



# Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing

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

### CHURCHWIDE RACIAL JUSTICE PROJECT—MARCH/APRIL 2016

**This is the last Racial Justice Project Bulletin for the 2015/2016 church year.**

This has been a challenging and exciting year. Challenging because we've examined serious issues, whether by attending a reflection group, reading a book, attending a movie or participating in social action initiatives. Exciting because we've come together in a common goal, to understand the dynamics of racism and white privilege, and to consider how we might begin to dismantle these social constructs.

**We will be continuing the project into the 2016/2017 church year.**

The UUCWC Board asked for input about what folks want to see going forward for UUCWC and continuing the Racial Justice initiative was important to participants in the survey. As of this writing, the Council for Faith in Action and the Racial Justice team are starting to develop next year's activities. It is expected that there will be some workshops, we'll continue with book discussions and movies, and of course, social action opportunities. Other suggestions and ideas are being considered.

**If you have thoughts about what we might do next year, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO CONTACT US at [racialjustice@uucwc.org](mailto:racialjustice@uucwc.org).** Is there a book you think we should read, a movie you'd like to see screened, a social action project you'd like to promote? **Your input is valuable.**

**For the Council for Faith in Action:**

Sallie Dunner (Chair), Karen DiGeorgio, Rich DiGeorgio, Mary Lou Dahms, Nathalie Edmond, Leah Edwards, Bobbye Galloway, Bud Johnson, Nick Mellis, Tony Panzetta, Lynne Quinto, Dan Tuft, Mike Wilson

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### GETTING OVER MYSELF

*The liberation of letting go of my self-image*

**"Waking up White" by Debbie Irving**

If the idea of being in the midst of a courageous conversation is making you break out in hives, let me give you another way to think about it. One of the motivations for me to get into and stay in the conversation is knowing that in our racialized social scheme, white people have been given not only better access to America's goods and services but disproportionate amounts of comfort, safety, and choice, including the ultimate choice – whether or not to deal with racism.

Choosing to engage in the effort to dismantle racism promises to bring with it discomfort, yet how can I compare my discomfort to what people of color endure? If someone had told me, prior to this journey, that I would attend a workshop where I would be called out by three enraged black women in front of 150 onlookers, people of color, I would have cringed and said "No thanks, I don't want to go down that road." When I think about the fear of saying something wrong that held me back for so long, I think I was a whole lot less afraid of hurting a person of color, actually, than I was of saying something that would expose my ignorance and make me look bad. I was working overtime to protect my self-

image and my ego. As my friend Verna Myers likes to say, “Get over yourself!”

How silly, really, that when confronting a four-hundred-year-old problem that includes millions of people, I should put my own self-image front and center. Where did this fervent desire to protect some imagined self-image come from, anyway? In a culture that espouses belief in the rugged individual, placing myself as a solo player at the center of my universe isn’t all that surprising. After all, if the belief that success or failure rides on individual merit, it puts a lot of pressure on individuals to be damn near perfect. The sense of freedom that came when I let go of worrying about “how good I am” at courageous conversations, or antiracist work, or life in general has sent new currents of energy through my body. Embracing humility has opened up my heart and mind and made way for vital relationships with people of color.

*(Excerpted from Chapter 32)*

## **“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

**March's reflection groups look closely at the theme of Liberation** and if the participants of the RJP would choose to do it all again, now knowing what they know.

**April's reflection groups will end our year of this work with the theme of Creation.** How might we now finish the sentence, "In the beginning..."?

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE EMAIL [ARE@UUCWC.ORG](mailto:ARE@UUCWC.ORG)**

## **Loaves & Fishes**

*(Facilitator: Ronnie Dobrowolski)*

**March 25 and 26, 2016, UUCWC and St. Mary's Cathedral, Trenton**

**Loaves and Fishes** is our annual church wide, social justice project that provides weekend meals to the homeless in Trenton, New Jersey. UUCWC has participated in this effort for about 30 years. In the past few years we've had close to 90 volunteers. This year's dates for **Loaves and Fishes** are **March 25 and 26**. We will pack about 800 brown bag lunches in the Crossings Room on the evening of March 25. We will need many volunteers (both adults and children) to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, as well as folks to bake brownies and bring them to church that day. Brownies should be individually wrapped, please.

On Saturday March 26, we join with the UU Congregation of Princeton to serve a hot meal for homeless persons at St. Mary's Cathedral in Trenton. We will need many volunteers to help prepare the meal, serve the meal, and clean up.

There is a sign-up poster in the lobby. We would appreciate your participation in this church wide social justice event. For more information contact Mary Kay Mitchell, [socialjustice@uucwc.org](mailto:socialjustice@uucwc.org).

## **Movie Screening**

*(Facilitator: Jim Bicksler)*

**“Do the Right Thing” - Friday, April 22, at 7:00 p.m.**

**Pizza, beverages and snacks will be provided.**

**Please sign up by email to [racialjustice@uucwc.org](mailto:racialjustice@uucwc.org).**

“Do the Right Thing,” Spike Lee’s 1989 masterpiece about a day in the life of (the Brooklyn Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood) on the hottest day of the year, starts with its heroes waking up and ends the next morning, after a night that includes a fight, police brutality that ends in murder, and a riot. The movie was controversial when it came out — some publicly speculated that it would ignite violence — but, as the character Radio Raheem’s monologue about his LOVE-HATE set of brass knuckles, love won. “Do the Right Thing” reignited interest in Malcolm X and encouraged a

broader cultural reappraisal of his ideas; it inspired independent filmmakers; it made a zillion teen-agers into Public Enemy fans. (Excerpted from *New Yorker Magazine*)

It is also a gripping human drama with an amazing ensemble cast, from veterans like Ossie Davis and the late Ruby Dee to first-timers like Martin Lawrence and Rosie Perez (who not only stars in the movie, but kicks it off with an unforgettable dance routine to Public Enemy's "Fight the Power"). Also on board: Danny Aiello, John Turturro, Giancarlo Esposito, Samuel L. Jackson, Bill Nunn, Robin Harris, and Lee himself as the pizza-delivering, trashcan-throwing Mookie. *Do the Right Thing* stands up today as a piece of art, as a milestone in African-American cinema, and as the movie that Barack and Michelle Obama saw on their first date. (Excerpted from *Rolling Stone Magazine*)

## **Book Suggestion for March/April**

(Discussion Facilitator: Bernice Husk)

### ***"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 Alabamian 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* are scheduled for April 25th and 29th. Please see the calendar at the end of this bulletin for times and sign up at [racialjustice@uucwc.org](mailto:racialjustice@uucwc.org). Copies will be available for sale in early April in the Crossings Room.**

**The Racial Justice Group is also suggesting reading the "The New Jim Crow" by Michelle Alexander over the summer. This important book about the current justice system and mass incarceration was the UUA's common read for the 2012/2013 church year.**

## **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 March/April

(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](http://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.

**Ten Ways White Liberals Perpetuate Racism.** George Sachs, Huffington Post

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-sachs-psyd/10-ways-white-liberals-pe\\_b\\_8068136.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-sachs-psyd/10-ways-white-liberals-pe_b_8068136.html)

**How to lock up fewer people.** Marc Mauer and David Cole, New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/24/opinion/sunday/how-to-lock-up-fewer-people.html>

**Legal Scholar: Jim Crow still exists in America.** Michelle Alexander, Fresh Air with Terry Gross. Includes podcast of the interview as well as a written article. <http://www.npr.org/2012/01/16/145175694/legal-scholar-jim-crow-still-exists-in-america>

**This American Life, Cops See It Differently.** Podcast on NPR

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/547/cops-see-it-differently-part-one>

**Flawed Humans, Flawed Justice.** Adam Benforado, New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/14/opinion/flawed-humans-flawed-justice.html>

## Study Group Update

(Facilitator: Rich DiGeorgio)

The Study Group has been diligently investigating possible outreach projects for the upcoming year. There are several projects under consideration and while it was hoped that we could start a project this coming year, it’s become apparent that it will take further time to develop the relationships necessary to effectively contribute in way that supports the mission of the organizations. To give an general overview, the group is looking at partnering with an African American church or organization; participating in a vocational training program in Ewing for young people 18 years and older; establishing, with partners, a yoga program in Trenton Schools; and one or two other ideas. The group will present more information at the annual meeting but the members feel that it’s important to properly implement a project and be fully informed and prepared before making the commitment required. Please don’t hesitate to contact [racialjustice@uucwc.org](mailto:racialjustice@uucwc.org) with any suggestions, questions or concerns.

## Race Matters in Hopewell Valley

The following is excerpted from a posting by Vincent Xu, [Mercerspace.com](http://Mercerspace.com), on February 1, 2016

Usually, an online post briefly galvanizes Internet dwellers before just as quickly dissipating until the next hot topic. But last fall, one post in a Hopewell area Facebook group generated hundreds of comments and the online chatter continued for more than a week.

In this case, the post concerned an incident earlier in the spring at Timberlane Middle School, when an African American

student was called a racial slur. Many online commentators expressed shock that such a thing could happen in town, but Renata Barnes, an African-American who grew up and later returned to Hopewell, was “surprised other people were surprised.”

After observing the online reaction and contributing a few responses herself, Barnes thought everyone could benefit from a community discussion about race and diversity. Floating the idea of an informal gathering, Barnes was amazed and encouraged at the outpouring of responses she received.

More than 100 people contacted her, and ultimately more than forty residents gathered together one October night in the basement of the Pennington Methodist Church. The informal event was organized with the help of pastor Dan Castelberry.

The focus of the gathering was not on what happened at Timberlane, but on the community’s growing diversity and how to understand and resolve issues of race and culture. “The goal was to find a place to have a real conversation, what it means to be black, Asian, what it means to be a white person of European descent,” Barnes said. “This is a difficult conversation. It’s an old conversation. You have to be willing to be offended and offend, and then work through that, move ahead.”

Why is race so difficult for everyone to talk about?

“I wish I knew why,” Barnes said. “I think it’s because it’s ugly, that it causes discomfort. We ignore it and hope it goes away. Everybody’s got their baggage in this issue. You’ve got to be willing to sit down with someone and open up the luggage. I think people are afraid of what happens after that. They don’t want to be exposed as a racist, might not know they are a racist, or they just don’t talk about it.”

There is also the historical context of race, the sheer longevity of which might discourage meaningful conversation.

“Probably the most difficult thing is getting people of the majority to see the angst, the frustration of trying to continually live, work and thrive in a system that kind of diminishes the history,” Barnes said.

“If you can, imagine trying to carry a heavy weight of your back that you were born with and combating the expectations that are buried deep within those who have these images of people of color.”

To read the full posting go to <http://mercerspace.com/news/race-matters-in-hopewell-valley/>

## Did you know . . .

- Hate groups increased from 784 groups in 2014 to 892 in 2015. Antigovernment “Patriot” groups grew from 874 in 2014 to 998 in 2015. The hate groups are both white and black, although predominately white.
- On Nov. 21, 2015, about a dozen armed protesters carrying long guns and signs gathered outside the Islamic Center of Irving, Texas. Explaining his decision to bring a 12-gauge hunting rifle to the peaceful suburban scene, protest organizer David Wright told *The Dallas Morning News*, “I’m not going to lie. We do want to show force. . . . It would be ridiculous to protest Islam without defending ourselves.”
- Ku Klux Klan chapters grew from 72 in 2014 to 190 last year, invigorated by the 364 pro-Confederate battle flag rallies that took place after South Carolina took down the battle flag from its Capitol grounds following the June massacre of nine black churchgoers by a white supremacist flag enthusiast in Charleston, S.C. Rallies in favor of the battle flag were held in 26 states — concentrated, but by no means limited to the South — and reflected widespread white anger that the tide in the country was turning against them.
- The 2015 hate group count almost certainly understates the true size of the American radical right. White supremacists are increasingly opting to operate mainly online, where the danger of public exposure and embarrassment is far lower, where younger people tend to gather, and where it requires virtually no effort or cost to join in the conversation. The major hate forum *Stormfront* now has more than 300,000 members, and the site has been adding about 25,000 registered users annually for several years — the size of a small city.

*(Southern Poverty Law Center)*

## Racial Justice Project Calendar, March 13 through April 30, 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>March 13</b> Racial Justice Project Service	14	15 Racial Justice Project Meeting 7:00 pm. Open to all who are interested.	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25 Loaves & Fishes	26 Loaves & Fishes
27 Easter Sunday	28 Reflection Group 7:00 to 9:00 pm	29 Reflection Group 1:00 to 3:00 pm	30 Reflection Group 7:00 to 9:00 pm	31	<b>April 1</b>	2
3 Reflection Group 12:30 to 2:30 pm	4	5 2016 Project Study Group Meeting 7:00 pm Open to all who are interested.	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 Reflection Group 10:00 am to 12:00 pm	15	16 Centennial Celebration
17 Centennial Service	18	19	20	21	22 Movie Screening "Do the Right Thing" 7:00 p.m.	23
24	25 "Just Mercy" Book Discussion 10:30 am – 12:00pm  Reflection Group 7:00 to 9:00 pm	26 Reflection Group 1:00 to 3:00 pm	27 Reflection Group 7:00 to 9:00 pm	28	29 "Just Mercy" Book Discussion 7:00 – 8:30 pm	30