



Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing

One Hundred Years of Faith, Hope, Love and Action, 1916 to 2016

CHURCHWIDE RACIAL JUSTICE PROJECT—DECEMBER 2015

THIS IS THE THIRD MONTH OF OUR RACIAL JUSTICE PROJECT AND THERE HAS BEEN STRONG PARTICIPATION IN THE VARIOUS AREAS.

About 45 people are participating in the monthly Reflection Groups (there's always room for more participants); 30 attended the first movie screening; many have read the suggested books and about 12 attended one of the two book discussions on "Waking up White and How I Found Myself in the Story of Race". Others have attended outside programs on the subject of racism, participated in direct action and contributed their time to the Houses of Healing Correspondence Course, to HomeFront, and to the Church of the Living Fellowship pen pal program with incarcerated UUs.

"I am not asking you as a white person to see yourself as an enslaver. I'm asking you as an American to see all of the freedoms that you enjoy and see how they are rooted in things that the country you belong to condoned or actively participated in the past."

Ta-Nehisi Coates, Author

Opportunities for Participation in UUCWC's Racial Justice Project

There will be fewer offerings during December but we're still suggesting books and articles to read as well as other possibilities. Please be sure to check out this entire packet for thoughtful and interesting information and ideas, including a pastoral message on the Movement for Black Lives from UUA President Peter Morales.

"Spirit in Practice" Reflection Groups

Gather in the monthly Racial Justice Reflection Groups. What they are:

A place to connect with yourself and with others in your group, in the experience and conversation of race.

A place to explore your own challenges, capacities and place.

A place to see more clearly where you stand, and in knowing this, to honor it, and perhaps to let go and move on.

The December reflection groups will be exploring the theme of *Expectation* through the "danger of a single story." Much of the work we are doing this year is based in the singular story we tell of certain people. Come and explore who gets to tell these stories, how they came to be, who we are in that process, and how this shapes our expectation of ourselves and other.

Groups are currently scheduled as follows:

First Sunday of the month: 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Second Thursday of the month: 10:00 to 12:00 p.m.

Fourth Monday of the month: 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Fourth Wednesday of the month: 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

TO REGISTER, PLEASE EMAIL ARE@UUCWC.ORG LISTING THREE (3) CHOICES IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE.

HomeFront Opportunities

(Facilitator: Ronnie Dobrowolski)

HomeFront's Sewing Space – Holiday Open House, December 12, 2015, 9 AM to Noon
HomeFront, 1880 Princeton Avenue, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

HomeFront's newly created Sewing Space provides skills training, income, pride and empowerment to moms who are working hard to achieve self-sufficiency. If you'd like to shop for truly special holiday gifts with a great story behind them, come to the Sewing Space Holiday Open House. Holiday Gifts and artwork will be on sale. Come shop for one of a kind hand-made items such as: handbags, hand-painted re-usable shopping bags, reupholstered chair seat covers, and cheery throw pillows. Artists will be on hand to discuss their work.

What UUCWC volunteers did in November:

- *Seven UUCWC members volunteered to help with HomeFront's Art & Collectables Sale on Saturday, November 7.*
- *Ten UUCWC volunteers helped organize, sort mountains of food and do what needed to be done to help get the HF Thanksgiving Dinner Baskets ready for HomeFront families. A group was there on Monday, November 23, from 10 am- 2:30 pm and a group was there the following morning as well. They accomplished a lot and enjoyed their time together.*
- *Thirty UUCWC families donated Thanksgiving Dinner Baskets*

The above were in addition to UUCWC's regular Monday night HomeFront tutoring program.

In December, there will be the Annual HomeFront holiday events at church, specifically the Craft Party for the HomeFront and UUCWC kids (sponsored by Children's Religious Education), and the Christmas Party for the young people in the Monday tutoring program. You can support the Christmas Party by making a donation to cover the cost of purchasing gift cards for the children. Contact Sarah Burke or Bernie Ruekgauer for more information.

Individual Volunteer Opportunities at the Family Campus in Ewing:

There are many volunteer opportunities for individuals 15 years and older which can be found on the UUCWC's RJP website page, on the lobby bulletin board and at <http://www.homefrontnj.org/polVolunteer.cfm> If you are interested, contact HomeFront directly at 609-989-9417 or at getinvolved@homefrontnj.org.

Each month we'll be highlighting a couple of these opportunities for you to check out:

- **Homework Helpers**
Assist the children at the Family Preservation Center with their homework Mon – Thurs from 4 pm – 5:30 pm
- **Free Store**
Every morning the HomeFront truck takes all of the clothing and small household items that were donated the previous day to the Free Store. Volunteer needs involve assisting with unloading, sorting and organizing the items in the store.

The RJP implementation team would be grateful if you could email them at racialjustice@uucwc.org and let them know what you're doing. Thank you.

Book Suggestions

(Facilitator: Bernice Husk)

The book we suggested for October was *"Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race"* by Debbie Irving, " In *Waking Up White*, Irving tells her often cringe-worthy story with such openness that readers will turn every page rooting for her-and ultimately for all of us." The discussion groups about this book were lively and eye-opening. **Even though we won't be discussing the book again, it's still worth you taking the time to read it. Three copies are available for loan from the Journey Toward Wholeness Library.**

We're suggesting two books for December going into January. There will be no discussion groups in December but there will be some in January and February, dates to be determined. Both of these books are quite extraordinary and we highly recommend them! They are:

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates

"In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race," a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?"

On the Run: Fugitive Life in An American City by Alice Goffman

"Forty years in, the War on Drugs has done almost nothing to prevent drugs from being sold or used, but it has nonetheless created a little-known surveillance state in America's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. Arrest quotas and high-tech surveillance techniques criminalize entire blocks, and transform the very associations that should stabilize young lives—family, relationships, jobs—into liabilities, as the police use such relationships to track down suspects, demand information, and threaten consequences.

Alice Goffman spent six years living in one such neighborhood in Philadelphia, and her close observations and often harrowing stories reveal the pernicious effects of this pervasive policing. Goffman introduces us to an unforgettable cast of young African American men who are caught up in this web of warrants and surveillance—some of them small-time drug dealers, others just ordinary guys dealing with limited choices. All find the web of presumed criminality, built as it is on the very associations and friendships that make up a life, nearly impossible to escape."

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

(Facilitator: Barbara Jensen)

Be sure to investigate the library of children's books in the Crossings Room on Sundays for parents to check out for a period of time. In the back of each book there will be paper with some starter questions to discuss with your child. There will also be room for the reader to share their experience of a book with the future readers. The selection will continue to expand as Barbara identifies more books.

Restorative Justice

(Facilitators: Pris Gaver and Michelle Hunt)

"Houses of Healing – A Prisoner's Guide to Inner Power and Freedom"

Congregant Pris Gaver has been facilitating this course for 18 years. It involves a 13-week commitment for two hours per week, beginning in early April. You would be an intern sitting in on the groups that Pris runs, at the Jones Farm Minimum Security Correctional Facility for Men in West Trenton. Participants will be required to take a volunteer training course run by the facility. **Three congregants have signed up to sit in on these courses and there's potentially room for one or two more for the spring course.**

"Houses of Healing" Correspondence Course:

This is a one-on-one correspondence program with a time requirement of 45-60 minutes per session (13 sessions), and is designed to be completed within 6 to 8 month. You would be set up with an inmate and would help them to do the course by mail. All mail from inmates is sent to the Lionheart Foundation and then forwarded to facilitators and vice versa. Training is provided including 4 hours of video, if wanted. **Several congregants have already registered to do this course with inmates and others are encouraged to consider doing this as well.**

"New Life in the Beloved Community"

This is an opportunity to help mentor an inmate being released from the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women in Clinton. The organizers are trying to build a statewide network of Community Mentor Teams (2-3 people per location) who would work with the women for at least 10 months as they transition back with their families and communities. Training and certification are provided.

Pris Gaver is the facilitator for the above opportunities and will gladly provide more information about each area. However, please do not contact Pris directly but rather send an email to racialjustice@uucwc.org and the project implementation team will ensure that it is sent to Pris.

UU Church of the Larger Fellowship Letter Writing Ministry:

Participants will engage in a letter correspondence with incarcerated people. One of UUCWC's congregants has been doing this for many years and six more congregants are now participating. CLF is always in need of more participants. Most CLF prisoner-members are brand-new to Unitarian Universalism. With no access to the web or UU Sunday services, they can only learn about Unitarian Universalism from the mailings sent by CLF and the letters they exchange with CLF staff and other UUs.

Michelle Hunt is the coordinator for this program and can provide more information. However, please do not contact Michelle directly but rather send an email to racialjustice@uucwc.org and the project implementation team will ensure that it is sent to Michelle.

Study Group for a Direct Action Project for the 2016-2017 Church Year

(Facilitator: Rich DiGeorgio)

The Study Group is actively soliciting ideas from the congregation for direct action projects that we might be able pursue in the 2016-2017 church year. **Please send your ideas to racialjustice@uucwc.org or complete one of the forms available in the lobby.** The group meets monthly on the first Tuesday and all are welcome.

Suggested Articles for December

(Facilitators: Mary Lou Dahms and Mary McKillip)

Links to the articles will be on the Racial Justice Project webpage, www.uucwc.org/faith-in-action/churchwide-racial-justice-project.

We know you have lots to do and not enough time but please consider checking out at least a couple of these articles!

Jimmy Carter and Jacqueline Woodson on Race, Religion and Rights. New York Times July 2015
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/26/fashion/jimmy-carter-and-jacqueline-woodson-on-race-religion-and-rights.html?_r=0

When you're the only White person in the room. John Blake, CNN

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/11/us/white-minority/index.html?sr=fb091414whiteminority1pstorylink>

Yes, I'm an Angry Black Woman. Dr. Stacey Patton, The Daily Dose

<http://www.damemagazine.com/2015/08/03/yes-im-angry-black-woman>

I, Racist. John Metta, Those People

<https://thspp.com/i-racist-538512462265#.u6pajzu46>

This American Life, Harper High School. Podcast

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/487/harper-high-school-part-one>

OUTSIDE EVENT IN DECEMBER

Building One New Jersey, Labor/Civil Rights Forum, Thursday, Dec 17, 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, Mercer County College Conference Center, 1200 Old Trenton Road West Windsor NJ 08550

The forum will be an important and timely conversation that will draw upon their shared history to better inform their response to today's challenges, especially those around issues of racial justice and economic inequality. A critical yet often forgotten part of the labor and civil rights struggle was the vital role of leadership training. The December 17 forum will help to launch and support Building One New Jersey's Leadership Training Program in 2016 that will be essential to advancing a unifying social justice agenda in New Jersey with BONJ partners and allies in labor and civil rights.

For more information and to register, go to www.buildingoneamerica.org. You can also email info@buildingoneamerica.org or call Building One New Jersey at (856) 854-2550 if you have any questions.

Pastoral Message from UUA President Peter Morales on the Movement for Black Lives

<http://www.uua.org/news/press-release/pastoral-message-movement-black-lives>

November 5, 2015

UUA President Peter Morales offers the following pastoral message on the Movement for Black Lives:

I am inspired and moved as I see Unitarian Universalists across the country stand on the side of love as they stand alongside grassroots activists in the Black Lives Matter movement. I see example after example of congregations and individuals courageously facing threats and vandalism. To those who have acted with courage, thank you. You remind us of who we are and what we stand for. This struggle is ultimately about respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every human being.

Black Lives Matter is a cry of outrage in the face of the specter of the repeated killings of black people. And it is more than this. It is a cry of protest against the continued marginalization of millions of African Americans. The killings, horrific as they are, are the tip of the iceberg. The killings are the most visible and extreme examples of a society that allows racism to destroy the lives and aspirations of tens of millions. Beneath the anger are anguish and tragedy.

The protests and the banners and the window signs are the latest actions in our long tradition of struggling against racism in America. We have stood with African American leaders in the Moral Mondays movement. We were there in Selma fifty years ago and again this spring. The best of our forebears stood against slavery.

While the Black Lives Matter movement is part of a long tradition, it also presents new challenges. This is a decentralized grassroots movement with no single leader and no institutional foundation. There is no Martin Luther King, Jr., issuing a call to Selma. Today we are called to be present, to listen deeply, to follow, to bear witness, to practice humility. Today's Selma is everywhere.

This won't be easy for us. We are used to working with organizations with clearer leadership and advocating for specific public policy changes. We are called to respond rather than plan, to follow rather than lead.

Along the way, I would have us keep several critical points in mind.

First, Black Lives Matter is *not* about saying black lives matter and that the lives of others—Latinos, LGBTQ

people, Native Americans, Muslims, Asians—do not matter. To support the cry for justice and respect that Black Lives Matter represents does not diminish the need to work for climate justice, economic justice, or any other kind of justice. There is, after all, only one kind of justice. Justice is ultimately about recognizing the worth of every single person.

Second, we must realize that the same spiritual failing that feeds anti-black racism is the same spiritual disease that marginalizes any group or person. We must connect the dots. The horrid impulse behind the killings of African Americans is the same impulse that allows migrants to languish in for-profit detention centers, that does violence to LGBTQ people, that murders Muslims and Jews.

Finally, and this is most important, we must not allow the call to support Black Lives Matter to create animosity among ourselves. Yes, we will disagree about tactics and, heaven help us, about how we should word our resolutions. Let's talk respectfully to one another. Let's listen deeply. Let's focus on our highest aspirations and our affection for one another. Let's hold one another tightly and hold our opinions loosely.

I have been inspired by what I have seen our people do. Let us continue to inspire one another. When we let love guide us, we will do the right thing.

More information can be found at:

- Learn more about our racial justice work at <http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism>
- Discover five ways to support Black Lives Matter at <http://www.uuworld.org/articles/5-ways-support-black-lives-matter>
- Read the *UU World* article "What Churches Learn When They Proclaim Black Lives Matter" at <http://www.uuworld.org/articles/black-lives-matter-pushback>
- Read the 2015 Action of Immediate Witness "Support the Black Lives Matter Movement" at <http://www.uua.org/statements/support-black-lives-matter-movement>

Did you know . . .

. . . that Americans of color, including the one million black GIs who'd risked their lives in World War II, were largely excluded from the GI Bill? Although black GIs were technically eligible for the bill's benefits, in reality our higher education, finance and housing systems made it difficult if not impossible for African American GIs to access them.

. . . that a DNA study showed that the closest matches are people with *different* racial and/or ethnic backgrounds and that the great variation occurs *within* ethnic groups?

. . . that the term "Caucasian" has its origins in a French jeweler's fascination with the "beautiful, naked, white skinned women" he saw in the Caucasus Mountains in the mid-1600s? The term was promoted in 1785 by a German philosopher in his book *The Outline of the History of Mankind* and this was subsequently reinforced by a published theory dividing humans into four categories, Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian and American. Only Caucasian has endured as a racial label.

Adapted from "Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race" by Debbie Irving

The Council for Faith in Action has overall responsibility for UUCWC's Racial Justice Project. If you have questions or concerns about the project, please contact Sallie Dunner, CFA Chair and project coordinator, or another member of the project implementation team, Nathalie Edmond, Lynne Quinto, Jennifer Rehbein, and Dan Tuft.