



For the unity of the light and dark skinned people of the world

Calling for Dialogue on the Direction of the UUA

Petition to the UUA Board of Trustees

Sponsored by the UU Multi-Racial Unity Action Council (www.UUMUAC.org)

Preamble: Censure vs Dialogue

The censuring of Rev. Todd Eklof in the summer of 2019 by the UU Ministers Association (UUMA) brought into stark relief the inability of the UUA to uphold the First, Fourth, and Fifth UU Principles when confronted by Eklof's challenge to engage in open and honest dialogue on difficult issues of race. These include doctrines whose divisive language of "whiteness" has inflamed the identity politics of the cultural wars. This alienation has hardened the red state / blue state political polarization and undermined Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of *Multi-Racial Unity* - that black and white will "sit down together at the table of brotherhood".

Rev. Eklof distributed his new book "The Gadfly Papers" at the General Assembly in Spokane, where he is the UU minister, in the spirit of the *First Principle* on "The inherent worth and dignity of each person", the *Fourth Principle* on "The free and responsible search for truth and meaning" and the *Fifth Principle* on "The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process...". Instead of welcoming this prophetic call to dialogue, misrepresentations of the book proliferated. Those who have actually read it are still left wondering what all the fuss was about. The "Right Relationship Team", charged with promoting ethical principles and practices, was not up to the task (read "A Self-Confessed *White Supremacy Culture*" by Anne Schneider).

All of this was a direct consequence of the failure of the UUA to address long-standing criticisms of its "anti-racism, anti-oppression" policies. Already in 1999, Rev. Thandeka articulated a persuasive critique of doctrines that are antithetical to our Seven Principles (https://revthandeka.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Why_Anti-Racism_Will_Fail.pdf). The Eklof Controversy threatens lasting damage to the UUA, echoing the black power disruptions of 50 years ago, instead of renewing a strong focus on our common humanity to meet the immense global challenges looming ahead. *Chaos or Community?*

Text of the Petition

We call on the UUA to organize sessions or forums at the next General Assembly, and subsequently in regional and local gatherings, to initiate open and honest dialogue on the direction of the UUA: This means deep listening, not call outs, especially about contentious issues and language of class, culture, race, and identity and their social, economic, and political impacts. The UUA's current direction has been more reflexive than reflective as it gets drawn into the polarization of an increasingly dysfunctional economic and political system.

To understand what is happening and to find common ground, we must face squarely the global traumas bearing down on us: Escalating inequality is global. Escalating climate disasters are global. Ecological and economic stresses are mounting everywhere, and many forecasts are grim. Is humanity up to the task?

Reversion to tribal instincts and violence has been attracting headlines in the US. Globally, this is mirrored by rebellion, civil conflict, warfare, nationalism, and authoritarian regimes in less stable regions. We need to see ourselves from historical perspectives – how societies under stress can self-destruct in the worst case, or engage their traumas constructively given a common purpose.

We suggest that instead of self-righteous moralizing over social and racial troubles, UUUs should utilize anthropological, historical, sociological, psychological, and public health perspectives. Concentrate on both facts and trends, both current and historical, discarding ideologies. Treat issues of race, class, and identity more like symptoms than drivers, taking into account different viewpoints and roles even within identity groups.

Goals of the Forums

The *first goal*: To better understand the anxieties faced by societies historically, cumulating in the US as an extreme example amid a sea of escalating stresses. That is, to understand how regimes rise and fall, and what we are up against today, including how social divisions aggravate economic and ecological challenges. How has the UUA responded to these stresses, for good or bad?

The *second goal*: To discuss ways forward – strategies of survival that will elevate the common concerns of humanity above the battles of the moment. Examples of new directions: (1) the eco-spirituality of climate change and threatened ecosystems and resources (2) the citizen-spirituality of more democratic and resilient governance on a global scale, (3) the justice-spirituality of more equitable social and economic systems.

The *third goal*: To plot out possible first steps, including asking how the UUA is or is not living up to its Seven Principles. In addition we must take a hard look at the larger mission and organization of the Unitarian-Universalism from historical and global perspectives. Why is the UUA not leading a global interfaith movement to pursue common ground on the escalating earth-centered crises? What would be involved if we decided to pursue a particular new direction while facing increasing demands for transformative change, especially in a period of stagnating membership, declining RE enrollment, and increasing anxiety?

Name (print / signature): _____ Email: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Church/Org: _____ Comments: _____

Online signatures: www.ipetitions.com/petition/dialogue-on-the-direction-of-the-UUA, or

Mail signature sheets to: UUMUAC, 1448 E. 52nd St., Box 267, Chicago, IL 60615.

