitalists are essentially friends to the black working class while (with a few exceptions) white working class people are essentially adversaries of the black working class. This not only mistakenly "others" white working class people; it also leads black working class people into the trap of supporting certain elements in the black community who are serving the interests of the most powerful racists!

Finally, while the term "white privilege" creates confusion, the term "white skin privilege" is much worse, because it reinforces the dangerous myth that SKIN, biology is somehow at the root of differences among people.

But are there some privileges associated with being "white?" If a white college student gets a well-paying job doing road construction because his uncle arranged it, isn't that a type of privilege not available to the black college student who probably doesn't have a "white" uncle? What about the privilege of being able to buy a house that rapidly appreciates in value because it is in a certain neighborhood? These are clearly short-run advantages. As anti-racists, we have a duty to expose the racist processes that deny members of minority groups a decent life. And we have a special responsibility to directly confront the myth of reverse discrimination, so popular in the media and on campus these days.

But capitalism as a system means misery for the great majority of people. This system, at its most gentle, produces stressful lives and alienated personal relationships for most people; at its worst, we have and will see many members of the so-called "majority" group experience the misery of economic hardship, political/police repression, and war. Already we see that life for many white people in small towns across the U.S. is not that different from life in the black and Latino inner cities -- with widespread unemployment, despair, drugs, and violence. Perhaps the language of "more oppressed" is a more useful way of explaining the processes of racist oppression than the language of "white privilege."

Racist exploitation is a key source of profits that keeps capitalism afloat, and racist ideology is a key source of power for the capitalists by keeping the working class divided. If capitalism harms the white working class and even many in the so-called "middle class", then members of those groups do not ultimately benefit from the racism that keeps capitalism afloat!

In the short run, and admittedly the short run can last longer than some of us might like, there are tangible differences in the material quality of life for members of different racial-ethnic groups. This must be exposed and opposed. But asking people to "give up their white skin privilege" can be one of those statements that sounds very radical but in fact leads to no change. Are we demanding that white professors resign? Better to ask the people fight against racism, even if it means risking losing one's job! That is an active, anti-racist stance that unites people while it aggressively fights racism as opposed to a strategy that can lead to empty "Apologies for Slavery" and strategies that hide the reality that the real roots of racism lie in class inequality, exploitation, and oppression -- which today means capitalism.

During the Vietnam War, some protestors went to jail rather than pay taxes because they did not want to be a part of supporting the war. With all due respect to their motives and unselfish dedication, the more effective strategy was to pay the taxes and then work very, very hard to stop the war -- even if it meant risking jail because of anti-war actions. It is not a question of "giving up privileges", however one might do that. There will be those who rationalize and passively exploit the oppression of others, and that should be exposed and opposed. But the rhetoric of "privilege" masks the roots and processes of racist oppression rather than attacking them. Different sections of the working class do experience different levels of oppression.

Some passengers on the Titanic drowned before others did. But those who drowned a half-hour later can hardly be called privileged. Those less oppressed do have a duty to focus special efforts to oppose the racist discrimination against their working class sisters and brothers from so-called "minority" groups. But the rhetoric of "privilege", while possibly helpful in exposing racist treatment, ultimately obscures and diffuses the anti-racist struggle.