

The MAC

Spring, 2018



Arrow

Unitarian Universalist
Multiracial Unity Action Caucus
(UUMUAC)

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

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The Mission Statement

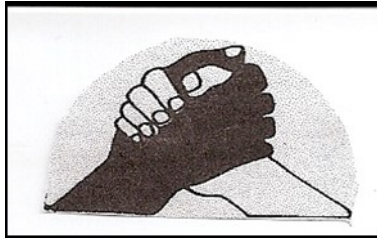
It is the mission of the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus to carry out and foster anti-racist and multiracial unity activities both within and outside the Unitarian Universalist Association through education, bearing witness and other actions, and expansion of our membership both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

The Vision Statement

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

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Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus (UUMUAC) Report



"The Unity of the Light and Dark-Skinned People of the World." by Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell, spokesperson finleycampbell5222@comcast.net

Greetings to members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus. First of all, let's give a brief overview of our activities since our Winter Arrow. From January 2018 to April 2018, we held our monthly meetings where we laid out plans for the year up to August 2018. And as usual we met at a working-class restaurant called Country Kitchen #2 in the heart of the southside black community where our multiracial group was warmly welcomed with good buffet food and gracious hospitality.

The main aspect of all these meetings was to, one, lay out future projects, two, deal with current issues, and, three, look back over past events: consists of the following: We endorsed and participated in the Pease Action Task Force action on April 17 with a MAC flyer outlining the racist imperialist nature of much of our military spending. We also endorsed the UUJEC Conference on Inequality. At the same time, we concluded that there would be no April 21st conference on neo-racist unemployment in Ann Arbor Michigan due, at least in part, to last minute opposition from powerful neo-racist forces in the UUA causing our major ally to back off, due to the failure of the MidAmerica Regional Office to advertise the event, and also partly due to the lack of significant participation by our own MAC membership.

We have endorsed the Poor People's Campaign, and been involved with it in Illinois, mainly through the work of our non-violent civil disobedience activist, Allan Lindrup.

For our future projects, June to August, 2018, we will be having a booth at the UUA's 2018 General Assembly in Kansas City, June 20 – 24: Marie Cobbs, Allan, and myself in charge. Sister Fahima Gaheez, of the Afghan Women's Fund, will also have a booth in our general area. We are planning to have literature, buttons, and a variety of programs on neo-racism and multiracial unitarian universalism, including showing segments of the movies dealing with the Great Abolitionist War aka the Civil War.

This latter activity will tie into our last major event on this three-month sequence, a gathering on the weekend of August 3-5, 2018 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, climaxing with a program at Little Round Top to mark the 155th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. We will honor the white brothers of the Maine 20th Volunteers who kept White Supremacist forces from outflanking the Union Army. Brothers Dwayne Matthews, Carl Wolf, and I will be heading up this effort and hopefully we will have our first call or flier in this issue of the *Arrow*.

In dealing with the present state of MAC, we discussed the various attacks against UUMUAC, especially from those who are ideologically opposed to multiracial unitarian universalism. Being self-critical, as a prophetic minister in the tradition of Brother James Luther Adams, I am often filled with righteous indignation about any person or organization which hinders the advance of the Beloved Community to its historical appearance. The greatest obstacle to that advance is racial segregation, either voluntary or involuntary. And yes, I have often forgot that some people support racial segregation because their professional survival depends on doing this

or because they honestly feel that this is the right way to fight racism or because they have had little or no experiences with black working-class folks, like the ones at County Kitchen #2.

Nevertheless, I agreed that the UUMUAC Executive Committee will monitor my public utterances as the spokesperson for MAC to make sure that I am more precise in my analysis of the issue of racism, I will also do this in memory of Brother Martin Luther King Jr., whose assassination catapulted me into being a representative of his essential vision; to wit, to create an Association of Congregation in which the content of our characters trumps the color of our skin or our racial ancestry.

Asset-Based Anti-Racism 3.0: What Do You Do With The White People?

by Dr. Kenneth Christiansen

A little more than half way into the recording of Dr. Mtangulizi Sanyika's presentation at Black Lives of UU Convening in New Orleans in March of 2017, the moderator asked the question: "You have given us a lot to think about in terms of structure and organizing domestically and how we might deploy our resources. But something that came up when you and I were preparing for this, about making sure we give white folks something to do, [laughter from the audience] in terms of this work."

What do you do with the white people? This was and is a really big question for movements that grew out of the emerging Black Nationalist traditions in the 1960s. Volumes could be written on the answers given by UUA proponents of these traditions in the 1960s and since then. This is an important investigation because it helps answer several big questions we are asking in 2018.

Was it really "White Supremacy" that split the UUA in 1967-71? Or was it other factors? What was and is the interplay between the goal of "self-determination" for the black community and the goal of achieving justice in society in relation to civil rights, mass incarceration, and the over-policing of African-Americans in our cities and towns? Is it all one big goal? Or have the various goals, each venerable in its own right, worked against each other? We really can't escape these questions if we want to make the UUA impact on the current racial situation in America as positive and useful as possible.

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In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League, many religious denominations, labor unions, and other groups struggled to work together for civil rights. In spite of great pain and many setbacks, progress was made in the areas of public accommodations, jobs, voting, and later, housing. Each accomplishment brought opposition from those in the larger society who supported and profited from the old Jim Crow system. The tenuous coalitions within the movement were always under intense pressure.

Outside the Civil Rights coalitions, Malcolm X disparaged both white and black leaders of the Civil Rights Movement for the inherent weakness of the non-violence they advocated. The American press, as is still customary, covered everything Malcolm said that was controversial and then, several years later, dropped him after his trip to Africa and ideological conversion to a position that aligned more with Dr. King's message.

Black Nationalist traditions had existed since the 1820s. These were intellectually sound expressions of the reality that black people were consistently let down by white people and needed to build their own resource base sufficiently to decide and accomplish their own goals. First and foremost, this included safety from the many threats posed by the white community.

By the mid to late 1960s Black Nationalist leaders, most notably Stokely Carmichael, were calling for Black Power. External entities including the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover sowed as many seeds of division as possible between and among the various black nationalist leaning groups and integrated, non-violent civil rights groups. The turmoil was deafening. For many black Americans, the "best harbor in the storm" was self-determination as inspired by Black Power, Black Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and, a uniquely UU manifestation, Black Humanism.

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In part it was a generational divide. Most older Unitarian Universalists both white and black were invested in the integrated non-violent Civil Rights Movement led by Dr. King. That movement had accomplished the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights law related to jobs and public accommodations and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Many all-white congregations had supported their pastors' participation in the march from Selma to Montgomery. Jobs and economic security were the next targets. Slowing the progress, die-hard segregationists used threats, violence, intimidation, foot-dragging legislation, and everything else they had in their arsenal. Life was difficult and the eventual outcomes were questionable.

Younger blacks saw the weaknesses of the Civil Rights Movement more than they saw its strengths. Dr. King was seen as reactionary, out of touch and weak. Non-violence as a strategy meant the acceptance of pain and not responding directly to the most abusive treatments. Integration meant dependence on white persons and institutions to do their part. Even though it had worked for Gandhi in India and had made some progress in the U.S., it didn't meet the immediate needs perceived in urban settings like Chicago and Los Angeles.

Coming out of this background, young UU blacks formed the Black Unitarians for Radical Reform in the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles in August of 1967. Members of this group formulated the demand for \$1,000,000 over four years for the work of the new, segregated Black Affairs Council that became the center of the controversies at the 1968 and 1969 General Assemblies and related UUA Board meetings.

The generational and strategic conflict within the community of black Unitarian Universalists over what to do with white people – exclude them or incorporate them – determined most of what happened after that point. I was touched by an incident recorded in the UUA film documentary of this period entitled *Wilderness Journey: The Struggle for Black Empowerment and Racial Justice within the Unitarian-Universalist Association*. Speaking into the camera 30+ years later, Dr. Glover Barnes, a prominent black Microbiologist living in the Seattle, Washington area and active Unitarian Universalist, reports that he was asked to write the General Assembly resolution in support of the Black Unitarian Universalist Caucus and Black Affairs Council (BUUC/BAC). He asked for assurances that BUUC/BAC would have no racial bars and was given them. He proceeded to write the resolution of support. After the resolution passed, he was told that the BUUC board nixed the part about racial bars, and that if his wife who was white wanted to be a member of BUUC, she had to declare herself black. He responded, "You're crazy. That will never happen."

I was so touched by this report that I looked up the obituaries for Dr. Barnes (2010) and his wife Miriam (2008). Both remained lifelong UUs. And both were extremely active in justice work apart from anything organized by the Unitarian Universalist Association.

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How far does Self-Determination go toward accomplishing change for a more just society? Dr. Mtangulizi Sanyika gave an impassioned argument for self-determination with which I strongly agree in his address to the UUA General Assembly in 2017.

"Self-determination and empowerment of people has been proven to be the anti-body against exploitation. Self-determination is a natural right. ...

"All religious denominations, churches, universities, institutions, all have affirmed self-determination, people's right to decide their own destiny. ...

“If you want a relationship with me, you must respect my right to control my own destiny and to determine it. ...

“You cannot on the one hand claim yourself to be a justice warrior... and at the same time deny the right of self-determination to people, not just on inside the UUA, but throughout the whole of this world and this society.

“That is what people are struggling for: self-determination and empowerment to be the finest human beings that they have been made to be.”

Arguably, self-determination has been a central goal of every group of people throughout history, especially the oppressed, and it should be strongly affirmed. Nonetheless, the choice between possible strategies to achieve self-determination, particularly as self-determination relates to justice in human relations, has often been quite contentious.

A key question faced repeatedly in history is, what kind of relationship between members of “my group” and members of “your group” will best serve the goal of self-determination with justice? Can we trust each other? Can we work for justice together as equal partners? Can the strength of empathy built by close relationships forged over time create enough empathy for this to be possible? Or will the interests of the more powerful group inevitably limit the self-determination of the weaker group?

The short answer is that self-determination alone does not bring about changes in society. It can bring very positive changes for the group that is determining its own path. The Kwanza culture and celebration developed by Maulana Karenga and others connected with the US organization (us, not them) is a case in point. Many black Americans and some white Americans have strongly benefited from the personal values inculcated through this cultural contribution.

Strangely (at first glance), Maulana Karenga and the US organization aligned themselves politically with Ronald Reagan and others far right of center on the national political scale. This wasn’t an uninformed decision. With the theory out there that all whites are alike, all embody what is presently called White Supremacy consciously or unconsciously, isn’t it most advantageous and safer to align with the more powerful? As Governor of California and later President, Ronald Reagan and his supporters were high on the list of most powerful.

Self-determination in this form helped bring an end to integrated efforts at social change. In particular, white liberals were driven out of the movement. The Black Nationalist view of a white liberal was perhaps put best by James Cone:

“He is still white to the core of his being. What he fails to realize is that there is no place for him in this war of survival. Blacks do not want his patronizing, condescending words of sympathy. They do not need his concern, his “love,” his money. It is that which dehumanizes; it is that which enslaves. Freedom is what happens to a man on the inside; it is what happens to a man’s being. It has nothing to do with voting, marching, picketing or rioting – though all may be manifestations of it....

“In this picture the liberal can find no place. His favorite question, when backed against the wall is ‘What can I do?’ One is tempted to reply, as Malcolm X did to the white girl who asked he same question, ‘Nothing.’”

It is hard to imagine Divide And Conquer ever having done a better job – not just by James Cone, but by an entire movement.

* * * * *

So what do you do with the white people when you have a Black Nationalist leaning movement that doesn’t want them aboard the same train? I was not part of the UUA in the 1960s (not until 2009). Nonetheless, during the late 1960s and following, I watched with much sadness as I saw the integrated, national focus on battles for Civil Rights legislation that was so strong in the mid-1960s morph into a blame and guilt movement. Living more and more in a separate

world, blacks asked whites to own their racism, to learn as much as they can about it, and to wait for further orders. The question asked "about making sure we give white folks something to do, in terms of this work" during the session of BLUU Convening in 2017 referenced at the beginning of this paper became ever more salient.

The answer given during the 2017 BLUU Convening session was for white allies to give support to black self-determination. That is certainly one answer. By itself, however, it doesn't cut it for making real changes in our society. Much larger coalitions of people working for change are required. They must be recruited and accepted from all backgrounds of race and class. Empathy needs to build and flow freely wherever concrete experiences of injustice exist. Together we need to put ourselves on the line for change.

The choice between viewing all parties ready and able to engage in the fight for positive change as potential assets, versus viewing white people as inherently handicapped by the full collective guilt of their race, should be a no brainer. Guilt paralyzes. The important question is, how can we use whatever powers we have to fight injustice?

There is a conundrum here. Fighting for justice is a legitimate exercise only insofar as victims of injustice help define the struggle. When the oppressed drop out of the conversation, justice is not served. When the powerful drop out of the struggle or are driven out, little or no change will be accomplished. The fight for justice requires all of the power and privilege available from everyone, with constant course correction by the experiences of the oppressed.

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One of the biggest signs of hope in 2018 is the Poor People Campaign and March To Washington organized by Rev. William Barbour and the Repairers Of The Breach. Like the Poor People's Campaign and March To Washington organized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1967-68, the 2018 campaign is building coalitions of very diverse people working for a common moral agenda in spite of all the ambiguities and difficulties that involves. Issues today include: "democracy and voting rights; poverty and economic justice; workers' rights; education; healthcare; environmental justice; immigrant rights and challenging xenophobia; criminal justice; LGBTQ rights; and war-mongering and the military." It has been heartening to see that many UUs have become involved in this campaign.

Another strong sign of hope very near and dear to my heart is the work of the UU Multiracial Unity Action Caucus, MAC for short. My goal as part of MAC is to bring about as much collaboration as possible between and among UUs from all racial backgrounds and social classes, working for justice in our larger society. It is one of few vehicles within the UUA positioned to help build a genuine spiritual basis for collaboration for justice in the larger society.

A third sign of hope is closely targeted, local, racially integrated Church Based Community Organizations. I spoke of ICARE, Jacksonville, FL's Interfaith Coalition for Action, Reconciliation and Empowerment, in my Asset-Based Anti-Racism 2.0 presentation in 2017. Issues are chosen in House Meetings in the 38 affiliated congregations each fall. Over half of the congregations are African-American and most if not all of the issues addressed citywide have come from that community. Having won on the issue of Civil Citations and Restorative Justice instead of arrests for youthful first time offenders, we are now working to end the practice of issuing Pedestrian Violation citations that cost \$65 and often result in the loss of a person's driver's license if they can't pay the fine. We have also received commitments from both the Sheriff and the States Attorney to build dashboards on their websites where information about arrests, complaints and other actions will be transparently presented. All of ICARE's work is completely integrated and, as needed, engages all the skill sets available from all members without any overlay of guilt. We have a common purpose in our actions.

Last but not least, my hope is with you, the reader of these words, to be empowered to give all you can for the causes of justice.

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVpP4cBGumM&t=186s> at minute 49:42.
2. Alicia McNary Forsey, Editor, *In Their Own Words: A Conversation With Participants in the Black Empowerment Movement Within the Unitarian Universalist Association*, (Starr King Seminary, January, 2001) p. 14.
3. Julie Kain, "A Timeline of the Black Empowerment Controversy in American Unitarian Universalism," found between pages 7 and 11 in the Alicia McNary Forsey work sited above.
4. Ron Cordes, documentary film producer, *Wilderness Journey: The Struggle for Black Empowerment and Racial Justice within the Unitarian-Universalist Association* at minutes 23:22 – 24:40 and 25:03 – 26:25. This video was published on YouTube by the UUA Leadership Institute on April 25, 2017, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDsD3mEtwjM>
5. Glover Barnes' obituary is at <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/seattletimes/obituary.aspx?n=glover-w-barnes&pid=138315456>; Miriam Barnes obituary is at <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/seattletimes/obituary.aspx?page=lifestory&pid=102970929>
6. <https://smallscreen.uua.org/videos/ga2017-303-dr-sanyika-presentation> at minutes 11:32 – 12:58
7. Scot Brown, *Fighting For US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2003) p. 93.
8. James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1997) pp 27-28. Original edition Harper & Row, 1969.
9. <https://www.breachrepairers.org/>
10. <https://www.breachrepairers.org/moralagenda>

The Poor Peoples Campaign—As it Looked in Illinois

By Allan Lindrup

I traveled the roughly 200 miles to Springfield, IL the first four Mondays of the Poor People's Campaign (PPC) in Illinois, prepared to do non-violent civil disobedience each week and in so doing risk arrest. I did so representing UUs in general and Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (the fiscal agent for UUMUAC) in particular. I am a member of the First Unitarian Society of Chicago.

We normally had about 200 participants in our public actions. With the exception of May 21, when the Fight for \$15 brought many young people of color out for direct action, the number of us risking arrest ranged from 7 to 12. I was the only UU among those risking arrest in Illinois. Surprising. none of the tri-leaders of the PPC in IL risked arrest in any of the four Mondays that I participated in as of this writing. It wasn't until the 4th Monday that a clergy person risked arrest, which then was a white, female Lutheran pastor. With the exception of the May 21 action, those risking arrest were almost all white. We apparently were in a position of privilege where we did not have a lot to lose by being arrested.

The first Monday the Springfield police just gave us potential arrestees misdemeanor tickets. The next two Monday none of those risking arrest were either arrested or ticketed. On June 4th nine of us were arrested (while two physically disabled individuals were ticketed) and spent about 5 hours in the Sangamon County Jail being processed, before our attorney (from the National Lawyers Guild) bailed us out. We got out of jail about 10 p.m. that day and the three vehicles taking folks back to the Chicago area generally got us home between 1:30 and 2 a.m. The June 4th arrestees have court dates in August.

The PPC in Illinois generated little coverage on broadcast media. The main cover was in social media. The 40 day campaign ends with a mass march and rally in Chicago, with a focus on homelessness, on June 18, the evening before I leave for the UUA's General Assembly.

The Battle Cry of Freedom: Remembering, around the 155th Anniversary, the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1863



Friday Aug. 3—Sunday, Aug. 5, 2018

Gettysburg, PA. at the National Monument

We invite all those committed to Multiracial Unity and/or Multiracial Unitarian Universalism to join us for a weekend celebration of the Victory, in 1863, with a special emphasis on the Battle of the Little Round Top, where 300 Union troops, led by the Maine 20th Volunteers, held off almost 1,000 Confederate Troops seeking to outflank the Union forces and thus defeat them, which could have led to a Confederate victory at Gettysburg, the conquest of Washington, D.C. and a possible Confederate win of the Civil War.

On Friday, August 3 we will travel to Gettysburg.

On Saturday, August 4, we will meet with our fellow celebrants, at 9 a.m., just inside the doors of the Battlefield Visitor Center. That morning and early afternoon, we will partake of programs and tours offered by the national park service. We will have a group lunch at the Center. At 3 p.m. we will take the tour to Cemetery Ridge and then walk to the Maine 20th Volunteer marker for a 45 min. program of prayer, a sermon, the singing of the Battle Hymn of the Republic, and then lay a wreath. That evening we will take part in the Taps program, to honor those who died and killed to destroy slavery-based white supremacy. We then return to town for dinner and informal discussions.

On Sunday, August 5 we will attend service at the UU Church of Gettysburg and, if we have time, visit the monument of Confederate General James Longstreet, to reflect on his role and that of the rank and file Confederate soldiers duped by racism into fighting for a system which was destroying thousands of poor white folks back home. We then leave for our respective homes.

Sponsored by the UU Multiracial Unity Action Caucus (UUMUAC)

For more information, or to let us know you are coming, contact"

Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell, spokesperson for UUMUAC

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Revised Report to: Michigan League of Women Voters

From: Bob. Davidow, Professor of Law (retired), George Mason University

Subject: Response to Gerrymandering

Date: 25 July 2016

Note: While the article is somewhat technical in its legalese and references, it is an important one in understanding one of the neo-racist methods used to control a multiracial populace of workers, students, and professionals. Gerrymandering after 1972 was used mainly in the South to dilute the black vote, on the one hand, and to reward pro-corporate African-American politicians, on the other. That is to say, these politicians were given gerrymandered districts consisting of all black or predominantly all black constituencies. Today gerrymandering is used to control the voting process in multiracial/predominantly black/predominantly white Democrat areas in most Republican controlled states. Gerrymandering along with voter suppressions scams in general was the main cause of the Republican Party's present monopoly over the Federal government at the present time. Thus does, in my opinion, neo-racism hurts the democratic process, this, more so, than President Vladimir Putin's alleged interference in our recent national election. Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell, Spokesperson, UUMUAC

I. Introduction

When I learned that the Michigan League of Women Voters was interested in an independent redistricting commission for Michigan to combat gerrymandering, I assumed that the way to proceed would be to adopt a state constitutional amendment providing for such a redistricting commission along the lines of those adopted in Arizona [1] and California, [2] for example. Such a commission became constitutionally possible for federal redistricting (as well as state redistricting) when, in June of 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Arizona's version of a redistricting commission. [3] I began to have doubts, however, when I read a report on California's experience. As it turns out, the process of selection of the members of the commission is very complicated, and it took two years for California to select the members of the commission. [4] The end result of the commission's work, though certainly an improvement over the previous redistricting, was still subject to some criticism, and, indeed, was challenged in several lawsuits. [5] So I began to think of other possibilities. My conclusion is that the only way to eliminate gerrymandering is to adopt some form of proportional representation, which obviates the necessity of drawing lines between districts. [6] This may sound radical, but if we are going to amend the state constitution, we might as well adopt a plan that will fully address the problem. As we shall see, at least one form of proportional representation can substantially reduce the role of money, reduce the influence of party elites, and encourage greater public

participation in the election process. My conclusion is not affected by the existence of independent redistricting commissions in other states in which the selection procedures are not as complex as California's. [7]

II. The California Scheme: Selection of Members of the Commission

To succeed, a redistricting a commission cannot be overly partisan. So the challenge is not technological; rather it the difficulty of reducing partisanship to a minimum. The California Citizens Redistricting Commission consists of 14 members: five from the largest party (Democratic), five from the next largest party (Republican), and four members of neither party. An independent Applicant Review Panel screens candidates and reduces the candidate pool to 60: 20 Democrats, 20 Republicans, and 20 of neither party. After this, each of the four legislative leaders – the Speaker of the Assembly, the Assembly Minority Floor Leader, the Senate President Pro Tempore, and the Senate Minority Floor Leader—can exercise something akin to peremptory challenges in jury selection and thus remove 2 candidates from each of the three 20-candidate groups. Next, eight members are selected by lot from the remaining 36 candidates. Finally, these eight select the remaining six members. [8] It's no wonder that it took two years to select the commission, involving a process that cost over \$4 million dollars. [9]

III. The Alternatives: Forms of Proportional Representation

Proportional representation, as the name suggests, attempts more accurately to reflect the wishes of the electorate. There are two main types: the list system and the single transferable vote, with a number of variations within each category. [10] The simplest is probably the closed list system. Each party prepares a fixed list of candidates. The number of elected candidates from each party is proportional to the percentage of votes received by each party. For example, if party A receives 30% of the popular vote in a 100-member legislative body, the first 30 persons on A's list are elected. With single transferable vote, the voter is presented with the names of individual candidates, whom the voter ranks by placing a number opposite each candidate. If a voter's first choice lacks sufficient votes to be elected, the voter's second choice is counted, and if that candidate fails to be elected, the voter's third choice is counted, and so forth until all seats in the legislature have been filled. This description is an over-simplification of the systems in that, for example, it doesn't deal with either the number of votes needed for election or the way to deal with votes in excess of those needed for election, as will be discussed below.

IV. Single Transferable Vote

David Farrell, of University College Dublin, an expert in the field of voting procedures, reviewed a draft of my proposal utilizing the list system, set forth below. He found it interesting, but “given the experience voters in US elections have of voting for candidates and given too the general feature of US politics as candidate-centred there is a risk that what [I] propose may be ‘culturally’ out of step.” [11] He then suggested that I consider the single transferable vote as it is utilized in the Australian Senate, which he thought more comparable to the U.S. than to the Irish Parliament. [12]

Each of the six states in Australia has 12 senators with staggered terms. (Six are elected every 3 years.) Until a recent change in the election law, [13] voters had the following choice: They could either rank every candidate on the ballot (“below the line”), or they could “vote above the line” for a predetermined list of candidates from a specific party. [14] Thus, this system seemingly has features of both the list method and the single transferable vote. Apart from complexity, my concern in trying to use the single transferable vote in state elections in Michigan is that it would be difficult for voters to know all the candidates running for the 38 Senate seats and 110 House seats. Without this knowledge, of course, it would be hard for a voter to intelligently rank the candidates. After all, the number of Michigan senators is over three times the number of Senators from each of the Australian states. Consider a voter in Ironwood in the far western part of the Upper Peninsula. Such a voter, located approximately 600 miles from Detroit, [15] would be expected to know the candidates from Southeastern Michigan. It would be possible to create separate constituencies within the state, but it would then be necessary to draw boundary lines, which could then lead back to the possibility of gerrymandering, the very problem which caused me to think of proportional representation in the first place.

V. My Proposal for a List System for Michigan

This report focuses on state elections in Michigan. In light of the above, I have concluded that the list system, requiring voters to vote for a party, is best for elections in Michigan.

Each party would be allocated a number of seats in proportion to the votes cast for it. To determine the number of votes needed for election (the quota), the total number of votes cast would be divided by 38 (Senate) or 110 (House). (This is known as the Hare quota.) [16] The number of votes cast for each party

would then be divided by this quota, yielding an initial calculation of the number of seats allocated to each party. Additional seats would be allocated by using the largest remainder method. Under this method, an additional seat would be awarded to the party that had the highest number of remaining votes. If there were still unallocated seats, the party with the next highest number of votes remaining would receive an additional vote. This process would be continued until there were no more unallocated seats.[17]

Because this would be a list system, the actual persons elected to the House or Senate would be the persons at the top of each party's list who, in number, would correspond to the number of seats to which the party would be entitled. Determination of the composition of the list, as well as the order on each list, could be left to each party. I propose, however, the following scheme: Persons wishing to be elected to the House or Senate would be required to collect a certain number of signatures supporting their candidacies, for example, 500 (the number of signatures now required for candidates for the Michigan House seeking to have their names appear on the ballot). In addition to collecting these signatures, they might be required to pledge to accept the party platform (or certain core values), to be determined at a party convention. The principles set forth in the platform would have to be somewhat general; otherwise, there would be an undue proliferation of small parties. [18] Those not willing to support the platform would have to join or form another party. Those satisfying the signature and pledging requirements would have their names placed on the list. The order of placement would then be determined by lot, but each party's list, of course, would not contain more than the total number of legislators in each house.

VI. In Defense of the Lot

We know of current uses of the lot: for example, in jury selection [19] and in the assignment of appellate judges to panels in some jurisdictions. [20] (I am not totally unbiased toward the use of the lot; I have chosen to use it in my proposal for judicial selection.) [21] The lot has an ancient lineage; it was the method by which most government officials were selected in Athens in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.E. [22] It was not considered incompatible with democracy; on the contrary, it was considered an essential ingredient of democracy. [23]

In the present context, the lot would reduce the power of the party elites. Although David Farrell has said that “[o]f all the systems [the single transferable vote] goes furthest toward removing the power of party elites to determine which of their candidates are elected,” [24] I submit that the use of the lot in the determination of the order of candidates on the list would do more to remove the power of the elites. Individual citizens who had enough support to obtain the necessary number of signatures would not have to seek the support of the rich, the powerful, and the well-connected to have a chance of election. Public participation in the process would likely increase. Also, use of the lot would reduce the role of money in the election process. Each party would still need to publicize its platform, but each individual candidate would not have to raise a great deal of money to secure the necessary signatures of support and hence a place on the list. [25]

VII. Criticisms of the List System

One of the criticisms of the list system is that there is a “lack of constituency representation.” [26] As a formal matter, this is true. One way to mitigate the problem would be to encourage as many persons as possible from all across the state to qualify for inclusion on a party list. This would ensure that each area now represented by an individual legislator would have a chance of having someone from that area elected to the legislature. [27] It should be noted, however, that the point of having a legislator from a particular area would be to ensure that local problems would be understood by the legislature.

With single-member, winner-take-all elections, one may be assured of having a representative from one’s own local district. If one happens to be a member of a party other than that of the person receiving the majority of the votes, however, the fact that the elected official comes from one’s own district may not be very helpful. The problem is worse if, because of gerrymandering, one’s party has fewer than one-third of the members of a legislative body even though that party overall has received 50% or more of the statewide vote, for example.

Another issue, one already alluded to in section V, is the risk of party proliferation. [28] It’s hard in the abstract to judge the extent to which the electorate would respond by creating a large numbers of parties. The present culture seemingly is against it, [29] but it’s difficult to know the extent to which a change in structure would produce a change in culture. It may be, for example, that the Green Party, the Libertarian Party, and the Natural Law Party would be able to elect one or more candidates to the Michigan House. It’s not clear that this would be an entirely negative result.

Regarding the danger of factionalism, one has only to look at the present U.S. Congress to see that factionalism can exist in a supposedly two-party system.

VIII. A Word About Congressional Districts

This report has focused on the state legislature. There is no constitutional impediment to my proposal's being used in the election of Michigan's Congressional delegation. After all, the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court case broadly affirmed the states' ability to exercise the power to "prescribe . . . the Times, Places, and Manner of holding Elections for . . . Representatives" through delegation of that power to the people, acting through state initiatives. [30]

IX. Conclusion

The selection of an independent redistricting commission might be a complex and expensive process, as suggested by the California experience. Even if a less complex method of selection of a redistricting commission were used, [31] the commission's work would not entirely eliminate gerrymandering and would not prevent legal challenges.

Some sort of proportional representation therefore seems more appropriate. Of the two main types of proportional representation, the list system seems to me to be the better choice. It is certainly simpler than what amounts to a hybrid list/single transferable vote system used in the Australian Senate, for example. Simplicity is especially important when one is trying to convince the citizenry to adopt what may appear to many to be a radically different system of electing members of the legislature. Even the simple, unadorned single transferable vote would be problematic in Michigan because it would require people to know something about candidates from all parts of the state. Individual candidates would have to spend considerable sums of money to educate the electorate, thus giving an advantage to the more affluent.

My proposal would eliminate gerrymandering; there would be no district lines to be drawn. It would not be affected by demographic changes. Moreover, relying as it does on the lot to determine the order of candidates on the list, the proposed system would substantially reduce (if not eliminate) the power of party elites and would reduce the role of money in the election process. Also, it would make election to the legislature feasible for those who today would realistically conclude that there was no possibility of their winning election to the Michigan House or Senate. It would thus encourage citizens to view holding elective office in the same way they view, or should view, service on a jury – as a civic duty. [32]

There are 7 pages of footnotes. Individuals who would like to see these should write to uusj@sbcglobal.net and they will be sent to the requester.

