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MAC Arrow

Unitarian Universalist
Multiracial Unity Action Council
(UUMUAC)

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

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The Mission Statement

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

The Vision Statement

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

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“An Embarrassment”

a review by Dick Burkhardt of

Report of the Commission on Institutional Change (COIC)

of the UUA (2020)

This report raises important issues of racial justice, things we can all agree upon, in the context of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) of congregations. It even asks for engagement with conflicts, rather than shutting them down, even engagement with “gadflies”, implying that recent incidents could have been handled far better. Yet I found the report repetitious and an embarrassment overall, permeated by in-your-face anti-white bias, blaming and shaming, unworthy of the balance and compassion one would expect of a liberal religious denomination. The report never acknowledges its roots in the controversial language and doctrines of Critical Race Theory (CRT) or addresses how these are subverting our core values – the Seven UU Principles.

Here’s what the report says about the last few years: “Religious professionals of color struggle to maintain their jobs, and many end up deciding to leave or being asked to leave. Efforts to focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion are met with derision, fake news, and shoddy research masquerading as truth.” ([Preface](#), p ix) If things in UU congregations are so bad, why would any People of Color (POC) stay, let alone check us out? Ditto for non-POC activists for racial justice.

And how could it have been kept so well hidden? As an active General Assembly participant for many years, I would have expected to hear tidbits from a vast rumor mill. It seems more likely that these statements come from a small number of incidents, and, out-of-fairness, I’d like to hear the other side. For example it’s possible that the ministers in question ran into trouble, not because of alleged racism or white supremacy, but because of mis-education and poor mentorship. What are the real lessons here?

Few UUs know much about CRT. I certainly didn’t until certain incidents and highly racialized language told me that some research was in order. I quickly discovered that generic descriptions of CRT were hiding some very irrational doctrines I found in Robin DiAngelo’s “White Fragility” and Charles Mills’ “The Racial Contract” (both highly influential in UU circles, see my Amazon reviews). I realized that CRT does not have solid foundations in the social sciences, but is a collection of ideologies, often based on speculation, prejudice, and sophistry, grounded in the subjectivity of post-modern philosophy.

For a prescient UU critique, check out the 1999 lecture on “Why Anti-Racism Will Fail” by the senior African American UU minister and scholar Rev Thandeka, plus her more recent writings, at [revthandeka.org](#). For hard hitting analyses of CRT, see the articles and videos based on in-depth research by mathematician and religious scholar James Lindsay at [newdiscourses.com](#). The irony is that the CRT doctrines most popular among UUs (“white fragility” and “white supremacy culture”) undermine key UU principles, especially the first (“inherent worth and dignity of every person”), fourth (“free and responsible search for truth and meaning”), and fifth (“right of conscience and the use of the democratic process”).

As to the first UU principle, DiAngelo asserts, without evidence, that every non-POC is automatically a racist or white supremacist to some degree, hence a morally inferior person, hence a person of demonstrably less “inherent worth and dignity” That is, whiteness is an “original sin” to use the language of Rev Joseph Barndt, who once did “anti-racist” trainings for the UUA. Put another way, DiAngelo demands that all non-POC adopt a strong, but very negative, “white identity”. But my principle identity is to be a “global citizen”, to transcend racial labels. Likewise, for a wide variety of good reasons, most people globally will resist being squeezed into racial boxes by CRT doctrines. Labeling such people as “fragile” is the DiAngelo version of blaming and shaming.

Similarly, Charles Mills simply assumes that "white supremacy" is a valid description for the political systems of the modern world. Yet this assertion of anti-white bias, when combined with esoteric philosophical speculations instead of rigorous scholarship grounded in the social sciences, makes his polemic worthless. His unstated but implicit goal is to guilt-trip everyone of European genetic and cultural ancestry by cherry picking various oppressions and atrocities and alleging that the participants were fundamentally motivated by doctrines of racial superiority, not economic, religious, or other cultural factors.

As to the fourth and fifth principles, CRT severely restricts the "free and responsible search for truth" and the "right of conscience", and actively opposes the "democratic process" in favor of more "authoritarian" methods. For example, if a POC adherent of CRT claims that their feelings were hurt by what most UUs would consider to be normal "open and honest dialogue", there is still a presumption of white guilt / black innocence, justifying a UU form of excommunication. This what happened to Rev. Todd Eklof when he distributed his book "The Gadfly Papers" at the 2019 General Assembly. He was ultimately de-fellowshipped, but his congregation defied the UUA and voted to retain him. Due process was ignored and ethics thrown to wind in what became a classic witch hunt. Good ends ("racial justice", agreed to by all) were used to justify dishonest and unethical means (escalating violations of UU principles, the very subjects of Eklof's book).

Even this COIC report advises "engagement with a conflict" rather than "shutting it down", which was also backed by a 55% vote to admit a Responsive Resolution at the 2020 UUA General Assembly. This Assembly was the occasion of another attack against a dissident, this time a senior African American minister, a follower of MLK, who disagrees with CRT. His virtual "Exhibit Hall" booth was removed, demonstrating that this is more about adherence to the CRT than to "race".

Elias Ortega, an author of this report, who also heads the Meadville Lombard Seminary, tries to defend CRT by claiming that its critics do not take into account that it "operates within a domain of knowledge, philosophy, that operates with a different logic than social science". I would say that, to the contrary, that to the extent that philosophy evades the standard rules of evidence and logical reasoning, then it is not a domain of "knowledge", but of intriguing speculation at best and of harmful bias, prejudice, and propaganda at worst. The latter is too often the case here, so it should be treated as such by the UU seminaries.

The COIC report acknowledges that "Guilt is not an effective agent for change". Yet the claim that "shame is never the goal of anti-racism work" (p 90) is ludicrous. In fact the word "white" is used over and over again in derogatory ways, diverting attention from neoliberal capitalism and classism. A prime example: so-called "white privilege" is actually mostly about class privilege, with "whiteness" providing an extra advantage in certain interactions, such as with the police in many locations, but becoming a disadvantage in others, such as where diversity goals are a priority for certain jobs or education. And don't forget that people in the non-POC underclass have always been subject to harsh discrimination and viscous name-calling, despite their supposed privilege. Plus, the non-POC working class has suffered far greater economic losses in recent decades than the POC working class, simply because the non-POC had far more to lose while the POC got more help. The esteemed academic Rev Thandeka, an African American POC, has a good exposition on all of this.

Then it only gets worse: the phrase "white supremacy" as applied to US society in general, or to UUs in particular, is a blazing "macroaggression" due to the associations of that phrase with: (1) white nationalist / racist hate groups, and (2) the popular definition: "the belief that white people are racially superior to others and should therefore dominate". According to recent University of Virginia study only 4% of US adults could be categorized as white nationalists / supremacists by close associates, with that number certainly one or two orders of magnitude less among UUs. In other words, the claim that the UUA presides over a "white supremacy culture" is ludicrous beyond belief.

So what is going on here? Well, precisely because of powerful potential of the phrase "white supremacy" to guilt trip many non-POC, a way had to be found to make it more credible. So followers of CRT searched for a redefinition that would be more plausible. The fact that a strong majority of non-POC, and even some POC, would still be insulted was considered acceptable collateral damage, along with the boost this would give to the cultural wars and consequent political gridlock. The problem was that no one could come up with a satisfactory redefinition (the proposal by Tema Okun was judged a failure by UU Professor Anne L. Schneider, for example). But the lure of this power play was just too strong, so promoters of CRT simply claimed that they had a good definition that was not so obviously false or insulting.

There is a lot of vague talk about "accountability" in the COIC report. "Accountable to Whom?" is never answered explicitly, but some of us have figured it out. It means "accountable" to a small number of acolytes of CRT, especially POC but also their CRT "white allies". When I questioned a young minister about the top-down imposition of CRT by the UUA, this is what I heard: That this small group was the only "authentic voice" on such matters so that traditional democratic accountability (to the member congregations of the UUA) does not apply.

The first big problem is that this small group may claim to represent all POC, but it does not, not even all elite POC. And when it comes to working class and elite POC, the gap is almost as great as between working class and elite non-POC. See the new book "White Working Class – Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America" by Joan Williams. Working class people tend to be skeptical of obscure ideologies and of elite power plays, being far more attuned to practical results.

The second big problem is that there has been no two-year process of congregational discussion and UUA bylaw changes to validate minority rule on particular subjects. The third big problem would be deciding on the membership of this small group and the scope of its power. And it wasn't just Eklof who crashed headlong into the wall of a new orthodoxy. Two years before UUA President Peter Morales, himself a well-regarded Latinx POC, resigned during the hiring controversy, along with others who took legal action, to escape an onslaught of racial slurs. The COIC issued a sub-report just on this controversy, a report which made no pretense of objectivity, serving as "Exhibit A" for the "Embarrassment".

Just like Eklof faced a kangaroo court of bias and refused to cooperate, so Morales and company refused to answer questions from an inquisition of bias. In both cases it appears that the inquisitors were so committed to CRT that they were blind to their double-standards. Things became so toxic that the UUA had great difficulty finding volunteers for the position of Moderator (Chair of the Board, the most powerful position in the UUA). It is noteworthy that this report revives the recommended governance reforms from a 1993 report, that would effectively combine the positions of President and Moderator. This reform seems long overdue on the surface, but it faces rapidly deepening distrust fueled by the current move toward authoritarian governance, as covertly manipulated by CRT

In fact a CRT "coup" of the hierarchy by stealth is now an accomplished fact, yet the GA delegates are not yet fully onboard, nor are the vast majority of congregants, many of whom have only a vague notion of CRT or what it has done to the UUA. Instead of getting bogged down in the cultural wars, the UUA needs to dig itself out of this morass by looking to the future: The existential threats posed by escalating climate catastrophes, deterioration of ecosystems and resources, global economic inequality, and the neo-fascist governance bred by desperation.

Review of an aspect of the report from the Commission on Institutional Change

by Allan Palley

Summary

In the report called "Widening the Circle of Concern" from the Commission on Institutional Change the claim is made that White Supremacy in UU culture harms Black people, Indigenous people and people of color (BIPOC); and the report implies that this harm is substantial and widespread. This document reviews the evidence given in the report in support of that claim. The conclusions are as follows: Given that the commissioners assumed that the claim was true before the study began, the lack of detailed descriptions of methodology in recruiting participants and soliciting testimony, the significant avenues for the commissioners to influence the type of participants and the testimony they gave, the inability to investigate the accuracy of the reports of harm, the non-representativeness of the sample and the substantial lack of clear well defined summary statistics to back up the claim, the information given in the report provides only weak uncertain evidence in support of the claim of substantial and widespread harm to BIPOC by UUs. Note that the reviewer is not asserting that the claim is false. He is asserting that it has not been established by the information in the report. However, it does provide reasonable evidence that there is some degree of problems in this area.

In addition, the report provides some evidence that white people and BIPOC, on average, see the racism issue in UUism somewhat differently. If this is right, I believe that the only way that UUism can thrive as a multiracial multicultural organization is to work toward a meeting of the minds across identity groups on problems that might arise at individual churches. Therefore, I believe that while UUism should recognize and celebrate our diversity it is more important that our policies and practices facilitate the coming together of groups of various identities to a common identity based on a commitment to our principles. The report suggests that white racism is so strong that policies to support and strengthen separate racial and cultural identities are more important than policies to support a common identity. I believe that the data on racism presented in the report does not support this conclusion.

To receive a copy of Allan Palley's full review of the COIC report, send your request to him at apall255@gmail.com

New UU Theology

by Frank Casper—July 4, 2020

(reprinted with permission from the Fifth Principle Project website)

It is important before reading this piece that the reader know that it is largely about theology, and specifically about theology at the UUA as presented at this year's General Assembly. I am writing it because it is something I have always been interested in and believe to be important. I believe this because of the one essential lesson that I learned from my graduate education at BU School of Theology. Whatever else theology may be about, it is first and foremost always about power, who has it, the terms in which it is exercised, and why. To put it another way, every theology has a politics.

But before I get into the message of GA, I want first to praise the technical team. This was the first all virtual GA in the history of the event, and from a technological perspective, it was first rate. What with thousands in attendance with differing credentials attending multiple simultaneous sessions, all recorded, and apart from the occasional glitch, to be expected with any task as complex as this clearly was, the technical team did a magnificent job. This will no doubt now be a crucial tool for the future of such gatherings. Hat's off to those responsible.

Consistent General Assembly Message

I will also say that the theme of the entire program and most of the workshops were consistent throughout. The GA management team could hardly have done a better job of coordinating the message with the programs they chose. Having said that, it is the message with which I have concerns.

Despite a valiant effort to convey the laudable message that UUism will strive to lift up minority and historically marginalized voices, I could not help but be somewhat taken aback by the strident sense of grievance and retribution in this year's GA. The opening speech delivered by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz on the first full day combined with the many programs following that concerned themselves with the history of oppression, and the overwhelmingly negative Action of Immediate Witness (AIW), particularly the AIW-A (attached), "[Addressing 400 Years of White Supremacist Colonialism](#)," painted a picture of the United States, and its political, religious, and economic institutions as an agenda of avaricious and murderous white people protecting and advancing the interests of white supremacy. While our national history is definitely scarred, especially with the twin sins of slavery and racism, this overwhelmingly negative viewpoint fails to provide a foundation upon which we can unite and move forward to address these important issues. Which brings me to the single most important business event of this GA.

This condemnatory and unforgiving view of our country was highlighted in the centerpiece of the whole program, the report from the Commission on Institutional Change. The report was presented by its author, Dr. Elias Ortega, president of Meadville Lombard, and the other commission members. It is a document that every UU should read and understand, because it is the first and official effort of the UUA to create a sweeping redefinition of the core values of Unitarian Universalism. It is nothing less than the outlines of a new theology, which is distinct but related to another effort that can be found in books like "The Turning Point," edited by Rev. Frederic Muir, and in essays like "Congregational Polity and the Myth of Congregational Autonomy" by Sue Phillips.

Committee on Institutional Change Report

The COIC report is grounded in Critical Race Theory (1) that spawned the distinct but related ideas of intersectionality and white supremacy culture. Indeed, soon after the presentation of the report, Dr. Ortega issued a 5-page essay preemptively defending CRT from its critics, particularly from those he identifies as liberals. The report, and its litany of recommendations, is guided by a simple principle, that the more one's voice has been marginalized, the more one's voice will be "centered" or amplified. But that principle can also legitimately be read in the obverse, that is, in terms of the theme of the GA described in the above paragraph, that white cisgendered people are a perennial problem and stubborn obstacles to progress toward social justice. In other words, if one is

white and cisgendered, we will only be heard in so far as you are willing to admit your role in the perpetuation of white supremacy, to be followed by committing ourselves to a program of perennial therapy, ever struggling against our nature in the constant search for unconscious bias. This, I think, is the new meaning of the 4th principle for the white and cisgendered. As one UU FB post said,

"I am a white ally. I have done decades of conscious work to undo my societally engrained racism. I still have racist thoughts or reactions. You have to understand we've had these ideas taught to us our entire lives. But that is not an excuse. I treat it similar to overcoming addiction and breaking the cycle of unhealthy thinking. It's not easy. It requires consistent vigilance. And I still make mistakes. I'm lucky to have a wonderful community that will lovingly point out my mistakes. Sometimes they're egregious errors and it hurts my ego deeply. It's uncomfortable. But change is rarely comfortable."

The related and parallel effort from Frederic Muir and others, and echoed in a recent article by UUA President Susan Frederick-Gray, concerns itself with is called the three sins of Unitarian Universalism, excessive individualism, exceptionalism, and what is termed "a certain allergy to authority." We suffer, in other words, from too much intellectual freedom. We think we can believe whatever we want and are free from any requirement of responsibility toward our faith community for the views we form. And we take pride in this, too much pride, in fact. We think too much of ourselves for our intellectual freedoms. And that lends itself to what they call that "allergy to authority." We tend toward rebellion on grounds of conscience. "These three corrupting narratives", writes Rev. Muir, "have shaped our story." They form what he calls the iChurch, and they are a barrier to the Beloved Community. Muir and others believe that in order save UUism, we need to abandon our tradition of individually governed congregations and subject ourselves to a centralized religious authority.

It is reasonable to suspect that the meaning of the Beloved Community is outlined in the COIC report. This can be seen in the report itself in the change being made to the meaning of the 4th principle. I quote:

"Freedom of belief promotes diversity of thought in our communities and fuels the responsible search for truth and meaning that leads toward beloved community. This freedom encourages exploration and experimentation, lending creativity and innovation to our communities. Yet over the decades since the consolidation of Unitarians and Universalists, an overemphasis on individual exploration and experience as the primary, if not sole center of religious experience developed. This centering of the individual decenters the communal as a locus of theological exploration. This centering of the individual decenters the communal as a locus of theological exploration. One of the unintended consequences has been the atomized individualism of the search for truth and meaning without accountability to its impact in the communities...."

Limits on Intellectual Freedom

In other words, there will be, or at least, the leadership of the UUA wants there to be, some kind of authority imposing limits on intellectual freedom. I think it reasonable to surmise that this may be the motive behind the push for the 8th principle, and its requirement of "accountability" for our actions. None of our other principles includes such a requirement – they are goals, not commandments. There is little if any effort so far that I'm aware

of to define what "accountability" will mean, but I think there are clues in my remarks here.

In this context I want to draw attention to one particular workshop I attended, "Building Communities to Counter White Nationalism/White Power", presented by Rev. Chris Rothbauer and Dr. Sharon Welsh. The title alone was intriguing as I had myself done a good deal of research into the nature and intent of this movement. And while Dr. Welsh presented a decent description of this movement, Rev. Rothbauer went on to turn the presentation into something I hadn't expected. It turns out that the way to counter what we all now tend to subsume under the word alt-right is to put limits on free speech. Indeed, according to Rev. Rothbauer, and a book he tells us he's deeply indebted to for the development of his views, "The Case Against Free Speech", by P.E. Moskowitz, the problem with free speech is that it protects hate speech. It is imperative that hate speech be shut down, and in order to do that, we have to put limits somehow on free speech. In one of his later slides, Rev. Rothbauer writes:

"If we must give a platform and listen to every idea, there are no limits to the ideologies we must tolerate in the name of free speech."

The remainder of his presentation attempts to present an alternative to tolerating noxious ideas and hate speech. He turns to what he calls "relational ethics", and his presentation of what that means tracks well with the meaning Beloved Community that Rev. Muir finds the three sins of UUism to be an obstacle to. The first bullet item of the Relational Ethics slide reads:

"We have the right to say things, but we are responsible to the people we are in relationship with."

He says in the next bullet that this is the meaning of our fifth principle. His last bullet states:

"We don't just tolerate hate speech because we think we have to but we seek to prevent hate speech from harming our loved ones, refuse to provide it platform, and seek to reconcile members of white nationalists groups to the larger community as well as prevent others from being recruited."

One wonders what kind of policy this would be in practice within our faith community until one remembers that we have a superlative example in the case of Rev. Dr. Todd Eklof. It was, in fact, hate speech that he was accused of and eventually, because he would not capitulate to that interpretation of his book and apologize for his alleged sins, he was publicly censured and then unfellowshipped. And if you are wondering how Dr. Eklof's book, firmly grounded as it is in religious humanism and the 7 principles that emerged from it, could be regarded as the kind of hate speech we see coming from white nationalists, then read one of the resources Rev. Rothbauer refers to in the supporting materials for his presentation, Andrew J. Mackay, "A Unitarian Universalist Pipeline to the Right?", (2019) It is a short essay which tells the reader to be very wary of UU's who talk about "postmodernism", "political correctness", "identity politics", or "Critical Race Theory" in a negative way, for they may be sliding toward an embrace of the alt-right. Dr. Eklof criticizes all of these ideas, ergo, he must have gone over to the dark side. He must be an alt-right minister. The UUA

must be protected from such criticism. Dr. Eklof had to go.

New UUism

This is not the Unitarian Universalism I've known and loved for nearly 4 decades. To me it seems clear that the trend is to be far less hospital to legitimate differences of viewpoint, particularly around matters pertaining to race and racism. This is a new UUism. I don't know what it's becoming, but UU now suggests to me "Used to be Unitarian."

Two UUMUAC Board members submitted reviews on Ibram Kendi's book *How To Be An Antiracist*. Those reviews, which have different takes on the book, follow. The review that was submitted first is presented first.

"Engaging Narrative, Bold Perspectives, Tortured Dogmas"

a 3 star review by Dick Burkhardt of

How To Be an Antiracist

By Ibram Kendi (2019)

This book reads like the compelling narrative "The Autobiography of Malcom X" except punctuated by bursts of pithy but sometimes dubious doctrines of race. That is, Kendi's aim is to spread his ideology to a wide audience by making it more palatable through vivid stories and confessions from his own life. This book is in the tradition of Critical Race Theory (CRT), especially in its guilt-tripping way of branding most people as "racists", either for not being sufficiently "antiracist" or for favoring assimilation (tarring most immigrants and educators). Yet, on the plus side, Kendi boldly attacks the anti-white doctrines of other popular CRT ideologies, such as those of Robin Di-Angelo and Charles Mills. In brief, Kendi blames continued racism on "failed racial ideologies" (p 201) which advise "going after white people instead of racist power" (p 131), saying that "only policy change helps groups" (p 210).

Unfortunately, Kendi's dogmatism hit me in the face right up front. He proclaims that "there is no neutrality in the racism struggle" (p 9). That is, you're either an antiracist or you're a racist. And later: "The only way to remedy racist discrimination is anti-racist discrimination" (p 19). To me this feels like a fundamentalist preacher proclaiming, "Believe in Jesus or You're Going to Hell". Besides this extreme dualism, a basic problem is that according to the simplest definition of racism ("prejudice or discrimination based on race") a person could easily be a non-racist (or a racist for that matter) without being an activist for or against racism. Also this might differ according to the "race" in question.

Kendi tries to solve this dilemma by redefining "racism" (a common practice in CRT): Belief "in a racial hierarchy" of economic and political power that needs to be maintained. A key problem with this "racial hierarchy" concept is that there are often confounding factors, such as degraded class status that may erase race advantages, as for the white Southern / Appalachian underclass for much of US history.

This is how Kendi shifts from personal racism to the politics and policies of structural racism. But in real life many people could recognize the existence of some kind of racial hierarchy without being an activist for or against it. Others might recognize that the purported hierarchy is only partly about race and that issues of justice, including racial equity, might be better served by approaching them through the lens of economics or class rather than race. That is, identity politics is a high risk business, especially for minorities who might be scapegoated in less prosperous or less equal times.

On another point of craziness, Kendi claims that he uses "racism" only as a descriptive word, that it is only a pejorative term in the minds of white supremacists like Richard Spencer (p 9), when this entire volume repeats constantly the theme "antiracism = good, racism = bad".

Personally I would suggest an alternative approach, to avoid the resentments and guilt-tripping that often come from labeling, and to generate more positive activism, based on good will of the kind inspired by MLK. Example: Instead of talking about "race", talk about "diversity", referring to relevant group characteristics such as ethnic, class, or similar status, sometimes combined with other factors such as language, religion, cultural interests, etc. Thus instead of defeating a presumed "racial hierarchy", the goal would be a suitable blend of more equal opportunities and outcomes for people of diverse backgrounds. The particular definitions of "opportunity", "outcome", and "blend" would depend on the historical socio-economic context of the diversity in question. Note that using this framework, one could study the caste system in India, treatment of indigenous peoples almost everywhere, and many other systems throughout world history which elude the US / European concept of race yet raise many of the same issues of equity.

Escaping the narrow lens of race, activists may realize that often the safest way, sometimes the only politically feasible way, is to design programs that will benefit all those who are downtrodden, knowing that oppressed racial groups will benefit the most. Explicit "Anti-racist" policies, like school busing, may produce backlash and fail to yield racial equity unless carefully thought through, evaluated, and modified as necessary, taking into account the current economics, politics, and other non-racial factors.

Yet another note of absurdity is when Kendi claims that "assimilationist ideas are racist ideas" (p 29). It's not exactly a secret that the vast majority of immigrants, or would-be immigrants, to the US want to assimilate, or if it's too hard for them, they certainly want their children to assimilate. Why? Because they are practical – they don't want their descendants to end up as second or third class citizens. That is, they want equal opportunity, the kind that is possible with the basics of assimilation, such as a good education, expecting that with hard work this will eventually lead to more equal outcomes.

So what's wrong with Kendi? He has the crazy notion that people would only want to assimilate, or help others assimilate, because they believe the "society of the assimilated" is racially superior and should dominate others, e.g., peopled by white supremacists. To see just how insulting this is, consider that two of my daughters (fully assimilated though bi-ethnic) have taught English as a Second Language (ESL) to very appreciative students. Even my wife and I have taught ESL to some senior Vietnamese ladies who had trouble shopping, riding the bus, etc. Even Kendi himself pursued his studies all the way to a Ph.D., an esteemed goal of assimilation. To use his language, I'd conclude that it would *be racist not to support the basics of assimilation*. Of course, our society can accommodate a wide variety of cultural tastes and differences, especially in large urban areas, so this is not what assimilation is about. It's fundamentally about education, citizenship, and understanding cultural norms.

One of our great advocates for assimilation is the historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr: "The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society". Why? He observes that "tribal antagonisms have caused more dominating, fearing, hating, killing than any other single cause since time began". "It is ironic that what the multiculturalists began as a celebration of diversity ends as a grim crusade for conformity". By assimilating, the US minorities have transformed that larger society, none more so than the African Americans. "A telling indicator is the rising rate of intermarriage across ethnic, religious, even racial lines", continuously creating a "unique American identity". In fact, issues of "race" will decline naturally over time unless CRT elites actively obstruct assimilation.

I wish that Kendi would pay more attention to his own confessions: "Intensely gullible, I was liable to believe anything, a believer more than a thinker. Racist ideas love believers, not thinkers" (p 122). Pretty accurate in explaining his dogmatism and irrational notions on assimilation. Except he finally did realize that black people had power and could be racist too (p 140). But in his chapter on Failure he relapses into narrow mindedness, blaming

“failed racial ideologies” (p 201) instead of studying history from multiple viewpoints, not just race. He even attacks abolitionists and reconstructionists for not meeting his exacting standards for contemporary antiracism.

Kendi’s notion of capitalism and racism being joined at the hip is equally absurd. Just look at China, which functions as a different version of a capitalist society. He shows no understanding of the importance of allies among the ruling elites – think FDR. I also discovered that personally at world social forums where I organized programs on global democracy, and third world activists told me how much it meant to them to have allies from the “belly of the beast” (= the US empire). Likewise Kendi shows no understanding of the levels of activism: (1) activities that help individuals (soup kitchens, etc) (2) witness / protests (3) policy development, lobbying, politicking, etc. For example, “only policy change helps groups” (p 210) is a useful reminder (level 3) but ignores that helping individuals and protests (levels 1 &2) can be a foundation for policy change.

Kendi is certainly on track when he says “To fight for mental and moral change as *prerequisite* for policy change” ...makes “it almost impossible for antiracist power to succeed” (p 208). Yet he fails to identify CRT as a prime example of such failure. The focus on “transforming open-minded people” (p 212) and self-critique when this fails (p 214) is also on the right track, instead of blaming “their hate rather than our impatient and alienating hate of them” (p 213). He continues his winning streak with “Blame policy, not people, for societal problems” (p 218). : “My research kept pointing me to the same answer: The source of racist ideas was not ignorance and hate but self-interest.” (p230). Yet even this comes up short, because he does not bring up the overall political economy, neo-liberal capitalism itself, and the existential challenges we face from limits-to-growth and ecological catastrophes.

A Review of Ibram Kendi’s *How To Be An Antiracist* By Dr. Kenneth Christiansen

I recently finished reading Kendi’s *How To Be An Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019). I really liked the book. That includes the format of mixing personal narrative with propositional statements. Why did I like it?

1) Kendi has a clear definition of antiracism that makes sense to me. He identifies antiracism as working to change racist policies – racist policies in government; racist policies in corporations; racist policies anywhere. He sees racist ideas as following racist policies rather than leading racist policies. This doesn’t rule out learning as much as you can about racist ideas – Kendi’s major work *Stamped From The Beginning* was a thorough history of racist ideas in the United States. But where do racist ideas come from? He finds that source in the self-interest of policy makers including both persons who directly make laws and institutional policies and persons with economic power to protect.

2) Kendi’s message contrasts directly with the penchant in many contemporary anti-racism training programs to look for racism only in the white psyche. He acknowledges racist ideas and actions in the black community throughout the book. This includes his own disparaging of blacks in his prize-winning high school Martin Luther King Day speech; E. Franklin Frazier’s sociological writings which dominated sociological thought about race from the early 1930s through the mid 1960s; the misguided widespread support in the black community for the War On Drugs which eventually included the 26 out of 38 members of the Black Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives voting for the 1994 anti-crime legislation that led to mass incarceration; and many other examples. Kendi explicitly refutes the argument that black people can’t be racist because black people don’t have any power.

3) Kendi affirms everyone's basic humanity. This is where the question of assimilation gets a little sticky. Many who advocate for assimilation from positions of power see themselves as normal, and those whom they want to assimilate as inferior. This was true of Oscar Romero's 1966 book, *The Culture Of Poverty*, which argued that the culture of people living in poverty locked them into an inferior position. It was also true of the monumental 1944 Carnegie Foundation study by Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, where prejudice and discrimination are seen as creating diminished people which in turn justifies more prejudice and discrimination. Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 Johnson Administration report, *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*, drew heavily from E. Franklin Frazier's 1955 book, *Black Bourgeoise*, to make the case that fixing the broken Negro family should be a top governmental priority – all the government needed to do for black America. Kendi sees these and similar arguments for assimilation as racist because of their view of the other as inferior.

4) Kendi says that everyone is either racist or antiracist. No middle ground. This seems too harsh. Then I remember a slogan that was very common in the 1960s: "If you aren't part of the solution, you must be part of the problem." Looking up the latter quote on Google, a writer in the *Guardian* identifies this as "a misquotation of Eldridge Cleaver. The correct (full) quote is: 'There is no more neutrality in the world. You either have to be part of the solution, or you're going to be part of the problem.'" Another writer in the *Guardian* says "Eldridge Cleaver was hardly being original. 'Those who are not for us are against us' is in the Bible - and had probably been said before that." As for the readers of this review in the UUMUAC *Arrow*, UUMUAC is an antiracist organization. You are part of it.

5) A prominent reviewer asserts that Kendi "found his true and useful self in his current battle against 'white supremacy.'" That sounds a lot like Critical Race Theory's battle against "white supremacy culture." I utilized the search feature in Kindle to find the offending passages. I learned that Kendi's book uses the term "white supremacy" five times. Four are in places where he is explaining a historical situation. The fifth use of the term occurred when he was in college and was explaining a premature theory he held at the time to his roommate. In short, the battle in *How To Be An Antiracist* is against racist policies. And, to Kendi, racist policies needing change can cut against anyone from any background including Caucasians. His message to blacks, to whites, to everyone is that we need to identify specific racist policies and then work hard and work together to get them changed.

6) The argumentation in the book is paired with narrative and analysis of Kendi's own experience. To me, this is the book's greatest strength – and its greatest weakness. Without the narrative, the analysis would be empty. With the narrative, the analysis has to deal with the messiness of life. Reviewers looking for a clear logical argument won't find it. On the other hand, logical argument is overrated if it doesn't take the messiness of life into account.

Neo-Racism

by Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell

Connotatively, "neo-racism" is defined as "the type of racism which came into being after the victories of the civil rights movement," (Finley C. Campbell).

Denotatively, "neo-racism" means "neo- "new, recent," and "racism" means "l. The belief that a particular race is superior to others [;] 2. Discrimination or prejudice based on race," (The American Heritage dic.tion.ar.y). When combined together the term means a "new" way of proving "that a particular race is superior to others" with the aim of creating a new way of continuing "discrimination or prejudice based on race."

Conceptually, we have two definitions: One developed by one Étienne Balibar's term for the prevalent new modality of racism he calls 'racism without race', which emerged in the 1970s. Whereas racism used to be premised on the idea of race as biological heredity, now in the postcolonial era it tends to be focused on 'cultural differences,' (Oxford Reference).

The other conception is the one which I prefer: the term refers to "the ideology which asserts that the best way to maintain an imperialistic racial hierarchy is to admit some members of an oppressed racial group into that hierarchy while shifting some members of that hierarchy into the ranks of the oppressed, based on criteria of intelligence, genetic propensity, cultural development, inherent criminality, etc.," (Dr. P. V. N. Acharya, former member, the International Committee Against Racism and former Research Specialist, the Department of Oncology, the University of Wisconsin - Madison Campus).

The most interesting aspect of the New Racism is that it involves elites from the people of color communities, especially the African Americans, to help maintain the separation, the oppression, and the racist exploitation of whites and black workers, and the super-exploitation of unemployed people of color. Now, in the past, many of us have focused on the participation of minorities, especially African Americans, in the neo-racist movement and its concomitant system. For, their participation as first-class citizens has given legitimacy to post-segregation racism and has helped to disarm emotionally and ideologically many anti-racist people, especially whites.

A Note About the Great Restructuring Plan of the UUAC, and Native Roots By Rev. Wesley Hromatko

The organization of the Iroquois Confederacy was taken into consideration in the development of the US Constitution, particularly by Benjamin Franklin. Another source, of course, was our UUAC congregationalism rooted in the Bible which tells the story of "tribal" bands similar to Native Americans. We are technically an association not a denomination.

The structure is similar in many ways to the original UUAC with Independent local groups that meet with counsels and then meet in a large counsel.

Native American groups were different in many respects and so not all followed similar patterns but very often those who in English were called chiefs were those who counted what the different people and groups thought about an issue. They didn't have authority in the same way it is being conceived today. They knew about traditions but didn't order people about.

Interestingly enough many Native Americans including the Iroquois were matrilineal and even matriarchal. What the men did depended on decisions in the women's societies. The Dakota in some ways felt that Canada with Queen Victoria sounded more like them.

In other words pressing for a streamlined organization that has more direct authority over local congregations is an attack on our traditional structure which is most similar to the Iroquois Confederacy. In other words, the model as I understand it so far would be even more corporate and similar to non profit corporations that make the principal officer directly responsive to the board unlike the old model that

made the president chosen by all. If adopted restructuring would make the structure more European and less Native American in all senses. Native leaders didn't have the same sort of power imagined.

Now, I do not have a detailed reading of the proposals yet, but the Native American structure would oppose the idea that we live in a totally white structured organization.

IS A FAR LEFT'S ANTI-RACISM MODEL ANTISEMITIC?

by David Cycleback

"All models are wrong, but some are useful"— George E.P. Box

"People view the world through their theories"— Thomas Kuhn

Recently, a reason dawned on me behind why some people believe antisemitism is a problem within some American and British progressive movements. A— I didn't say *the*, as I know people on the left with different definitions— standard definition amongst many progressives and progressive movements use is that **racism = prejudice + power**. As these groups define Jews as part of the white privileged, or 'white supremacy' (their term for white America), that means that the adherents to that definition are saying antisemitism isn't racism. Or, if they say antisemitism is racism, they've undercut their own definition.

Perhaps they say that antisemitism is not racism but a different form of bigotry— and that is a fair topic for debate. How to define race, what is race and the question of if Jews are a race are interesting questions. Many scholars, the United Nations and the World Jewish Congress, define antisemitism as a type of racism, and many textbooks and international laws define racism as including both race and ethnicity. Anne Frank House states that race is an artificial cultural construct and, thus, Jews are not a race, but that the classification of Jews as a race and discrimination based on that is racism.

A Jewish friend said the question of if Jews are a race or an ethnicity is a matter of semantics, and joked "When you find out which we are, let me know." This all says that the world, societies, structures, concepts and ethnic oppression are far more complex and nuanced than a simple equation or definition can define or encompass.

Racial categories are an artificial and arbitrary social not biological or genetic construct, and people on all parts of the political spectrum have long drawn the lines to suit their political ideologies and agendas. Depending on the prevailing or particular and often political and ideological sentiments, Jews, Japanese, Latinos, Irish, Greeks and Arabs have fallen in and out of the "white" category.

Armenians have alternately been classified by US courts as "yellow" and "white." Though if you ask Armenians themselves, they usually will not label themselves as a color, as that is not how they, and many other non-Westerners, define race.

I attended a lecture on Islam by two Somali immigrants. One said they didn't like it when Americans called them black "because that's not how Somalis view people."

There is no denying that the particular American artificial color codes constructs have been socially and psychologically influential in American history and used and designed for ill, including being made to justify slavery and Jim Crow Laws. Though, as this article shows, many Jews say artificial color codes and stereotyping that have been decried are now being used by the far left to pigeon-hole and oppress them. They point out the hypocrisy and that two wrongs don't make a right.

A problem with power as a necessary and required element in the definition is that Jews have been persecuted (as a race— at least that's how the Nazis defined them and how White Supremacists define them— and, according to Anne Frank House that is thus racism) in major part because of the perception they had power.

In the 1800s to early 1900s many elite universities— including Harvard, Yale, Colombia, Cornell, McGill and Toronto—, had quotas on Jewish students because they were too successful. Physics Nobel Prize winner Richard Feynman could not get into Colombia University as an undergraduate because of quotas on Jews, and National Medal of Science winner Norbert Wiener was rejected for a professorship at Harvard due to like quota. Interestingly, Feynman was secular and identified himself as Jewish only ethnically and not religiously.

The Nazis and White Supremacists defined/define Jews as both having power/privilege and being an inferior people/race. This all points out that there are many ways, types and directions of discrimination, racism, oppression and persecution.

Another common point that has often been brought up is that it is incorrect, or at the very least problematic, to generalize across all members about their privilege and power. There, of course, have been many poor and powerless Jews and Jewish communities throughout history, and a homeless opioid-addicted white man in rural West Virginia will likely question the existence of his privilege and power in the United States.

Rabbi Michael Lerner says the 'privileged' categorization is a stereotype. "This argument leaves out the hundreds of thousands of Jews who have not 'made it' the way their Manhattan brothers and sisters may have." (Lerner 2019)

Further, equating "Jews" with "power and privilege"— as the 'racism = privilege + power' equation does— is one of the age-old stereotypes and prejudices long used against Jews. It should be disturbing that some groups and movements on today's far-left use and play into this same trope that has been and are used by antisemitic movements on the far right, including the KKK and Neo-Nazis. The definition defines Jews, as an entire group, as oppressors.

A complaint from many Jews is that some progressive movements and people trivialize or dismiss the significance of antisemitism, and many Jews say that some progressive movements are antisemitic (Flayton 2019). That has been an accusation of British Labour and the BDS (Boycot, Divest and Sanction) movement. A Jewish congregant I know opined there is much antisemitism in the progressive movements, and said "We have been listening to this White Privilege stuff for 5000 years."

Brooklyn College history professor KC Johnson said, "If Jews are seen as 'white' (which, in this permutation of progressivism, they are), and 'whites' cannot be subjected to racist attacks, then anti-semitism becomes a trivial concern." (Johnson in Dunst 2018)

Robert Walker, director of Hasbara Fellowships Canada, says that left activists on university campuses often dismiss the opinions of Jews, including on issues of discrimination because Jews are cataloged as privileged (Lungen 2018).

Walker says: "Our fellows have seen more instances where a pro-Israel side is dismissed in a summary manner, merely because many of our students are Jews, (and are) therefore seen to be privileged and therefore excluded from consideration or mainstream dialogue . . . Their opinion is often dismissed for being Jewish or pro-Israel and seen as part of the privileged white bourgeoisie . . . People are dismissed simply for who they are. We're seeing this more and more." (Walker in Lungen 2018)

To the average person, automatically dismissing a person's opinion simply because of their race or ethnicity is racism.

Rabbi Michael Lerner says many Jews, including he, do not consider Jews white, and consider categorizing Jews as white an act of oppression. He says some on the far left categorizing Jews as white is an attempt to paint them not as a historically marginalized and persecuted people with their own unique culture and history, but a part of the generic oppressive power structure. (Lerner 2019)

Lerner writes "Jews are not white, and those who claim we are and exclude our history and literature from their newly emerging multicultural canon are our oppressors . . . Jews can only be deemed 'white' if there is massive amnesia on the part of non-Jews about the monumental history of anti-Semitism." (Lerner 2019)

I was talking with an English Jewish woman in London. As an American curious about her perspective, I asked her if she thought there was antisemitism in the British Labour Party, and she said "Yes, in my opinion, and generally in the left."

I said, "The American far left— or some on the far left, I don't wish to generalize— use the same stereotypes about Jews as the far right."

Her response was, "Yes, exactly."

I attended a racial justice group where one ardent supporter of the White Supremacy Culture model (a common name for this racism = prejudice + power' anti-racism model) did not want the group to read an article by a Jewish professor "because he is white." She wanted a vetter to prevent articles from such voices from even reaching group members. I am not generalizing about the group, as two group members said they thought the article was worthy of discussing, if in a different forum.

Whatever one's definitions for the terms, it should be obvious the rhetorical odiousness of the telling Auschwitz survivors in Pittsburgh or Charleston that they are part of "White Supremacy" and part of the "racist oppression." Following that up by then telling those survivors that any offense they take is "white fragility" is nothing short of gaslighting.

A Jewish woman who objected to being called a member of the "White Supremacy" by people on the far left explained, "It is not a matter of intellectually debating the issue. It simply is offensive."

I know people on the left, progressives, people of color and Jews with a variety of opinions and views and considerations, including on this topic. Thus, I am not painting with a broad brush or generalizing. I know many progressives and people of color who do not subscribe to that definition of racism and its anti-racism theory.

In fact, the far left's anti-racism, anti-oppression models and ideological language do not represent the beliefs or language of the vast majority of the minority groups the advocates are supposedly speaking for. The theories and terms are fringe including within the particular minority groups. The definition of racism also is counter to common usage and understanding of the term, and, dare I say, common sense. (Monk 2018) (Thinknow 2019)(Douthat 2020)

However, as with any theory or model, a key is how the 'racism = prejudice + power' definition is considered.

The recently deceased Physics Nobel Prize winner and philosopher of science Phillip Anderson was an antireductionist and was for complexity in modeling. He correctly saw that reality, and any area within it, was far too complex and nuanced to be reduced to a simple theory or model, and said that "more is different." (Horgan 2020).

All models or theories are artificial, arbitrary, myopic and, thus, false representations of reality. However, when used and considered as one of many different lenses to view things, a theory can be useful and offer insight. Science uses multiple and often competing theories to examine an area, each theory limited but together giving a fuller, if still incomplete, picture.

The anti-racism "privilege + prejudice = power" definition and theory is an interesting and useful lens to view things through. However, as with any theory, it is simplistic and narrow and must be just one of many different lenses which to look at the complexity of racism and oppression. Making it the only lens— and making it dogma and ideology, and saying that no other lenses, theories or viewpoints can be expressed or used — is false and foolish.

An atheist friend and colleague of mine once dismissed the Hindus because they "believe in thousands of gods." I said that Hindus believe in one god, but know that God is too big and complex to be understood or approached through one deity, or lens, and that they take none of their many deities literally.

Race, racism, oppression, marginalization and bigotry are incredibly complex and multifaceted areas, full of gray areas, diversity, contradictions and diverse personal life experiences that cannot be defined much less solved by one model, theory or equation. Jews demonstrate that one can both be privileged and marginalized, that oppression and persecution can involve punching both down and punching up, and that someone can both be oppressed and oppress. Defining any race, ethnicity or large group as monolithically "all this" or "all that" is simplistic and a type of simplistic, and false, stereotyping that one would think anti-racism is supposedly aspiring to overcome.

If the 'racism = privilege + power' and White Supremacy Culture theory is dogmatically used as the sole or key definition and lens through which to view the world, social structures and people—as some and some groups on the far left do—, it is clearly antisemitic, using dangerous and deceptive stereotypes, characterizations and theories about Jews.

Ironically, if antisemitism is a form of racism (and I will let you answer that question for yourself), that would make that particular anti-racism model racist.

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“A Welcome Wake-Up Call”

a review by Dick Burkhardt of

White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America

By Joan Williams (2020)

This straight-to-the-point little book really lays it on the line. Williams admonishes us in the “professional managerial elite” to show a lot more respect for the working class of the USA (roughly, those without college degrees), especially the “white” working class. We certainly don’t need to be like them, just as they don’t want to be like us. Yet without mutual respect, they vote for Trump out of desperation, and we’re all worse off.

As Williams puts it, “Deriding ‘political correctness’ becomes a way for less-privilege whites to express their fury at the snobbery of the more-privileged whites”. And the bottom line is “the hidden injuries of class have now become visible in politics so polarized that our democracy is now threatened” (p 4).

Then she takes on the tough questions, such as “Why does the working class resent the poor and professionals but admire the rich?” “Why don’t they just move to where the jobs are or go to college?” “Why are they sexist and racist?” “Why don’t they appreciate government programs?”

The differences are not something arcane or mysterious. In fact, they are hidden in plain sight. To be successful in today’s working class requires, well, hard, nose-to-the-grindstone kind of work. This is not the meaningful work of the “cultural creatives”. Working people admire values like honesty, responsibility, integrity, stability, self-discipline, solidarity, and being industrious, caring, clean, and orderly.

Their self-worth comes from their sense of morality and being part of a tight-knit community, not from the merit of their professional accomplishments. A typical big mistake at a class reunion is to ask, “What do you do?”, instead of asking about their family (p 31). They despise those who are perceived as dishonest, irresponsible, lazy, or into “hard-living”. They tend to view the “self-actualization” of the elites as irresponsible self-indulgence, their “flexibility” as risky, and their “conflict avoidance” as weakness.

Today their fundamental anxiety is that “opportunities for a settled life are slipping away” (p 19). This is the phenomenon that not long ago was billed as the “shrinking middle class” because the “settled life” sought by the working class was simply a modest version of the American dream. Of course, this dream has now faded even for many with college degrees, supposedly in the middle class, but often earning less than plumbers and other in-demand workers. For the working class sticking with their birth community provides a safety net when they need a helping hand, especially given the stigma and bureaucracy of many government programs.

Williams also points out that working class disdain for government programs is complicated. For example, they accept unemployment or disability benefits because those are obviously work related and job losses or injuries are typically outside worker control. But “welfare” programs like food stamps and TANF are viewed as propping up moral failures (laziness, broken families) rather than compensating for the scarcity of good jobs. Meanwhile they don’t see the massive subsidies for the rich which are channeled through tax expenditures, like tax credits and deductions (out-of-sight: out-of-mind). So she suggests a variety of ways to make these hidden subsidies far more visible.

Still the working class attitudes portrayed by Williams assume that they are like serfs in a system they have no control over. This, of course, is exactly what big money wants. But it also means that there is a huge potential for organizing for systemic change, instead of the rightwing diversions they are fed, like abortion or guns or scapegoating immigrants or blacks. Williams herself compared working whites to working blacks and discovered that blacks are not so judgmental about the poor, with an attitude of “there but for the

grace of God go I" (p 23), thus more accepting of government programs. In addition, working class blacks vote with the liberal elites despite being more socially conservative because, as a minority, they know they need allies.

This suggests a big opening for progressive elites: (1) Acknowledge that working class whites have been hit harder than any other group by 40 years of escalating inequality. (2) Support programs with tangible benefits that rebuild the old alliance with the white working class. In fact this is exactly what Bernie Sanders wants to do, and what the Green New Deal would do. Williams' point is that classism and cluelessness is standing in the way, fomenting the cultural wars and workers' perception of condescending elitism. A perfect example is elite language like "white privilege" and "white supremacy", which routinely contradicts the lived experience of today's white working class. In any case, it's really mostly about class, not race, with "whiteness" playing a decreasing role as diversification and assimilation continue apace.

Yet Williams is less forthright about the self-interest that is also standing in the way: That elites will have to give up a significant portion of their material privileges so that resources can be shifted to the needs of working people. Fortunately there is a vast amount of waste to tap into: (1) humongous bailouts of Wall Street, (2) massive tax expenditures on the affluent, (3) an extravagant health care system, (4) outlandish military spending, for starters.