



Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing

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

CHURCHWIDE RACIAL JUSTICE PROJECT—FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

How successful is the Racial Justice Project so far? Of course, this depends on the definition of success. Is it reading a book, attending a movie screening, reading a suggested article? Is it actual participation in the various activities offered? Or is it simply being aware of the conversation? It's all of these and more. Doors have been opened to the myriad racial injustices in the US, both historic and current, to a better understanding of white privilege, to reaching out and reaching in.

As of this writing, over 90 congregants have participated in the project in one way or another, many taking advantage of more than one opportunity. Fifty people are attending the monthly reflection groups, each movie screening has attracted about between 30 and 40 people, the book discussions have been well attended (even by a few people who weren't able to read the book!) and the restorative justice and volunteer opportunities have had many participants.

So, as the year has progressed, approximately 35% of the congregation has actively participated in the various opportunities and there are others who've been quietly paying attention and thinking about the issues raised. Is this what YOU consider successful? What worked? What didn't? The Council for Faith In Action and the Racial Justice Team want to have your input and will be providing you with the opportunity to express your opinions in a short survey that will be distributed this Spring.

Excerpted from "A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST "BLACK LIVES MATTER THEOLOGY"

by **Kenny Wiley** (UU World senior editor and director of faith formation at Prairie UU Church in Parker, Colorado)

"If, while I hear the wild shriek of the slave mother robbed of her little ones, I do not open my mouth, am I not guilty?" Lucy Stone

In the Denver community I strive to be a racial justice activist. Whenever I introduce myself in justice circles, I say that my Unitarian Universalist faith informs my work. "My faith," I have said, "calls me to proclaim that black lives matter—that *my* life matters." Deep down I've been asking myself: *Is that true?* I knew that I felt called; was it *Unitarian Universalism* calling me here? . . . doubts remained because of the hateful and/or ignorant comments some Unitarian Universalists have sent my way since I joined the racial justice movement. The doubts remained because of the silence and seeming indifference I've felt from some of my fellow UUs, even as others have gotten quite involved.

I needed a *Unitarian Universalist Black Lives Matter* theology. I needed more than the First Principle—I needed to dive into our history and our theology and find the deeds, words, and voices that could help me feel *theologically* grounded in racial justice work.

When confronted with white, privileged Unitarian Universalists derailing the 'Black Lives Matter' message with statements like "all lives matter!" or "I don't get why black people are so angry all the time," the first principle starts to feel like a lie. A deep dive into the archives of our Universalist and Unitarian ancestors—and of our nation's history—unearths a more profound explanation.

For the full article go to: <http://kennywiley.com/2015/03/26/a-unitarian-universalist-black-lives-matter-theology/>.

“Spirit in Practice” Monthly 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

February's theme is exploring what it means to be a People of Desire. In this month's reflection group we will explore how our desire to do this work is different for each of us, and how these differences allow us to work together or hinder our ability to move forward.

The theme for March is to explore what it means to be a People of Liberation. As we near the close of our project for this year, it is fitting that we take on such a question

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE EMAIL ARE@UUCWC.ORG

Update on the Martin Luther King Day of Service at HomeFront

More than 30 people from the UUCWC community worked at HomeFront on MLK Day. This was twice the number of people who volunteered last year! Among various tasks, the volunteers

- Organized and shelved food donated to the HomeFront Food Pantry
- Sorted and organized linens, clothing, etc. donated to HomeFront
- Assisted with tasks in the Sewing Space, such as cutting fabric and organizing.

HomeFront Volunteer Opportunities

(Facilitator: Ronnie Dobrowolski)

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. Examples are:

Serving on an Event Committee & Volunteer to Participate

- Be a part of the committee to help with the Annual Events (Poker Tournament & Casino Night (February), HomeFront Run for Hope 5k Run (May), ArtJam (June)) and volunteer at the event.

Help by tutoring children offsite (18 years or older):

- Wednesdays 6 pm - 8 pm, Tutor children 5-12 years old @ ETS in Princeton
- Wednesdays 6 pm -8 pm, Tutor Teens at the Lawrence Community Center
Tuesdays 6 pm-8 pm, Tutor 5-17 year olds @ The Lawrence Library

The RJP implementation team would be grateful if you could email them at racialjustice@uucwc.org and let them know if you volunteer for one of these individual opportunities. Thank you.

Movie Screening

(Facilitator: Jim Bicksler)

“The House I Live In” - Friday, March 11, at 7:00 p.m.

Pizza, beverages and snacks will be provided.

Please sign up on the Racial Justice bulletin board in the lobby or by email to racialjustice@uucwc.org.

For the past 40 years, the war on drugs has resulted in more than 45 million arrests, \$1 trillion dollars in government spending, and America's role as the world's largest jailer. Yet for all that, drugs are cheaper, purer, and more available than ever. Filmed in more than twenty states, *The House I Live In* captures heart-wrenching stories of those on the front lines — from the dealer to the grieving mother, the narcotics officer to the senator, the inmate to the federal judge — and offers a penetrating look at the profound human rights

implications of America's longest war.

The film recognizes drug abuse as a matter of public health, and investigates the tragic errors and shortcomings that have resulted from framing it as an issue for law enforcement. It also examines how political and financial corruption has fueled the war on drugs, despite persistent evidence of its moral, economic, and practical failures. The drug war in America has helped establish the largest prison-industrial system in the world, contributing to the incarceration of 2.3 million men and women and is responsible for untold collateral damage to the lives of countless individuals and families, with a particularly destructive impact on black America. "It'd be one thing if it was draconian and it worked. But it's draconian and it doesn't work. It just leads to more," says David Simon, creator of the HBO series, *The Wire*.

Instead of questioning a campaign of such epic cost and failure, those in public office generally advocate for harsher penalties for drug offenses, lest they be perceived as soft on crime. Thanks to mandatory minimum sentencing, a small offense can put a nonviolent offender behind bars for decades — or even life. Many say these prisoners are paying for fear instead of paying for their crime.

"If you stand in a federal court, you're watching poor and uneducated people being fed into a machine like meat to make sausage. It's just bang, bang, bang, bang. Next!" says journalist Charles Bowden.

But there's a growing recognition among those on all sides that the war on drugs is a failure. At a time of heightened fiscal instability, the drug war is also seen as economically unsustainable. Beyond its human cost at home, the unprecedented violence in Mexico provides a daily reminder of the war's immense impact abroad, and America has at last begun to take the first meaningful steps toward reform. At this pivotal moment, the film promotes public awareness of the problem while encouraging new and innovative pathways to domestic drug policy reform.

Book Discussion

(Facilitator: Bernice Husk)

On the Run: Fugitive Life in An American City

Monday, February 29, 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Friday, March 4, 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Snacks will be provided at the discussions.

On the Run is available online at Amazon and Barnes & Noble. There are also copies of each book in the Journey Toward Wholeness Library and a couple of copies are available for sale @ \$15 each. Contact racialjustice@uucwc.org if you'd like to purchase one.

Please sign-up for the discussions on the sheet in the lobby or email racialjustice@uucwc.org

Upcoming Book Suggestion for April/May

"Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption" by Bryan Stevenson

Just Mercy is the UUA Common Read for the current church year.

A powerful true story about the potential for mercy to redeem us, and a clarion call to fix our broken system of justice—from one of the most brilliant and influential lawyers of our time.

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children

trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn't commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machinations, and legal brinkmanship—and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever.

JUST MERCY is at once an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer's coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of justice.

"It will come as no surprise to those who have heard Stevenson speak or perused any of his briefs that "Just Mercy" is an easy read — a work of style, substance and clarity. Mixing commentary and reportage, he adroitly juxtaposes triumph and failure, neither of which is in short supply, against an unfolding backdrop of the saga of Walter McMillian, an innocent black Alabaman sentenced to death for the 1986 murder of an 18-year-old white woman."

(from review by Rob Warden, Washington Post)

Several UUCWC folks have already read this book and recommend it very highly.

Discussions of *Just Mercy* will be scheduled for end April/early May. Copies will be available for sale in March in the Crossings Room.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE LIBRARY OF BOOKS FOR CHILDREN!

(Facilitator: Barbara Jensen)

Barbara Jensen has put together a great collection of books for children on issues of race and justice. The library is in the Crossings Room after the second service on Sunday and can be checked out for a period of time. In the back of each book there is paper with some starter questions to discuss with your child. There is also a place 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.

Suggested Articles for February/March

(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.

"Water Cooler Conversations"

To facilitate discussion, especially during Sunday coffee hours, we will be featuring one article each week. Sunday's Crossings II will provide some basic info about the article along with link information. The link will then be included in the weekly church email, as well as on the UUCWC website and the UUCWC Community FaceBook page. The hope is that by the next Sunday, people will have read the article and will be open to discussion as it arises. This idea came from Barbara Jensen as a way to facilitate engagement by (a) people actually reading the articles and then (b) be willing to share their thoughts with others. Thank you, Barbara, for this idea.

The Murder of Sean Bell: From pain to poetry. Renee Watson, Rethinking Schools.org,

http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/23_01/sean231.shtml

Diversity is for White People: The big lie behind a well-intentioned word. Ellen Berrey, Salon.com

http://www.salon.com/2015/10/26/diversity_is_for_white_people_the_big_lie_behind_a_well_intended_word/

The Fall of the Lion, School re-segregation. Lisa Rab, Charlotte Magazine

<http://www.charlottemagazine.com/Charlotte-Magazine/September-2014/The-Fall-of-the-Lions/>

When it Comes to Illegal Drug Use, White America Does the Crime, Black America Gets the Time. Saki Knafo,

Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/17/racial-disparity-drug-use_n_3941346.html

Participation Opportunities for Restorative Justice

(Facilitators: Pris Gaver and Michelle Hunt)

"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 months. You would be paired with an inmate and 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 are participating in 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. However, please do not contact Pris directly but rather send an email to racialjustice@uucwc.org for forwarding 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 for forwarding to Michelle.

OUTSIDE EVENTS

"America ... We Served!" Three Centuries of African American Soldiers

Saturday and Sunday, February 27 & 28, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Old Barracks, Trenton

Celebrate Black History Month at The Old Barracks Museum! Come hear about the brave African American soldiers that helped shape our nation's history! Learn about the integral role they played in our military, from the early days of our nation's infancy all the way up to World War II. Meet the dedicated reenactors and living historians who will be exhibiting throughout the day, sharing their knowledge and passion about African American military history with our visitors. Represented regiments will include The Harlem Hellfighters of WWI, the 6th Regiment USCT of the Civil War, and others. You will not want to miss this unique and educational experience, great for the entire family!

UUCWC's own Leon Brooks is a long-time re-enactor at The Old Barracks and offers the following insight:

"Two weeks after Bunker Hill, George Washington arrived in Cambridge to take command of the army. To his chagrin, he saw blacks among the ranks. 175 had fought at the historic battle. On July 10th, after a council of war, his headquarters issued an order forbidding the recruitment of British deserters, vagabonds and Negroes. But of course you knew all this from your history class in school. No? Don't be denied. Come out and raise your BHQ with us."

Did you know . . .

- About 14 million Whites and 2.6 million African Americans report using an illicit drug
- 5 times as many Whites are using drugs as African Americans, yet African Americans are sent to prison for drug offenses at 10 times the rate of Whites
- African Americans represent 12% of the total population of drug users, but 38% of those arrested for drug offenses, and 59% of those in state prison for a drug offense
- African Americans serve virtually as much time in prison for a drug offense (58.7 months) as whites do for a violent offense (61.7 months)

(Sentencing Project)

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, racialjustice@uucwc.org

Racial Justice Project Calendar, February 14 through March 12, 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
February 14 30 Days of Love Sunday	15	16 Council for Faith in Action Meeting 7:00 pm. Open to all who are interested.	17	18	19	20
21	22 Reflection Group 7:00 to 9:00 pm	23 Reflection Group 1:00 to 3:00 pm	24 Reflection Group 7:00 to 9:00 pm	25	26	27 Three Centuries of African American Service, Old Barracks, Trenton
28 Three Centuries of African American Service, Old Barracks, Trenton	29 "On The Run" Book Discussion 10:30 am – 12:00pm	March 1 2016 Project Study Group Meeting 7:00 pm Open to all who are interested.	2	3	4 "On The Run" Book Discussion 7:00 to 8:30 pm	5
6 Reflection Group 12:30 to 2:30 pm	7	8	9	10 Reflection Group 10:00 am to 12:00 pm	11 Movie Screening 7:00 pm "The House I Live In"	12