

A Critique of the Proposed 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism

The 8th Principle: *We covenant to affirm and promote:*
Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

Introduction:

The proposed 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism appears to have very strong popular support from UU members.

UU members are inspired by its goal of greater inclusion of members of historically marginalized identity groups.

UU members welcome a strong emphasis on fighting against racism and oppression of marginalized groups.

UU members are responding to the call to elevate the voices of the marginalized. They eagerly look forward to a future where all members equally benefit from the promise of spiritual wholeness in UU.

These are goals everyone supports.

However, many UU members believe that the meaning and intent of the proposed 8th Principle is underestimated and should be discussed more deeply and openly before each congregation decides whether to adopt the proposed 8th Principle.

The words in the proposed 8th Principle are ambiguous.

Ask yourself...

Are you clear about what *accountably* means?

Accountable to who?

Are you clear about the definition of *racism*?

Are you clear about what constitutes *oppressions* and what causes them?

What does *dismantle* mean?

Who decides what *actions* are sufficient?

Why is the focus on *ourselves and our institutions*, not America as a whole?

Why does it use the phrase *Beloved Community*?

What is meant when UU leadership refers to *White Supremacy Culture*?

If UU members are going to make a commitment to be accountable for acting to achieve its goals, it is important that the meaning and intent of every phrase is clearly interpreted and all UU members come to a shared understanding of what it means.

Whose interpretations matter?

Where does the authority to define these words lie? Can individual congregations even answer questions about the meaning of each phrase in the proposed 8th Principle? If the future of UU is more interdependence, less congregational autonomy, what each congregation thinks the proposed 8th principle means does not matter. These clarifications would have to come from higher up in the UU national hierarchy.

Many UU congregations have already adopted the proposed 8th Principle for themselves. Those congregations probably assume that the interpretation and meaning of words like “accountably” will be decided by each congregation as they see fit. Some members assume this means each person is committing to holding themselves accountable.

If the 8th Principle is officially added to the national UUA Bylaws, the interpretation of “accountably” and other ambiguous phrases will probably mean something entirely different than currently assumed. Will the precedent of adopting the 8th Principle for themselves under one set of assumptions inhibit re-assessing using new assumptions?

The purpose of this critique

This critique offers interpretations of many of the words and phrases in the proposed 8th Principle. Most of the interpretations in this critique come from careful reading of official UUA writings. In many cases these interpretations are different from how most UU members currently interpret the meaning and intent of the proposed 8th Principle.

This critique has four sections

1. Interpretations of most of the words and phrases in the proposed 8th Principle, derived from a careful reading of official UUA writings.
2. Examination of current trends in UU national institutions. This is background context that is essential for understanding why some UU members are hesitant to adopt the proposed 8th Principle.
3. Examination of changes in UU that are already happening or are poised to be proposed in the next two years. These changes also provide essential context for understanding how the proposed 8th Principle fits into a bigger picture.
4. Conclusion.

Snapshots of the most pertinent sentences in the source documents are shown alongside the commentary in this critique. The reader can click on the snapshots, or click on the links in the faintly underlined words in the commentary, to see the relevant references in the original documents. A recap of all references is at the end of this document.

The most frequently cited sources are the Commission on Institutional Change Report titled “Widening the Circle of Concern”, which was presented at the UUA General Assembly in 2020 (GA 2020), and 8thprincipleuu.org, an analysis composed by Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU).

What does the proposed 8th Principle mean?

“Actions”

The proposed 8th Principle is unusual. But the proposed 8th Principle of UU is NOT redundant. Principles #1 thru #7 are aspirational, lighting a path for us to be our best selves, both individually and collectively. This proposed 8th Principle has a different tone, being more of a “must do” mandate than a “should do” aspiration.

“Accountably”

Who will we be accountable to? What will be the criteria we are judged by? The apparent intent is that UU member and congregation actions would be reviewed and monitored by boards or caucuses composed **exclusively** of members of historically marginalized identity groups. These will apparently be primarily representatives of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) UU caucuses.

“Dismantle”

Dismantle means tear down (or divest of power) what exists and presumably replace or transform it, building something substantially different. The proposed 8th Principle’s apparent intent is to replace UU’s culture of prioritizing liberal Enlightenment values. This most likely will require rewriting many of the existing 7 Principles.

8thprincipleuu.org/background#Other-Comments

OTHER COMMENTS

Our existing 7 principles imply this 8th principle, but do not explicitly hold us accountable for addressing these oppressions directly, especially at the systemic level.

medium.com/outfront/black-lives-of-uu-organizing-collective-urges-...

Open in app Get started

learned, develop action plans.” As such, where is the consistent and demonstrable effort on behalf of the Association to protect UUs of color especially from harm by moving beyond action plans into a demonstrable effort around dismantling white supremacy in the structure, culture and liturgy of our faith community?

uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening/accountabilit...

Recommendation

The UUA should establish an ongoing independent body to identify systemic changes and monitor accountability on work toward equity, inclusion, and diversity. This body should be based on representatives of groups of oppressed people and should have direct representation on the Association Board.

8thprincipleuu.org/what-does-it-mean-to-be-accountable

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ACCOUNTABLE?

White UUs hold themselves accountable to communities of color, to make sure whites do what they say they will do. In

8thprincipleuu.org/why-now#Paragraph-3

way for us to truly support racial justice in a significant way is to purge ourselves and our institutions of the culture and exclusive practices of whiteness and white supremacy.

uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commissio...

The Commission is charged with reviewing all sections of Article II, and is free to revise, replace, or restructure them as needed to meet the objectives stated above. There is nothing sacred about the number of principles or sources, nor their specific wordings, nor in the way that Article II is laid out. We encourage creativity. The Board would like to see

“Oppressions”

The concept of oppressions in the proposed 8th Principle is derived from Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory postulates that disparities in American society are due to American culture preserving power and privilege for the racial identity group in power (White citizens). Critical Race Theory asserts that American (i.e. White) culture oppresses all other racial identity groups.

Critical Race Theory is also based on **Postmodernism**, which posits that truth and reality cannot be discerned objectively. Society has norms about what kinds of knowledge “count”. Identity groups know their own truths and realities best. Reason and logic and evidence and due process are incapable of knowing another identity groups’ truths derived from lived experience.

Critical Race Theory’s foundation in Postmodernism leads to the conclusion that Enlightenment values like reason and requiring evidence are just methods of preserving power. White ways of knowing are tools of oppression. The same is asserted about White norms for ways of doing things, seen as arbitrary ways to preserve power and privilege. The COIC report states “When we talk about power combined with prejudice and the centering of the dominant group and their ways of being and doing, we are talking about oppression”.

Elias Ortega

June 25, 2020 · 🌐

← Co-Author of COIC Report

The UUA-GA 2020 season is in full swing. With the release of the Commission on Institutional Change Report, "Widening the Circle of Concern," I imagine that some folks will be reading it looking for flaws to dismiss it from the outset. I imagine this will happen primarily because the report mobilizes aspects of Critical Race Theory to engage the impact of structural racism and call us deeper into living our shared Unitarian

Although I could be wrong, I imagine that many within the wing of our movement cemented in classical liberalism as their political outlook will take exception to the use of Critical Race Theory in the report. It may also happen

newdiscourses.com/2020/06/reasons-critical-race-theory-terrible-dealing-racism/
that the races cannot truly understand one another (while demanding that they must and that racism is the *whole cause* of the inevitable failure), that racially privileged people are inherently oppressors and everyone else is inherently oppressed (this is derived from Marxism applied to racial groups),

britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy
britannica Browse Search Quizzes On This Day Subscribe

Postmodernism and relativism

As indicated in the preceding section, many of the characteristic doctrines of postmodernism constitute or imply some form of metaphysical, epistemological, or ethical relativism. (It should be noted, however, that some postmodernists vehemently reject the relativist label.) Postmodernists deny that there are aspects of reality that are objective; that there are statements

areomagazine.com/2017/03/27/how-french-intellectuals-ruined-the-west-postmodernism-and-its-impact-explained/

Shared humanity and individuality are essentially illusions and people are propagators or victims of discourses depending on their social position; a position which is dependent on identity far more than their individual engagement with society. Morality is culturally relative, as is reality itself. Empirical evidence is suspect and so are any culturally dominant ideas including science, reason, and universal liberalism. These are Enlightenment values which are naïve, totalizing and oppressive, and there is a moral necessity to smash them. Far more important is the lived experience,

This state of affairs is said not only to directly oppress already-oppressed groups but also to indirectly oppress them by preventing their ability to speak authentically (see also, voice and voice of color) about, thus achieve progress against, their oppression (see also, disrupt

uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening/governance#... 🔍 ☆ ⚙️

When we talk about governance, we are talking about power. When we talk about power combined with prejudice and the centering of the dominant group and their ways of being and doing, we are talking about oppression.

“White Supremacy Culture”

The frameworks of Critical Race Theory are applicable to other identity groups (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, disability). The national UUA Board of Trustees refers to this broader application of CRT as **White Supremacy Culture**. Their declared goal of “dismantling White Supremacy Culture” in UU means replacing UU’s culture of prioritizing liberal Enlightenment values. This intention is also reflected in the UUA Bylaws Article II Study Commission charge.

“Racism”

In the context of the 8th Principle, racism means “disparate outcomes” for non-white groups of people. Equality of opportunity is not considered good enough. Colorblindness is insufficient. Equity in outcomes, especially for members of the non-dominant groups, is what the 8th Principle mandates.

Critical Race Theory appears to posit that race is the deciding factor in American society. This is called “**race reductionism**”.

Saying that your race is the most important thing about you is called “**race essentialism**”.

These paradigms renounce the goals of color blindness and seamless inclusion that characterized anti-racism efforts of the past seven decades.

Charge

At the New Orleans General Assembly in 2017, the UUA Board of Trustees announced and chartered the Commission on Institutional Change. The charge given was to conduct an audit of the power structures and analyze systemic racism and white supremacy culture within the Unitarian Universalist Association.

- UU funding and focus in the last decade shifted toward shallow diversity rather than deep multicultural Beloved Community and structural change. UU support of the Movement for Black Lives has been encouraging; the best way for us to truly support racial justice in a significant way is to purge ourselves and our institutions of the culture and exclusive practices of whiteness and white supremacy.

through as many channels and communication media as possible. Further, the Commission shall de-center habitual practices that reinforce white supremacy culture.

As such, racism is measured by its economic, cultural, sociological, and political outcomes rather than its intentions (i.e., its effect on both racially and ethnically marginalized groups and racially and ethnically dominant groups).

• Color-blindness/Racial Neutrality

The racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity... Colorblindness alone is not sufficient to heal racial wounds on a national or personal level. It is only a half-measure that in the end operates as a form of racism.

—Monnica T. Williams, “Colorblind Ideology Is a Form of Racism”

• Institutional Racism

The ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites, and oppression and disadvantage for people of color.

—Maggie Potapchuk, et al., “Flipping the Script”

“Our institutions”

The phrase “our institutions” means the target is all of UU itself. It assumes that all of UU manifests in racial and other oppressions of non-dominant identity groups. This diagnosis and mandate would be permanently embedded in the eternal UU Principles. This implies that racism and other oppressions are going to be never-ending challenges for all UU members and all UU institutions.

“Beloved Community”

Expressing a goal of Beloved Community is probably a call to change UU from being an association of independent congregations, to an interdependent denomination. This would mean centralizing authority into national UU institutions. Individual congregations would no longer operate autonomously, independently deciding for themselves what to think or do. This is what is sometimes implied by “covenanting”.

“Journeying Toward Spiritual Wholeness”

The primary impetus for creating an 8th Principle was because the Journey Toward Wholeness campaign lost momentum. At General Assembly in 1997, the UUA made a commitment to becoming an Anti-Racist Multi-Cultural organization. Later a goal of being Anti-Oppression was added. The creators of the proposed 8th Principle felt this is a commitment that remains unfulfilled, because there was no accountability mechanism. The proposed 8th Principle is worded to close that loophole.

Charge

At the New Orleans General Assembly in 2017, the UUA Board of Trustees announced and chartered the Commission on Institutional Change. The charge given was to conduct an audit of the power structures and analyze systemic racism and white supremacy culture within the Unitarian Universalist Association.

We can imagine this covenant would include each entity’s statement of how they are living their understanding of their UU mission, and how they pledge to both support the larger movement’s missional commitments, both by affirming the mission but by also participating as possible in as many

Recommendation of UUA Board Task Force on Re-Imagining Covenant

Rationale for the Task Force’s Recommendation:

The Task Force was charged changing the culture of the UUA from one of a member services administration to one of mutual covenanting. After over a year and a half of deep discussions, we have The Task Force will bring to the 2018 General Assembly recommended bylaw changes that would require member congregations and covenanting communities to renew their connection to the UUA biennially, with a vote of intention to join, and a statement of how they understand their community to be fulfilling Unitarian Universalist purpose.

8thprincipleuu.org/why-now#Paragraph-2

BLUU’s main point is that the UUA voted in 1997 at GA to commit to intentionally becoming an ARAOMC institution. Initially good progress was made, with programs including the Journey Toward Wholeness, the Jubilee Anti-Racism Training workshops, process evaluation at meetings, and multicultural consulting services. In the early 2000s, funding and support for much of this work began to decline. The recent hiring

uua.org/action/statements/toward-anti-racist-unitarian-univers...

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly requests that the UUA Board of Trustees establish a committee to monitor and assess our transformation as an anti-racist, multi-cultural institution, and that the

8thprincipleuu.org/origin#Paragraph-2

Organization), but the funding and support started to wane in the 2000’s – our accountability mechanism failed

uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening/accountabilit...

Recommendation

Ongoing monitoring is needed to ensure that work to counter bias and oppression is not interrupted again.

The proposed 8th Principle can be explained as: A commitment made in 1997 remains unfulfilled, so the 8th Principle will centralize authority in the UUA, to replace the liberal values that are the foundation of UU, expecting this will achieve equal outcomes for all identity groups. Historically marginalized identity groups will make sure UU members and congregations prioritize this mandate and take effective actions to replace UU's culture.

Current Trends in UU:

UU culture is already being replaced

In 2017 the national Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Board of Trustees abruptly accepted a characterization of UU as having “the realities of racism and white supremacy in our congregations”.

Critical Race Theory is criticized by many social scientists as being too simplistic. These experts contend that the causes of disparate racial outcomes in America are myriad and complex.

Postmodernism is even more controversial. Objectivity may be elusive but that does not mean reason and logic and evidence cannot be valid sources of knowledge.

Nevertheless, the UUA Board unilaterally committed to dismantling White Supremacy Culture in all of UU.

UU congregations and institutions are being pressured to reject White (Liberal) ways of knowing and doing things. They are supported when they abandon Enlightenment values like tolerance for multiple points of view.

Personal “lived experience” of members of historically marginalized identity groups is being given higher priority than reason and logic and evidence. Logic and reason are rejected because they are White ways of knowing things.

Motion to Endorse UU White Supremacy Teach In

4/3/2017

The Board of the Unitarian Universalist Association endorses and encourages our member congregations and communities to support and participate in the UU White Supremacy Teach In. This call to action and worship comes from a growing network of UUs – religious professionals and lay leaders from both within and outside congregations – led by UUs of color and white UUs working together. Congregations are committing to discuss the realities of racism and white supremacy in our congregations, in our Association, and in our faith on April 30th or May 7th (or an upcoming Sunday.)

MINUTES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION

April 6, 2017

f) commit and plan for anti-racism programming and mentorship for White people that includes an analysis of personal, institutional, systemic, and cultural racism and oppressions with access for youth, young adults, covenanting communities, and congregations;

uua.org/central-east/events/congregations-events/uucdc-antira...

Type of event: Workshop

Sponsor: UU Church of Delaware County, Media, PA

Decentering Whiteness One Conversation at a Time

This workshop, grounded in principles of cultural humility, critical race theory and mindful facilitation is designed to bridge the gap between awareness of privilege and racism

This is a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture that show up in our organizations. Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify. The characteristics listed below are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being proactively named or chosen by the group. They are damaging because they promote white supremacy thinking. Because we all live in a white supremacy culture, these characteristics show up in the attitudes and behaviors of all of us –

muusja.org/reprint-an-open-letter-from-white-uu-ministers/#B...

dignity, all behaviors and ideas do not. Ideas and language can indeed be forms of violence, and can cause real harm. It is disingenuous at best, and malicious at worst, to argue that those who have been targeted by systemic violence have an obligation to bear witness to “ideas and words” that demean and diminish their personhood and discount their lived experience. The predictable “freedom of speech” arguments are commonly weaponized to perpetuate oppression and inflict further harm.

docs.google.com/document/d/1-4HvVMVT1pC3FKOZR0iIFd2XyMjYr3z_egd8EaiNus/mobilebasi

UUMA POCI Statement

The material in question lacks both respect and compassion, continually asserting that if people of color would only be logical, things would be different. Unfortunately, since racism is not logical, logic cannot be a primary tool in its resolution. The material goes on to single out a

Free exchange of multiple points of view is being circumscribed, and disagreement is not tolerated, if the opinions are contrary to the views of non-dominant identity groups.

Due process in Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association disciplinary proceedings is not being followed by the UUMA Board of Trustees and the Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

Evidence to support assertions of harm is no longer considered to be necessary because requiring evidence is a White way of knowing and doing things.



Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries

June 22, 2019 · 🌐

address the harm caused by this book and center its own people. We, people of color, Queer and Trans people of Color, DRUUMM leaders, need for white Unitarian Universalists to do the work you are being called to do to dismantle white supremacy in our communities and to hold accountable the ministers who weaponize white supremacy in this faith.

We, Unitarian Universalists of Color, know this will not be the last statement on harm being caused by our siblings who uphold a toxic interpretation of Unitarian Universalism that only centers white people and culture. Let this be known, we as people of color are committed to our Unitarian Universalist faith. We are not going anywhere. We are holding steadfast in the face of false prophets.

This book is not only a failed attempt at logical discourse rife with white fragility, it is a stark reminder that ideas aligned with alt-right ideology do exist within Unitarian Universalism. It is a clear premeditated and callous attempt to further strife within our beloved faith. It has caused and is causing pain to all too many within our UU community. It is a manifestation of white supremacy culture fighting back against the beautiful, transformative work that so many are doing to confront and dismantle systems of oppression. The call to end white supremacy—to

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

→ uuma.org/news/466020/UUMA-Board-and-Executive-Team-Issu...

practice of ministry, seems more crucial each day. We are also working to revise the accountability processes to ground them in values of justice, integrity, and healing rather than in their current legalistic frame.

→ fifthprincipleproject.org/2020/09/16/we-quit-uu-ministers-resign-fro...

The UUMA Board's censure of Todd Eklof

The Board's conduct in issuing censure has been disheartening and relationship-breaking...

* Violating the disciplinary process defined in our UUMA Code of Conduct – not just minor deviation, but dispensing with the most basic rudiments of fairness, like notification of the charges, presentation of evidence, and the opportunity to respond.

* Echoing the other letters of condemnation in disavowing logic, calling it a strategy of white supremacy culture.

* Citing no particulars from the book as evidence of its offense.

→ muusja.org/reprint-an-open-letter-from-white-uu-ministers/#P...

We recognize that a zealous commitment to "logic" and "reason" over all other forms of knowing is one of the foundational stones of White Supremacy Culture. Instead of accepting the frame of Rev. Eklof's arguments and debunking them, we instead affirm the following:

Individuals are being devalued because individual exercise of conscience can slow down changes the UUA is promoting.

→ uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening/theology#Ta...

- If freedom and individualism are our most important values, we have little to offer in these times.

← → uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening/accountabilit...

Differences in commitments, structures, and practices among affiliate groups dilute and endanger these critical commitments. Professional groups are wrestling with these at differing levels and, when engaged in anti-oppressive work, can be critical levers for change. Other groups, such as camps and conference centers, when failing to adopt contemporary standards, impede our progress as an Association. The scope of our work did not allow for the full

Democracy is not being prioritized. Elections are manipulated to not be truly competitive. The Board of Trustees proposed making the UUA President election non-competitive, although that was voted down at GA2021. The Board committed to implementing the COIC report before congregations could debate it and decide whether to follow through on the recommendations.

← → uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening/congregatio...

to determine the future of our faith. And while Unitarian Universalists value democracy, it is best not seen as democracy in the purely political sense. This is not about winning by vote alone but rather as honoring the voices of all—and listening to the call of conscience.

Board members discussed whether they would make a statement about the candidates, noting the need to speak with one voice. They recognized that the leadership of Board itself is being raised as an issue in the campaign. They agreed to consider making a statement at the May meeting that supports the slate put forward by the Nominating Committee, since those nominees affirms the Board's commitment to implementing the COIC report and recommendations. Board members agreed not make any endorsements prior to that meeting.

- Allowing the Presidential Search Committee to nominate “one or more candidates,” rather than requiring a competitive election of two or more nominations (parallel to current language for nomination of the Moderator)

Commission on Institutional Change Resolution

The Board reviewed the draft resolution to formalize its own commitment to following of the recommendations of the Commission on Institutional Change. Members recognized this commitment was happening in parallel to staff planning for implementation and the work of other UUA committees, UU organizations and congregations to consider the report. They recognized there is a need to develop a process for checking in with these other UU entities about the progress of their work on the report.

Efficiency and organizational values like adhering to Roberts Rules of Order are being devalued and disparaged (even though Roberts Rules is in the UUA Bylaws) because they are White ways of doing things.

← → uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening/congregatio...

- What stories or anecdotes illustrate how your group engages in practices that counter these practices of white-normed culture: perfectionism, defensiveness, valuing quantity over quality, worship of the written word, conflict avoidance, paternalism, either/ or thinking, power hoarding, paternalism, false sense of urgency, assuming a right to comfort, and individualism. [20]

Unitarian Universalist Association

Annual Report of the Board of Trustees 2016-17

In addition to continuing to streamline both our policies and the monitoring process the Board has begun to explore diverse models for shared facilitation and leadership. There is general agreement that Roberts Rules of Order can be overly restrictive. Roberts Rules is decision making process that reflects white supremacist culture. The Board is exploring more culturally inclusive, spiritually grounded and empowering ways to make decisions. Continuing education

Unreasonable standards of conduct for UU ministers were added in 2020. These include a potential charge of “tokenism” for making “... *any superficial gesture, however well intentioned, of accommodation to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion*” or “sense by a member of the dominant group of fulfilling an ethical mandate, of ‘doing the right thing,’ or of avoiding criticism”. Another unreasonable standard of conduct is a potential charge of “bullying and abuse” for “opposing”, which includes “*challenging another person’s perceptions, opinions, and thoughts*”, or “blocking”, which includes “*switching topics*” or “*using words or other means to stop a conversation*”.

When 13 long-serving UU Ministers resigned as a group from the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA) in September 2020, those newly implemented standards were two of the examples they gave for withdrawing their membership from the UUMA.

B. Tokenism

Tokenism in the context in which we practice refers to any superficial gesture, however well-intentioned, of accommodation to the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion of members of underrepresented, historically-marginalized groups. The practice of tokenism may include a sense by a member of the dominant group of fulfilling an ethical mandate, of “doing the right thing”, or of avoiding criticism. Within the context of our ministries, tokenism may appear, for example, in the areas of hiring practices and volunteer recruitment, congregational membership, and programming.

- Opposing: a pattern of arguing against anything someone says, challenging their perceptions, opinions, and thoughts. Treating another as an adversary, in effect saying “No” to everything, so a constructive conversation is impossible.
- Blocking: may include switching topics, accusations, or use of words or other means to stop conversation.

* Some of the new offenses outlined in the Code are outrageous, if not patently absurd...

– It is now Bullying & Emotional Abuse (defined in the Appendix) to exhibit a pattern of:

- “*challenging a person’s perceptions, opinions, and thoughts.*”
- “*switching topics*” or
- “*using words or other means to stop a conversation.*”

This is so absurd as to require no further comment.

– The new offense of Tokenism (defined in the Appendix) includes: “*any superficial gesture*” or “*sense by a member of the dominant group of fulfilling an ethical mandate, of ‘doing the right thing,’ or of avoiding criticism*” in efforts toward diversity, equity, and inclusion. While superficial gestures can indeed be irksome, it is outrageous – perhaps fanatical – to mandate diversity, equity, and inclusion but then make it misconduct to seem to be doing it to fulfill a mandate.

What is coming next:

(Note: This critique was created in February of 2022)

The proposed 8th Principle is a proxy for where the UUA board wants to take UU.

Guidelines for rewriting the UUA bylaws will be proposed in a Business Resolution at GA 2022. Included in the guidelines is a goal of creating an accountability mechanism. The guidelines infer that a realignment of power is needed. The goal is to shift control away from congregations and concentrate doctrine and policy making power in national UUA institutions. The rewrite is planned to be presented at the UUA General Assembly in 2023.

Hesitancy to support this concentration of power is dismissed as being an excessive focus on “*individualism*” and an “*allergy to authority and power*”.

Tamping down individualism is not just about individuals! Insistence on congregational autonomy can be framed as individualism at the group level.

uua.org/files/2022-02/prop_bus_res_02142022.pdf

changes. These new bylaws should create a governance system that supports the UUA in accountably achieving its mission and aspirations consistent with our core values. These values and goals should guide the new bylaws framework:

- Reflect our theological commitment to liberation and inclusion.
- Provide accountability to our long-standing anti-racist and anti-oppressive commitments.
- Create flexibility, allowing for innovation and experimentation.
- Provide clarity of role and authority among leaders and groups that support diverse leadership and the UUA's shared mission, values and Principles.

the possibility of an extensive rewrite of the bylaws, will be brought to the General Assembly for consideration at the 2023 General Assembly.

uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening/accountabilit...

For equity, inclusiveness, and diversity to flourish in our Association, a united commitment must be reflected in the identity documents of the Association and all affiliate organizations. The differing practices and levels of commitment from structural entity to structural entity within our Association is one of the ways

Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, and members of other historically marginalized groups are injured over and over again.

Differences in commitments, structures, and practices among affiliate groups dilute and endanger these critical commitments. Professional groups are wrestling with these at differing levels and, when engaged in anti-oppressive work, can be critical levers for change. Other groups, such as camps and conference centers, when failing to adopt contemporary standards, impede our progress as an Association. The scope of our work

complete review and revision of the bylaws with a strong draft completed and delivered to the Board by December 2021. Between December 2021 and April 2022, the bylaws group would get input from the Board of Trustees and other stakeholders, including wider constituent groups and congregations to provide two more revised drafts to the Board – one in February 2022 and another in April 2022.

theology and culture. In his essay “From iChurch to Beloved Community,” the Rev. Fred Muir writes of the “trinity of errors” that have come to define Unitarian Universalism. They are individualism, exceptionalism, and our allergy to authority.

uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening/governance

And another:

We have to come to an understanding of the word polity. And our kind of clinging to the word polity [to mean] each congregation can do whatever it wants. They can call the ministers it wants and whatever.... There is such a hardcore individualism that even colors the way we think about polity, which is a little bit more about the individuals coming into and being accountable and in collaboration with the other individual congregations; that's actually what polity was supposed to do.

A major rewrite of the existing 7 Principles in Article II of the UUA Bylaws will be proposed in 2023. The revisions will presumably also formally add the 8th Principle. GA 2021 Responsive Resolution #1 pretty much demands the addition of the 8th Principle as part of the re-write (without using the words "8th Principle").

At the very least, UU members should expect the concept of "accountability", and boundaries on individual prerogatives, to be imbedded in other Principles. The fourth principle (a free and responsible search for truth and meaning) appears to be a likely target for circumscription in the rewrite.

The UUA Board's vision for "accountability" will most likely be to make congregations answerable to national UU caucuses of historically marginalized identity groups. UU members would be answerable to congregation-level groups composed exclusively of members of historically marginalized identity groups.

The breadth of this accountability is unknown. Consider this: Will AIWs voted on at GA become mandates? AIWs tend to reflect leading-edge social justice activism, including controversial stances. Will action on all AIWs be included on the scorecard being used to judge whether a congregation can remain in the UU Association?

noted the Commission is encouraging UUs to stay flexible with their expectations for how language of all the principles may change, as they work towards holistic recommendations for the UUA principles, sources and all parts of Article II of the Bylaws.

We understand the work we are doing to be building on the strengths of the 8th Principle movement. Whatever flowers grow from the process of

I. GA 2021 Responsive Resolution to Include Systemic Anti-Racism in Principles

The Article II Study Commission stated in its report that it is requesting feedback about what to include in its recommendation for revising Article II, the Principles, Sources, and Purposes, of the UUA Bylaws. For that reason, we ask the Article II Commission and the Board to ensure proposed changes to Article II include in the Principles a clear and direct statement that accountable systemic anti-racist and anti-oppressive actions to build Beloved Community are part of what it means to be Unitarian Universalist.

of one another and our support for each person's spiritual growth. We discern an accountable love in our call for a responsible search for truth and meaning. Our affirmation of the right of conscience, and the right of

As a faith community, we place a high value on the free and responsible search for truth and meaning. Yet this has somehow come to be interpreted almost exclusively through an individualistic lens. We suggest that as a religious organization, bound together by choice, we operate as a collective based on principle, so that this "free and responsible" search is done within the boundaries of communities.

over the decades since the consolidation of Unitarian and Universalist, 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. One of the unintended consequences has been the atomized individualism of the search for truth and meaning without accountability to its impact in communities. This has a correlation with the ways in which justice priorities

Design Team

shared a brief update from the Design Team for the Board's COIC implementation, including planning for an ongoing accountability group.

Recommendation

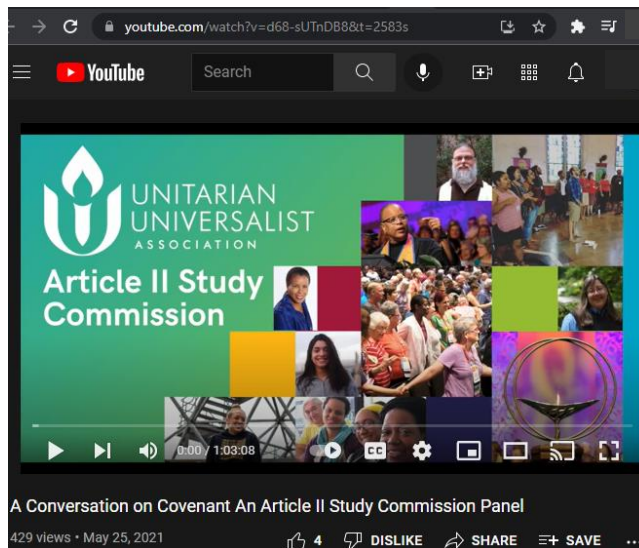
The UUA should establish an ongoing independent body to identify systemic changes and monitor accountability on work toward equity, inclusion, and diversity. This body should be based on representatives of groups of oppressed people and should have direct representation on the Association Board.

- **Action:** Establish an independent body through a vote at General Assembly to consist of one representative and one alternate from identity-based groups, including DRUUMM, BLUU, TRUUsT, and EqUual Access if they are willing to participate. Membership for this panel should be reviewed every two years to include all relevant

If the 8th Principle is adopted nationwide as part of the Article II rewrite, Unitarian Universalism is destined to become a denomination, not an association. Individual congregations will not be making their own decisions about how to interpret the eight Principles. This is sometimes what is implied when UU leaders say “we are a covenantal faith”.

The UUA Board of Trustees has already committed to pushing ahead and implementing the recommendations of the Commission on Institutional Change “Widening the Circle of Concern” report. The justification they give for taking this initiative instead of waiting for deeply debated UU congregational input, as explained at the Board’s September 2020 meeting, is their firm belief that “systemic racism and white supremacy culture exist in many Unitarian Universalist institutions”.

Basically, the UUA Board of Trustees believes White Supremacy Culture in UU is an urgent crisis that needs a prompt and robust response, so they are taking the initiative to make this happen. This expands their scope of active engagement beyond the missions found in the UUA Bylaws, now involving the board in creating theological and governance policy.



COIC Implementation

reported on UUA staff work to create an internal system to track and implement recommendations from the COIC report. The system is being led by a cross-staff COIC Implementation and Mission Alignment Team (CIMAT). He said that staff are very engaged in the process, that they are already undertaking a range of projects that the CIMAT will work to ensure are coordinated and accountable, and that the CIMAT will give a more detailed update on current implementation work at the January Board meeting.

Board of Trustees

MEETING: September 14, 2020, 8:00 pm, Eastern Time

EXHIBIT 1

Whereas systemic racism and white supremacy culture exist in many Unitarian Universalist institutions;

Whereas the UUA Board of Trustees appointed the Commission on Institutional Change in 2017;

Whereas the UUA Board of Trustees accepted their report (“Widening the Circle of Concern”) in June 2020;

Whereas there has been an unfortunate pattern of reports received without actions taken in the history of Unitarian Universalism, especially with regard to equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the UUA Board of Trustees will

43 Section C-2.2. Purposes.

44 The Unitarian Universalist Association shall devote its resources to
45 and exercise its corporate powers for religious, educational and
46 humanitarian purposes. The primary purpose of the Association is
47 to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new
48 congregations, extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist
49 institutions and implement its principles.

686

ARTICLE VI Board of Trustees

687 Section C-6.1. Responsibility.

688 The Board of Trustees shall conduct the affairs of the Association
689 and, subject to these Bylaws, shall carry out the Association's
690 policies and directives as provided by law.

691 Section 6.2. Powers.

692 The Board of Trustees shall act for the Association between
693 General Assemblies.

Conclusion

Voting “No” is justifiable

Many UU members worry that if they vote “No” on the proposed 8th Principle, it implies that they are not in favor of fighting against racism and oppression, and goals of effective inclusion of historically marginalized identity groups. But there is a middle ground.

- A legitimate argument is that UU’s prioritization of liberal Enlightenment values is not the root cause of the problem. It does not accurately explain why members of some identity groups feel UU is not inclusive enough. **The diagnosis is wrong.**
- Thus, dismantling UU’s historical foundation on liberal principles is the **wrong answer.**
- Making UU into a denomination with doctrine and policy dictated by a **central authority** is not the right direction. We are not allergic to authority and power. We are wary of consolidated power and recent unfair treatment of ministers makes us reluctant to give the UUA more control. UU should remain an association of independent congregations.
- Equal outcomes are a subjective target. There are no definitive criteria for judging whether equal outcomes have been achieved. This is an **unrealistic goal.** We should not commit to being held accountable for unrealistic goals that are judged with subjective criteria.

- Recent incidents of condemning expressions of disagreement from ministers demonstrates a **rush to judgement** and a disregard for due process. This pattern of intolerance towards ministers creates doubt about whether UU members will still be able to speak their mind without being unduly censored or censured.
- Some new standards of conduct for ministers are **unreasonable.** This creates doubt about whether judgements made by centralized UU bodies will be based on reasonable criteria.
- Being a UU member has never been about being compelled to think a specific way or act in a specific way. A lack of an enforced **dogma** is what attracts many people to UU. Putting boundaries on a right to conscience or a free and responsible search for truth and meaning would deny them spiritual wholeness.
- Making the dominant (White) identity group answerable to non-dominant identity groups is not the right answer. Having identity groups **judge each other** would almost certainly lead to tension and divisiveness. It would alienate many current and potential UU members and fracture, not build, a Beloved Community.
- It is OK to vote “No”, explaining that “I approve of most of the goals, but not this solution”.
- The ends do not justify the means.

Deeper discussions are needed. Changes of this magnitude require a deep and open discussion in every congregation. Most congregations are not having this discussion, because the wording of the proposed 8th Principle is so ambiguous. We should not be making an “accountable” commitment based on assumptions. **We need more clarity!**

References:

<i>(Description of Source)</i>	<i>(Section/Title)</i>	<i>(Excerpt)</i>
Actions		
8thprincipleuu.org BLUU Blog Post - April 5, 2017	The 8 th Principle - Background BLUU Urges Adoption of 8 th Principle	“imply this 8th principle, but ...” “moving beyond action plans”
Accountability		
Widening the Circle of Concern 8thprincipleuu.org	Accountability and Resources What does it mean to be accountable?	“of groups of oppressed people “to make sure whites do what”
Dismantle		
8thprincipleuu.org Article II Study Commission	Why Now? Charge	“purge ourselves and our ..” “free to revise, replace, or ...”
Oppressions		
Dr. Elias Ortega Facebook Post New Discourses Aero Magazine Widening the Circle of Concern	Release of COIC Report June 25, 2020 Eight Big Reasons Critical Race Theory ... Postmodernism Governance	“mobilizes aspects of Critical ...” “everyone else ... oppressed” “Morality is culturally relative” “their ways of being and doing ”
White Supremacy Culture		
Widening the Circle of Concern 8thprincipleuu.org Article II Study Commission	Introduction Why Now? Charge	“white supremacy culture” “exclusive practices of white...” “de-center habitual practices”
Racism		
Widening the Circle of Concern Widening the Circle of Concern Widening the Circle of Concern	Appendix I – Hiring Decision Findings Distinctions and Definitions Distinctions and Definitions	“outcomes rather than its intent “Colorblindness alone is not ...” “create different outcomes ...”
Beloved Community		
Rev. Fredric J. Muir Report to the UUA Board Jan-2016 Widening the Circle of Concern Recommendation to UUA Board Recommendation to UUA Board	From iChurch to Beloved Community Re-Imagining Covenant Task Force Congregations and Communities Re-Imagining Covenant Task Force Re-Imagining Covenant Task Force	192 nd Berry Street Essay (2012) “how they pledge to ... support” “commitment not comfort” “to one of mutual covenanting” “renew their connection bienni..
Our Institutions		
Widening the Circle of Concern Widening the Circle of Concern	Introduction Educating for Liberation	“culture within the Unitarian ...” “within one’s beloved religious”
Journeying Towards Spiritual Wholeness		
8thprincipleuu.org 1997 Business Resolution BLUU Blog Post - April 5, 2017 8thprincipleuu.org Widening the Circle of Concern	Why Now? Toward an Anti-Racist UU Association BLUU Urges Adoption of 8 th Principle Origin Accountability and Resources	“accountable to that commit...” “participants in a racist society” “97 resolution we are commit..” “our accountability mechanism” “work..is not interrupted again”

<i>(Description of Source)</i>	<i>(Section/Title)</i>	<i>(Excerpt)</i>
Current Trends		
UU Culture Is Being Replaced		
UUA Board Minutes Apr-2017	Endorse UU White Supremacy Teach In	“realities of racism...in (UU)”
UUA Board Minutes Apr-2017	Racism Audit Motion	“programming for White people
UUA Board Pressure to Reject White Culture		
Central East Congregation Events	Decentering Whiteness Workshop	“grounded..critical race theory”
Jones and Okun 1999 Paper	Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture	“damaging characteristics WSC”
Logic and Reason are Rejected		
UUMA White Ministers Letter	Condemnation of “ <i>The Gadfly Papers</i> ”	“logic and reason are ... WSC”
UUMA POCI Chapter Letter	Condemnation of “ <i>The Gadfly Papers</i> ”	“logic cannot be a primary tool “
Disagreement is Not Tolerated		
DRUUMM Letter	Condemnation of “ <i>The Gadfly Papers</i> ”	“weaponize white supremacy”
ARE Letter	Condemnation of “ <i>The Gadfly Papers</i> ”	“callous attempt...further strife”
Due Process is not being followed		
Letter to UUMA Board of Trustees	Request to the Board (re: Eklof censure)	“... taken without due process”
UUMA Board of Trustees Letter	Letter of Censure of Rev. Dr. Todd Eklof	“rather than ... legalistic frame“
Evidence of harm is not necessary		
Letter from 13 UU Ministers	“We Quit” - Mass resignation from UUMA	“dispensing with ... evidence”
UUMA White Ministers Letter	Condemnation of “ <i>The Gadfly Papers</i> ”	“Instead of accepting the frame
Individualism is being devalued		
Widening the Circle of Concern	Theology	“individualism ... little to offer”
Widening the Circle of Concern	Accountability and Resources	“Differences ... dilute and ...”
Democracy is not Being Prioritized		
Widening the Circle of Concern	Congregations and Communities	“best if not political democracy”
UUA Board Meeting Apr-2021	UUA Board Election	“since those nominees affirms ”
UUA Board Meeting Mar-2021	Bylaw Amendments	“rather than ... competitive”
UUA Board Minutes Sep-2020	Commitment to Implement COIC Report	“reports without actions taken”
Efficiency and Organizational Values Disparaged		
Widening the Circle of Concern	Congregations and Communities	“counter practices white culture
UUA Board 2017	Annual Report of UUA Board (2016-2017)	“Roberts Rules reflects WSC”
Unreasonable Standards of Conduct		
UUMA Guidelines	Addendum	“superficial gesture”
UUMA Guidelines	Addendum	“challenging their perceptions”
Letter from 13 UU Ministers	“We Quit” - Mass resignation from UUMA	“outrageous, if not absurd”

(Source)

(Topic)

(Point of Emphasis)

What is Coming Next

Bylaw Changes

[UUA Board Packet Feb-2022](#)

[Widening the Circle of Concern](#)

[UUA Board Meeting Aug-2021](#)

[UU World - Spring 2019](#)

[Widening the Circle of Concern](#)

Proposed Business Resolution for GA2022
Accountability and Resources
Bylaws Group Update
The Power of We – Susan Frederick-Gray
Governance

Bylaw changes proposed 2023
Congregational differences bad
Complete revision of bylaws
Covenant antidote to individual
“individualism...colors...polity”

Principle Changes

[UUA Board Meeting Jun-2021](#)

[UUA Beliefs - What We Believe](#)

[Article II Study Commission Blog](#)

[Article II Study Commission Blog](#)

[Widening the Circle of Concern](#)

[Widening the Circle of Concern](#)

Article II Study Commission Update
Principles
Thoughts about incorporating 8th Principle
Musings about study commission mission
Methodology
Theology

Flexible expectations about chgs
Existing 7 Principles of UU
Principle changes reveal in 2023
“Accountable” 4th Principle?
“Boundaries” on 4th Principle?
“Accountable search for truth”?

Governance Changes

[UUA Board Meeting Mar-2021](#)

[Widening the Circle of Concern](#)

[Widening the Circle of Concern](#)

[Widening the Circle of Concern](#)

[Article II Commission Video](#)

Design Team Update
Accountability and Resources
Accountability and Resources
Accountability and Resources
Panel Discussion about Covenant

Accountability being designed?
“work...is not interrupted again”
“establish an ongoing ... body”
“from identity-based groups”
UU is too individualistic?

UUA Board Initiatives

[UUA Board Meeting Dec-2020](#)

[UUA Board Minutes Sep-2020](#)

[UUA Bylaws 2021](#)

[UUA Board Packet Apr-2021](#)

[UUA Board Packet Apr-2021](#)

COIC Implementation and Mission Alignment Team - Driving COIC Changes
Commitment to Implement COIC Report
Article VI – Board of Trustees
President’s Report To The Board
President’s Report To The Board

COIC Report is road map for UU.
“carry out Association policies”
Create Theology Policy
Create Governance Policy

Primary Sources:

<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening>

<https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/background>

<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission>

<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/board/packets>

https://www.uua.org/files/2021-08/uua_bylaws_2021.pdf

<https://www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/principles>

Widening the Circle of Concern
8th Principle analysis by BLUU
Article II Study Commission
UUA Board Meeting Minutes
UUA Bylaws
7 Principles of UU

Other Sources:

[The Gadfly Papers: Three Inconvenient Essays by One Pesky Minister](#)

[A Self-Confessed "White Supremacy Culture"](#)

[Used to Be UU: The Systematic Attack on UU Liberalism](#)

[The Gadfly Affair](#)

[Cynical Theories](#)

Todd Eklof
Anne Schneider
Frank Casper and Jay Kiskel
Todd F. Eklof
Helen Pluckrose/James Lindsay