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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.”

Mailing Address: UUMUAC

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

Editor’s email: uusj@sbcglobal.net

The Mission Statement

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

We also seek to defend our UU Principles against those who seek to undermine them.

The Vision Statement

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

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

Note: Articles reflect their author's views. They do not necessarily reflect a position taken by the UUMUAC Board of Directors

UUA Rejects Unitarian Universalism

Rev. Richard Trudeau

UUMUAC has been denied permission to purchase a booth in the Exhibit Hall at this year's General Assembly.

In his letter of May 5, the Executive Vice-President of the UUA, Carey McDonald, wrote:

"The denial of UUMUAC's booth is based both on past non-covenantal behavior, as well as the incompatibility of UUMUAC's mission with the goal of the General Assembly event. While UUMUAC members are able to attend GA as participants, the event will not provide a paid platform to advocate against the core values or commitments of the UUA. The denial will remain in effect as long as UUMUAC engages in non-covenantal behavior and retains its mission in its current form."

He offered two reasons for the denial: (1) our "non-covenantal behavior" and (2) our mission.

At a Zoom meeting later the same day, I got a glimpse of what Mr. McDonald means by (1). At one point I said "Yes!!" quite loudly. Mr. McDonald interrupted the conversation to chide me for my "non-covenantal behavior." I had caused "harm" by raising my voice in his presence. Like many younger people today, Mr. McDonald (in his 30s) experiences spirited argument, debate—in fact, any disagreement at all—as injurious.

I think Mr. McDonald is misinterpreting his feelings. When someone disagrees with me, I feel uncomfortable, but I have outgrown the childish interpretation of that discomfort as harm. I have been taught, and learned from my own experience, that disagreement is an opportunity for both parties to move closer to the truth by discussing their differences.

What about (2)? UUMUAC's mission is to use the Seven UU Principles to promote multiracial unity. How could that possibly be incompatible with "the goal of the General Assembly event" or "the core values or commitments of the UUA"? The answer, again, involves disagreement. UUMUAC shares the

UUA's stated goal of fighting racism, but disagrees on the means. Mr. McDonald's intolerance of any disagreement has caused him to confuse a difference in strategy with an incompatibility of goals.

When the UUA was formed in 1961, it began its self-description with these words (emphasis mine):

"The members of the Unitarian Universalist Association, dedicated to the principles of a free faith, unite in seeking ... to strengthen one another in a **free and disciplined search for truth** as the foundation of our religious fellowship...."

The search for truth requires discussion. By outlawing discussion, Mr. McDonald is betraying the most fundamental value of the UU approach to religion. It is not that UUMUAC's behavior or mission are incompatible with UUism, but rather that *the behavior of the UUA* is incompatible with UUism. The UUA is rejecting what its own founding document declared to be "the foundation of our religious fellowship."

Context for UUA Letter to UUMUAC by Dick Burkhart

The letter below was sent by UUA Executive Vice President Carey McDonald on May 5, 2022 to UUMUAC 30 minutes prior to a zoom meeting of UUMUAC (represented by Dick Burkhart, Allan Lindrup, and Richard Trudeau) with the UUA General Assembly Planning Committee (represented by LaTonya Richardson, Thomas Earthman, and others, plus Carey McDonald).

This letter was in response to repeated inquiries by UUMUAC as to the reasons for the rejection of the UUMUAC Exhibit Hall at the General Assembly in 2020 and for discussions with those involved to seek a resolution of this issue toward the resumption of the UUMUAC Exhibit Hall for 2022 and beyond. There had been several miscommunications (especially lost emails) over the last two years until successful arrangements for this UUMUAC - GAPC meeting were finally successful.

The UUMUAC inquiries had included requests for an appeal of the rejection to a suitable hearing body.

The Letter

I apologize for my delayed response to your request for a review of our previous denial of UUMUAC's application for a booth at General Assembly. To recap - we did receive and review your grievance about our decision, and we affirmed the path our staff chose to take. When we invited you into conversation at the time of your initial denial in 2020, we did not receive any response from you to an invitation to meet with LaTonya Richardson for further discussion. Since you seeking to meet with members of the GA Planning Committee now, I want to provide you with the following points of clarity prior to that conversation.

The decision by UUA staff to deny UUMUAC a booth or any other sponsorship or speaking opportunity, and the subsequent response to your grievance, are final. There is no appeal or hearing process. These are decisions well within the purview of UUA staff roles and UUA policies.

The denial of UUMUAC's booth is based both on past non-covenantal behavior, as well as the incompatibility of UUMUAC's mission with the goal of the General Assembly event. While UUMUAC members are able to attend GA as participants, the event will not provide a paid platform to advocate against the core values or commitments of the UUA. The denial will remain in effect as long as UUMUAC engages in non-covenantal behavior and retains its mission in its current form.

Your conversation with the GAPC may address how to create agreements around behavior by UUMUAC members at General Assembly (online or in person), since all participants must abide by the GA Covenant. However, it is not a forum to discuss your desire for a booth or other public platform at GA, because that question has already been answered.

The UUA considers the question of any booth or public platform for UUMUAC to be closed. You will not receive any response from any of our staff or volunteers to these inquiries going forward.

Some Comments on the Letter:

(1) The refusal of an appeal or hearing without clear explanation is obviously a severe violation of standard due process, as it permits arbitrary refusals. Note that Carey's letter claims that this decision is "well within the purview of UUA staff roles and UUA policies" but there is no documentation of such roles or policies

(2) The claim of past non-covenantal behavior is not documented nor is it explained how the UUMUAC mission statement violates the goal of the GA event. Since these are precisely the points that would be the subject of an appeals hearing, a request for clarification was made during the UUMUAC - GAPC meeting. But when "multiracial unity" was given as a two-word summary of the UUMUAC mission, no explanation was forthcoming as to how this might violate the goal of the GA event. It was also explained that UUMUAC embraces being "color affirmative" not "race-blind", when the latter was claimed.

(3) The goal of an Exhibit Hall booth was never clearly articulated but it became clearer upon further discussion that consistency with the UUA 7 principles and overall goals is not sufficient. That is, consistency with UUA programs is required, no

matter how controversial, such as its antiracism program whose ideology and policies are derived from Critical Race Theory (CRT). Thus discussion of possible alternative approaches to the same overall goals is not acceptable. However, no documentation was provided for this policy, which would appear to be a direct violation of our 4th principle – “a free and responsible search for truth and meaning”.

**Below are statements from the 2 independent/petition
candidates for the UUA Board of Trustees.
They are on the ballot at General Assembly 2022**



Reverend Beverly H. Seese

**Minister at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Kokomo, Indiana
Beverly is a candidate for position #11 on the UUA Board of Trustees
Campaign email: bseeseteach1@gmail.com**

The Rev. Beverly H. Seese was ordained in 2011, and has served as the part-time minister of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Kokomo, IN, for the past 11 years, along with her active community ministry. She received her Master’s Degree from Meadville Lombard where her areas of specialization were Pastoral Counseling and Worship Arts. She took classes in Buddhism and titled her thesis “Choosing Non-Suffering”. She has been on the board of the UU Multiracial Unity Action Council for three years and co-chairs their Religious Professionals Task Force.

Rev. Beverly grew up in Modesto, CA, as a Church of the Brethren pacifist, and has taken training for non-violent social resistance. Among others, she participated in marches against nuclear proliferation in the Silicone Valley, CA; with Forward On Climate in Washington, DC, in 2013; with the National Women's March Rally in Indianapolis in 2017; and the Poor People's Campaign's march in Indianapolis, in 2021.

Rev. Beverly served on the board, was a youth group advisor and directed the choir at her denomination's local church when she moved to Indiana thirty years ago. However, she grew impatient with the slow pace of instituting gay rights and diverse liberal religious thought, and changed her affiliation when she found a home with the Lafayette UU Church. There she served as Choir Director, Religious Education teacher, Ministerial Committee member and chair, and Chair of the Board, before deciding to go to seminary.

Her California State University BA degree and teaching credentials are in Music and Consumer & Family Science, teaching in CA, OR, and IN. She has worked at an Indiana Community College branch as an academic advisor, and spent ten years as a counselor/academic advisor and ESL instructor at the Tippecanoe County Adult Education Program, working with immigrants and young people to gain their U.S. citizenship and High School Equivalency Diplomas. She volunteered three years as a "Big Sister" to a young teen mother. She is active in her small rural community serving on the boards of the Parks Department, Preservation Society, the Wabash and Erie Canal Park (where she does 1850s reenactment), and the Chapel Art Gallery. Beverly was an active Extension Homemaker and served as County-wide President for several years as well as directing the Extension Chorus for ten years. She loves music making, gardening, reading, quilting, and other creative arts.

Beverly worked for a number of years in retail management and is now the owner/host of a historic B&B. Her husband, Carl Seese, recently retired from teaching Spanish and

Social Studies. They enjoy visiting their daughter, in Denver, and son, close-by in Indiana.

I am running for this position because:

Unitarian Universalism should be allowed to maintain its historic integrity and proceed to its own future. A growing number of members are concerned that Unitarian Universalist principles and practices are being undermined.

I acknowledge the desire of many, especially younger and/or marginalized-identifying members, to take our religion in a radically different direction, perhaps to keep it from slowly dying of attrition as many members age out of full participation. I believe this is the wrong approach. I wholeheartedly support helping another branch of UUism to be formed that is more attractive to the aforementioned folks. (Maybe named 21st Century UUs; The traditionalists could be the UU Association of Churches – UUAC, again.) We do not need to be antagonistic toward one another. UUs have always been welcoming of other perspectives and opinions. Join me in calming the schism that has been growing between congregations' members and various identity groups.

I am feeling called to this role in our Association by a large spectrum of our beloved community who are concerned about the erosion of our precious tradition.

I would be representing the heartland of our country and the growing sense of a lack of representation on this board, from all the different areas of the country. (Notice that all the members and nominated members of the board represent the East Coast, except one from GA and one from MN.)

**Candidate Statement – Rebecca Mattis –
UUA Board of Trustees, Seat #7**



Why am I Running?

Unitarian Universalism has been my religious home for fifteen years. I have always felt a sense of welcome and belonging among diverse groups, and I cannot think of a more religiously diverse denomination than UUism. Our faith has always encouraged us to do good work in love and in freedom. But, like many UUs, I am grieved to see the direction our UU leadership has taken in the past several years. The UUA has gone from being an organization that supports its member congregations in our liberal religious work, to a highly centralized and insular group, disengaged from individual congregations, and disturbing in its dogmatism. This departure from the heritage roots of our denomination has brought such distress that sometimes I wondered if I should leave the church; however, I cherish my home congregation, the UU Church of Rutland, Vermont. That love fills me with a fierce determination, and I want to bring that sense of purpose to the UUA Board of Trustees. I believe in our Seven Principles, and I am willing to fight for them.

Platform

The three principles that I most wish to protect are the first, fourth, and fifth: the inherent worth and dignity of every person, a free and responsible search for truth and meaning, and the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process. These principles, particularly dear to me, are also the ones that I see being abandoned by the UUA. For the past several years, the UU World and the UUA website have been telling UUs what to think and how to act, which I believe has no place in a free church. As a Trustee I will do all I can to preserve and promote scientific processes and diversity of thought within our congregations and UU leadership. To this end, I believe denominational decision-making authority should be returned to our congregations, and I will sponsor the conversation to end the current regional organizational structure and reconstitute our congregation-led district structure. I want real elections every year, not selections by the nominating committee to be rubber-stamped at GA.

My Background

I have many years of experience with the democratic process, both as a church trustee and as an elected official, serving four years on the city council of Rutland, Vermont. As a city council member, I learned to listen to all parties with care and empathy, including my opponents. I worked to build an environment that was no longer “us vs. them” but just “us.” We engaged in constructive debate, did our best to meet the needs of all - never perfectly of course, but often successfully. I believe that diversity of thought is any group’s greatest strength. UUism was built on the foundation of free thought, and I aim to do all I can to keep us there. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Some reasons the 8th principle proposal is not a good way to fight racism

Bob Parks, May 1, 2022

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KfqY9eki0tm4PTVjik6CABKAjem3ea7o9IfEAbSh-1Q/edit?usp=sharing>

- Terrible harm has been done by racism in the U.S. But reference to this awful history does **not** amount to an argument **for** the proposed 8th Principle.
- I want explain the case against the 8th Principle proposal, including its apparent inconsistency with some of our existing 7 principles.
- And I also want to propose that our FUSIT community act on a mission to address racism and inequality, without risking the problems that would be created by the 8th Principle proposal.

The 8th Principle proposal is not a principle. The 8th Principle proposal is not a statement of values, like our 7 principles, but offers a call for specific actions, based on a particular political point of view.

The 8th Principle’s proposed solution is to create “people of color” sub-groups so white congregants can be accountable to them. This is likely to be a problem, not a solution.

- According to the 8th Principle website, “accountability” means “White UUs hold themselves accountable to communities of color, to make sure whites do what they say they will do. In practice, that can mean having a People of Color Caucus within congregations, districts, etc., to discern and express needs and concerns to the rest of the community.”

Response 1: Creating sub-groups and asking one sub-group to be accountable to another risks creating divisions and power struggles. Does FUSIT need a “people of color” subgroup, so white people in our congregation can be held accountable to that subgroup? I have not heard a single argument from 8th Principle advocates for requiring a “people of color” caucus. In fact, in my wife's experience, as a woman of Chinese ancestry, the very fact of dividing our congregation into white vs. "people of color" can be hurtful. As a congregation, we should be able to get to know each other in our complex identities, without requiring the categorization of people as white or colored, oppressor or oppressed.

(c)

b. **Response 2: “White” and “Black” are skin colors, not cultures and not “races”.** The 8th Principle advocates say “the best way for us to truly support racial justice ... is to purge ourselves and our institutions of the culture and exclusive practices of whiteness and white supremacy.” (www.8thprinciple.org) Unfortunately, “white culture” is not defined. Does it actually exist? Do they mean some range of European cultures? Does it include people of Jewish ancestry? Italian? Greek? Turkish? Arabic? Indians (who are, after all, the original Aryans)? What is the point of our drawing that line and saying this person is “white”, that person is a “person of color”? Some might respond that we can allow people to self-identify. But that doesn’t make the practice of creating skin-color groups and calling them “races”, any more coherent or useful.

3. If we want to end racism, we need to stop using the language of “race” created by racists. According to African-American historian Henry Louis Gates, we need a new language to talk about the realities of “shared ancestry”. (b) The terms black/white, “people of color”, “Asian”, etc. - tend to suppress the cultural identity of members of ethnic and national groups. And these identities are often complex, compounding the problem of stereotyping and oversimplification. (c) These are not “racial” categories - unless we adopt a racialized perspective.

4. The idea that “white supremacy culture” - and not economic inequality - is the cause of racism in our society is misguided. To oppose racism effectively, we need to understand its causes in our economic structure. (a) As Martin Luther King once wrote:

We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together... you can’t really get rid of one without getting rid of the others... the whole structure of American life must be changed.

(Report to SCLC Staff, May 1967.)

5. We need to build unity not division. Rev. William Barber’s “Poor People’s Campaign” (d) views racism in its economic and social context, building on the principle of:

lifting up and deepening the leadership of those most affected by

systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation and to **building unity across lines of division.**

Instead of building unity across lines of division, the 8th Principle proposal requires **building lines of division in our communities** – whites vs. Blacks/”people of color”, etc. – and making one sub-group “accountable” to the other.

6. **The 8th Principle is inconsistent with the UU 1st Principle.** According to the 8th Principle’s author, Paula Cole Jones, it aims to create a new paradigm of church life, moving away from our 1st Principle – “The inherent worth and dignity of every person” and replacing it with a different organizing principle - “the inherent worth and dignity of every community, and the well-being between communities”. This is part of a “change in paradigm” she advocates for UUism. (e)
7. **The 8th Principle is inconsistent with the UU 5th Principle** The change in paradigm advocated by Ms. Jones also involves moving away from “majority rule” and replacing it with “consensus” decision-making. Although “majority rule” is not a perfect decision making process, giving up majority rule could create new dangers. €

We can agree with every description of the terrible effects of racism in our society. But this does not amount to an argument that the 8th Principle proposal is an effective way to fight racism. **If we are willing to engage in sustained dialogue among the different political views represented in our congregation, I think there is ample room for genuine agreement on anti-racism at FUSIT. But I cannot support the 8th Principle proposal. And I sincerely hope it will be defeated in the upcoming Congregational vote. We can do better by finding our mission in fighting the sources of both racism and economic oppression, and not just the symptoms.**

Notes:

Two African-American historians have written an excellent book on racism: *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*, by Barbara and Karen Fields. They provide a clear explanation of how racism has been a creation of economic forces, not cultural traits.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Andrew S. Curran, “We Need a New Language for Talking A About Race” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/03/opinion/sunday/talking-about-race.html>)

:

C. A regular viewing of these two videos is worthwhile:

Things we share: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jD8tjhVO1Tc&t=50s>

The Danger of a Single Story – TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg&vl=en>

D. <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/> . Also note President Biden’s approach to re-mediating pollution without invoking “race”. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/15/climate/biden-environment-race-pollution.html>)

E. Paula Cole Jones’ online workshop on the 8th Principle, for FUSIT, on February 13, 2022.

A Disturbing Journey with the UUA 2021 General Assembly Choir

By Rebecca A. Pace—August, 2021

I registered to participate in the UUA General Assembly 2021 Virtual Choir. I did this for the 2020 GA and found it challenging, but quite rewarding.

Two songs had been selected, by our choir director, Susan T. Mashiyama, PhD, Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley. She wrote, “The big “everyone” number is planned to be “Rise Up,” a song that many consider the unofficial anthem of the Black Lives Matter movement.”

The composer, Andra Day , says the song is about overcoming challenges. It was performed in

2021 during the inauguration parade for President Joe Biden. In a 2016 interview by WBLS Radio, Day said, “It was really a song about perseverance. For me, I feel like, at the time when I wrote it, it wasn’t one thing in particular I was going through but rather sort of a culmination of things....It was to just be reminded to just stand up. If you can stand up, you can take the next step...” In 2017 Time magazine reported that Black Lives Matter had adopted the song, and others, as unofficial anthems.

By the time of this announcement, considerable effort had been put into securing the license to perform the pieces, paying fees, and recording sectional rehearsal tracks.

The first rehearsal was April 19, 2021. I wasn’t able to attend. I got my first whiff of trouble in an e-mail from Dr. Mashiyama the next day, April 20, 2021.

Dear Choir members,

There've been some issues with using "Rise Up" and we are still discussing how to move forward. Will keep you posted. Thank you so much for your warm support and understanding! I recently realized that the piece would have some serious issues visually at GA and am deeply grateful to the person who brought it to my attention.

This was followed, on the 23rd, by this e-mail from LaTonya Richardson, Director General Assembly:

During choir rehearsal on Monday, there was a need for holy interruption: setting aside the intended purpose -- singing and fellowship -- in order to attend to harm inadvertently done to BIPOC vocalist(s) and observed by others who identify as allies. That interruption allowed everyone time to name the choir's shared values, prioritize relationship over productivity, and notice the ways that white supremacy culture sneaks into our daily lives.

We find, again, that there's a need to pause, so we are postponing Saturday's rehearsal (tomorrow) out of a desire to attend to our relationships with one another. The work that is done by the choir invites us into covenant with one another as well as with our larger community. That process involves covenant and commitment – the cornerstones of dismantling systems of oppression.

In another e-mail, Ms. Richardson explained that during the choir rehearsal on April 19 ... Rev Erika Hewitt and Rev Jo VonRue interrupted the rehearsal and requested caucus conversations. I learned the full story at a "learning conversation", called to provide musicians with "pastoral care, support, and a safe place for conversations to process all that has occurred".

Towards the beginning of the first GA Choir rehearsal, on April 19, the Black soloist for "Rise Up" resigned. She said she was uncomfortable. She felt she was being used as a token in front of a predominantly white choir. The soloist was chosen by audition and invitation, weeks before. I'm not sure if it was a paid position.

The rehearsal interruption, on the 19th, took the director, Dr. Mashiyama by surprise. However, the time had been set aside for the choir to rehearse, so the rehearsal continued on Zoom. Dr. Mashiyama was at the keyboard, and engaged with the choir, working through parts. Meanwhile, although those who were rehearsing did not know it, the chat was

aflame with comments and concerns, by some choir members who were upset and distracted by this sudden development. The Rev Hewitt and Rev VonRue took charge and, without consulting the director, stopped the rehearsal.

People of Color were invited to move to a breakout room to process the situation. The white musicians remained on-line and listened to pre-recorded rehearsal tracks. Eventually, Dr. Mashiyama, a Person of Color herself, returned to the main "room" and announced the rehearsal was over. None of the People of Color returned.

A few days later, on April 25, Dr. Mashiyama resigned. The choir members were advised that the Director of General Assembly, LaTonya Richardson, had decided that neither of the original songs would be included in the Closing Worship.

Along with many other choir members, I resigned and requested a refund of the materials fee. On April 29, Ms. Richardson sent a massive e-mail responding to many e-mails at once.

She wrote to SEF: Thanks for your email. We are sorry to hear that this has been "the most unfulfilling choir experience you've had in over 50 years of singing".

And to KS: The choir will perform two choral anthems: "Circlesong Six" and "Rise Up". Neither will be broadcast during the Sunday Service at GA. "Circlesong Six" will be broadcast as part of the closing service, presented by YARN (Young Adult Revival Network) and "Rise Up" will be streamed on-demand as part of a panel discussion about how/when/why a predominately white choir or congregation might embrace and incorporate music from various cultures in their services.

And to me: Rebecca Pace - I'm confused by your email. What do you mean by "the UUA has found it impossible to honor our talented musicians as they honor our multi-cultural music heritage"? Are there specific people at the UUA that you are referencing? In what ways have talented musicians not been honored during the planning phase of GA 2021? I'd love to know more. In the meantime, your GA Choir registration has been cancelled, as requested. The GA Registrar will follow-up with you soon.

I decided to accept the invitation to the learning conversation with Rev. Erika Hewitt and Julia Hermann de la Fuente to try to make some sense of what had happened and why.

The session was disconcerting. I left feeling more frustrated than I was when I joined the meeting. Other than confirming the sequence of events, I learned nothing about why it was necessary to stop the rehearsal, instead of closing the chat.

. I didn't learn why the soloist waited until the rehearsal started, to resign. I didn't expect to learn the details about why Dr. Mashiyama had found it necessary to resign. I did hope to learn how the respectful performance of music chosen to honor People of Color during this tumultuous year could be labeled misappropriation. There was no clue about how this composition was selected, and approved, only to be jettisoned midway through preparation.

I did learn something interesting, however. There were about 45 people on the Zoom call. All of them white, except for Ms. Richardson and our host, Julica Hermann de la Fuente. Of course People of Color in the choir must have been experiencing similar feelings about the experience, but none were at THIS learning session. When we registered, we were asked to identify as white or Person of Color. As they did with the Zoom breakout room on April 19, People of Color were invited to a different meeting. Since what we were working through was a choir experience, I expected a discussion that included any choir member, not segregated discussions.

Another thing stood out. During the meeting, Ms. de la Fuente related her experiences while "passing" [as white], in trying to frame the discussion. Her German heritage and complexion allowed her to "pass", she explained, although she was actually a Person of Color.

Now, another Zoom gathering has been scheduled for September 1, to discuss "Dismantling White Supremacy Culture in Worship", an essay that has been posted on the UUA website. The GA-related situations are considered closed.

In the massive e-mail on April 29, Ms. Richardson, told MT "'Rise Up" was originally the second choral anthem. Then, it was nixed. Now, it's back because we have determined a unique and beneficial use for the performance. We received questions, encouragement and support for the song choice, and several concerns too. The response suggests that we have an opportunity to educate, equip, and inspire our UU community by talking about it. So, our plan is that "Rise Up" will be streamed on-demand from GA participation portal library. It will be preceded by a panel discussion about how/when/why a predominately white choir or congregation might embrace and incorporate music from various cultures in their services. We will also talk about the complexity of opinions."

At this point there is no word about when, or if, the promised webinar will be available. Choir members, who remained with the group, submitted their videos three months ago.

Addendum

Although the “UUA Rise Up” music video was eventually produced, the promised webinar did not happen. The September 1 zoom conversation was focused on allowing flexibility and welcoming change during worship services. It did not address the General Assembly Choir situation at all until, towards the very end of the event, a participant asked specifically if the video existed. It did, and apparently a link was sent to choir members who submitted videos. The link is below. It seemed to me that the presentation focused on anger and resistance, instead of the spiritually uplifting resilience, hope and perseverance of Andra Day’s original concept for the piece.

LaTonya Richardson’s message about the decision is here: <https://vimeo.com/583008924>
The music video is here: <https://vimeo.com/583013900>

Why the UUA is Doomed to Fail by David Cycleback

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is attempting to both increase general UU membership and greatly increase racial minority membership. While the goals are admirable, the UUA’s radical approach is ill-conceived and likely to fail.

Unitarian Universalism (UU) is a tiny, eccentric, politically far left and predominantly white church with dwindling membership. It is far whiter than the United States population and than most Christian and conservative churches, including the Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Anglican Church and Mormons. While UU has advanced from its heterosexual patriarchal roots, the lack of racial diversity has been a source of angst to many UUs who see themselves as social justice vanguards. (UUA 2010) (Braestrup 2017)

Doubling concerns, according to its last census in 2020, UU membership was at its lowest in twenty-three years. Despite the country’s population increasing seventy-five percent, UU’s membership is nineteen percent smaller than when it was formed in 1961 and has shrunk since introducing radical anti-racism initiatives starting in the last twenty-five years. (UUA 2020) (Loehr 2005) (Halsted 2019) (UUA 1997)

The current national UU leadership aspires to both increase UU membership and greatly increase racial minority membership by moving UU even further to the political left into radicalism. This essay explains how these goals can conflict and how the current national UU’s attempts may achieve neither. (Frederick-Gray 2021)

UU’s Traditional Culture

As with most churches, Unitarian Universalism has had a particular demographic and culture. UU is associated with its upper middle class, educated, Puritan, New England

Unitarian roots. Famous Unitarians included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Susan B. Anthony, Thomas Jefferson, Frank Lloyd Wright and Julian Jaynes. The Collegeville Pennsylvania fellowship is named after Thomas Paine.

Martin Luther King Jr. said Sunday at 11 a.m. is the most segregated time in America, with people traditionally tending to congregate with their own demographic. Some racial minorities have said they are drawn to UU's beliefs but have a hard time fitting in with the dominant culture. One congregant wrote, "I don't think segregation is intentional. It's a matter of music, demographics, age, culture, worship style, etc." (Blake 2010) (Grossman 2015) (8th Principle)

Anyone who attends a UU congregation knows they tend to have a controlled, insular, polite, Northern European-American culture. As a native of Wisconsin and with many Minnesotan relatives, I've commented that the culture of the Seattle UU congregation I attend is "very Scandinavian." I am neurodivergent (autistic and bipolar) and Jewish and have personally experienced how people who are different can struggle and feel misunderstood in a UU congregation. I agree with the UUA that congregations must work on being more inclusive of and educated about different cultures and peoples.

There have been attempts to become more racially, ethnically and culturally diverse, including diversifying service styles and music, having racial justice education and recruiting more minorities into seminary. Most congregations have participated in the Beloved Congregations and White Supremacy Teach-In programs. (McCardle 2017) (WSUU 2018)

It's Not Just Racial Minorities: UU Culture Is Unwelcoming to the Majority in Most Demographics

Usually omitted from the racial argument is the fact that UU's culture is also unwelcoming to most whites. That it is out of sync with most in all racial and ethnic groups is why the denomination is so small. Many outsiders would describe the current UU as a counterculture, and my un-Politically Correct white Texas friend said he could stand about ten seconds in a UU service.

Many working-class and working-class background UUs have complained about UU's intellectual, educational and class elitism. Brown University professor and social critic Glenn Loury has pointed out that most proponents of the prevailing far-left social justice ideology are highly educated cultural elite, along with being predominantly white. Some atheists I have talked to have no interest in joining a UU congregation because they don't want to belong to any organized church, even one that has atheists and agnostics, and attend services that have a church-like style. (Loury 2022)

A complaint about the recent years' narrowing of UU's politics is that it excludes political moderates and conservatives who would embrace the UU's Principles. There is no reason moderates and conservatives can't belong to a UU or other liberal religions. UU Minister Rev. Sean Neil-Baron put it "We are a liberal religion not a religion for liberals," and there used to be an active group for conservative UUs. I know numerous UUs who have said they

wish their congregational membership had a broader political spectrum. (UUA 2017) (Morgenstern 2020)

Moving Further Left Makes UU Only More Unappealing to Most Minorities

About fourteen percent of the country is black. It is simply the statistical reality that if every church wants to be, say, forty percent black, that is impossible. UU, in its traditional or current state, will not be the type of church that attracts large swaths of blacks and other racial and ethnic minorities.

In her 2017 essay *Where Are We Headed?*, Rev. Kate Braestrup wrote that UU would have to become more conservative to attract many minorities who are generally more conservative than UU. Moving even further to the left into radicalism and extreme identity politics will likely make UU even smaller. (Pew Research Center 2021) (Braestrup 2017) (Pew Research Center 2020) (Winston 2020)

Rev. Braestrup wrote: “Despite our decades of self-flagellating attempts to scour away every vestige of racism from our bleeding hearts, religions that have never made the slightest effort to ‘dismantle white supremacy’ aren’t just more successful at attracting congregants of all colors, they are — according to our own preferred measures — far less racist The statistics, in other words, strongly imply that anyone who wishes to belong to a non-racist church should depart Unitarian Universalism and join the Assemblies of God. Or— easier still— become a Catholic.” (Braestrup 2017)

Despite UUs liking to think of themselves as independent thinkers, I have found them to be as much of group thinkers and crowd followers as in any religious denomination. UU spaces are often political and ideological echo chambers, ignoring and silencing different perspectives including from minorities. A congregant said that to many UUs multiculturalism means “People who think exactly like us but come in different colors.” I replied and he agreed, “Multiculturalism means they aren’t all going to think like you, and many will think things you very much disagree with.”

UU leaders often hold up the goal of “multiculturalism.” However, they don’t really want multiculturalism. A truly multicultural church would contain opposing political, social and ideological values and would be full of constant conflict and unappealing to all. With their new expectations of political and ideological conformity, national UU leaders are trying to create a monoculture.

Conflicting Goals

The national UU’s efforts are not just about attracting minorities to UU but being more welcoming and inclusive to minorities already in UU.

As racial minorities in UU tend to be much further to the political left, more radical and identity politics-centric than the general racial minority population, this creates a conflict. Doing what “BIPOC of UU” want will make UU even less

appealing to most racial minorities. Many racial minority UUs who are LGBT+ felt unwelcome in the more conservative racial minority dominant churches they grew up in and do not want that. The radicalization of UU may not only not attract many racial minorities to UU but make many whites who believe in religious liberalism quit. It may ultimately lead to a split in the denomination.

Many Ways to Create and Different Considerations of Diversity

Some UUs are not troubled by the lack of racial diversity. They say that most churches and congregations have particular cultures and demographics, such as Scandinavian Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox congregations, many Muslim and Hindu temples and Jewish synagogues. I attend a predominantly Ashkenazi synagogue. Further, a congregation mostly attracts people from its neighborhood which means the congregation will tend to reflect the demographics of the neighborhood.

As far as attaining diversity goes, there is more than one way to skin a cat. For example, congregations can do interfaith work with other congregations and organizations. A Seattle UU congregation belongs to an interfaith network with members from the neighborhood mosque, Hispanic Catholic congregation and synagogue working together in neighborhood charity work. This type of work involves not only a diversity of races, but of cultures and beliefs. It is problematic when UUs want ethnic and racial minorities to be part of their religion but only if they “think the way we do.” I see a tokenizing and fetishism in focusing strictly on the percentage of skin colors in a congregation, and a pandering in doing whatever it takes to attract people of different skin colors. Harvard law professor Randall Kennedy says that using only the lens of race in social justice work creates a “danger of race narcissism.” (Manhattan Institute 2021)

I belong to different communities. These include a mostly white but gender diverse UU congregation, a mostly Ashkenazi synagogue, a multi-racial and racial-minority led workplace, and a vintage baseball card collecting club that is largely male but with a wide diversity of religious and political beliefs. The combination of these is my multi-cultural experience, and I neither expect nor want each to be the same.

The challenge of creating racial diversity and how to attract and maintain minorities in dominant white churches is not just an issue for Unitarian Unitarianism. This is being tackled in other liberal denominations, synagogues, mosques and Christian churches. With challenges, successes and failures, there have been numerous attempts to create multi-racial Christian churches. (Gjelten 2020)

There is no one or objectively correct answer as to what should be achieved or how to achieve it, and any way involves conflicts and trade-offs. A church can't be all the things it wants and doesn't want to be all things to all people. To gain one valued thing, you often have to give up another valued thing, and pleasing one group of people within a community will offend another group. Such is the nature of communities, especially in a liberal, pluralistic church.

However, I believe the national UU leadership's attempt to move UU further to the left into radicalism and to create ideological and political homogeneity will neither attract substantial numbers of racial and ethnic minorities nor expand UU membership. This is why I submit that the UUA is doomed to fail.

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