



Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

White Privilege Exploration

Hayward, CA, Kathryn LaMar, 26 January 2022, 2:00 PM

CHALICE LIGHTING/OPENING WORDS

0.5 min

I just cannot accept the proposition that some people are better or worse than other people because of their race--whatever that may be. I accept my race and the race of everyone simply as a condition of existence, like height, weight, age, sex or shoe size. Now this doesn't mean at all that I am blind to the fact that other people may regard race as the most consequential aspect of their being and my being. I have almost a half century of scars, fortunately most of them on my memory and not on my body, to remind me that I live in a racist society. However, I refuse to permit anyone to infect me with the virus of racial pride, because I know it would turn out to be a cancer that would destroy my spirit, my physical self, and the world in which I live.

Wade H. McCree (first African-American to serve as USA Assistant Solicitor General, and UUA Vice -Moderator 1965-1966)

COMMUNITY SINGING: I WISH I KNEW HOW (NO. 151 IN THE GREY HYMNAL)

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVhglL3HgZY>>

4 min

MEDITATION:

3 ministry

A Sacred Moment, from Plum Village, France

<https://vimeo.com/460722803?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=4399609>

CHECK-IN (2 ROUNDS)

40 min

Please share some thing(s) about your life since last we met.

INTRODUCTION

5 min

Then: In 1992 the General Assembly passed a resolution that committed the Unitarian Universalist Association to a vision of becoming a racially diverse and multicultural religious movement. Referred to now as the Journey Towards Wholeness, congregations, individuals and organizations were challenged to engage in the work of building anti-racist and anti-oppression institutions.

Now: The recent history of Unitarian-universalism has shown problems in realizing the 1992 vision. In 2013, a movement began to create an eight principle—in addition to our famous seven—worded as follows:

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, 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.

[John Robinson has proposed the following wording of the Eighth Principle to keep it parallel with the other seven: Accountable for realizing the Beloved Community by working together to end oppression and racism, advocate for justice, treat everyone with kindness and dignity, champion the environment and all life forms, and be on the side of Love.--From the Sept, 7, 2021 entry to the blog "Fifth Principle Project" entitled "Comments on the 8th Principle Project"]

In 2020, individual congregations began adopting this principle, and the Eighth Principle will be voted on by the 2023 and 2024 General Assemblies.

In 2022, it is essential that we critically acknowledge the current state of racism in the United States and elsewhere in the world, to begin planning our individual and collective "actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."

QUOTES ABOUT WHITE PRIVILEGE

10 min

First, I argue that inherent within religious liberalism is a fundamental tension that undermines our efforts to become an effective prophetic voice in a society that badly needs one. Second, squarely confronting the continuing evil of white racism and our own complicity in it can shift the balance of this tension and help us reclaim our prophetic voice. Yet, antiracism work reveals some additional tensions and tendencies within liberalism that make this effort difficult to sustain. Third, the evil of racism lies deeper than institutional structures and systemic power relations; it has a spiritual dimension that liberals all too often fail to recognize. As a result, despite our clearest analysis and noblest intentions, we sometimes fail to truly engage and call out the evil that holds us in its grasp. Yet, ironically, it is the spiritual dimension that can not only ground our antiracism work but contribute most to recovering the prophetic power of our own voice, which too often lies dormant or speaks only weakly.

Paul Rasor

There is the story told about the wise old fish who was swimming through the water. As he swam along, he encountered two young fish coming by. He turned to them and asked "How is the water?" and the young fish replied - "What water?"

White people are raised to be confused about their own color. While we are taught to be aware of other people's color, polite white people do not mention color in public - especially their own.

Janet Helms

It is not a matter of choosing whether or not to be a part of a racist system that benefits white people. You can't simply say, "I am not going to be privileged anymore." As long as the institutions of society are designed to provide us with privilege, we will get these privileges whether we want them or not.

Peggy McIntosh

Progressives and feminists do not articulate a vision of how white males can be part of positive change. They want me to feel guilty for being male and white in place of delivering a message that I can feel responsible - responsible for noticing and challenging racism, sexism, and heterosexism.

Emma Brown

You may be in a meeting or conference overhearing a conversation. You may be in a more private setting, seeing a picture being passed around. When you hear it or see it, what can you do in that moment? Once I feel like I am getting attacked, then I just shut down and don't listen. When I occupy the dominant social

position, and someone challenges me to think critically about how I am helping perpetuate injustice or inequity, it is not totally unpredictable that I am going to react defensively. We might decide to learn to recognize what we are looking at in a social situation. We might decide to be part of the change. If you see something, say something.

Author of session entitled White Privilege—White

Guiltling , River of Grass UU Congregation Men’s Group , Davie, Florida, June 3, 2021

READING OF PEGGY McINTOSH'S FIFTY-ITEM LIST OF STATEMENTS REFLECTING WHITE PRIVILEGE, APPENDED 5 min

PREPARATION FOR GROUP REFLECTION 1 min

Read the questions for reflection, one by one

BREAK 10 min

GROUP REFLECTION 50 min

- ◆ Do you identify, from your own personal heritage, with one or several racial or ethnic groups? If so, how do you embody that part of your identity?
- ◆ In your daily life today, how are you aware of racism?
- ◆ How do you respond to racist encounters today?
- ◆ How does institutional or cultural racism affect you?
- ◆ When did you first notice privilege in your world?
- ◆ When did you first feel like the world was different from what you were told growing up?
- ◆ Are you a part of any social group that takes you outside of the white, middle-class experience?
- ◆ Do you see racism as an either/or choice or a matter of many complex layers?
- ◆ Labels for various cultures, nationalities, sexual proclivities change frequently. Some of us keep current with these changes, and some do not. Where are you in this evolution? How do you feel about others who stress the latest political correctness?
- ◆ What does it take to walk away from a story you’ve been living for a long time? What does it take to be part of the change?

COMMUNITY SINGING: TURN THE WORLD AROUND (NO. 1074 N THE TEAL HYMNAL)

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSBYfgZmTV4>> 4 min

SESSION FEEDBACK 5 min

How did this session go for you? What could have gone better for you? Are there any changes to the group format you can think of that would help us fulfill our mission, charter, or camaraderie better?

FUTURE PLANS 5 min

Now meeting once a month for formal SGM session (fourth Wednesday of the month), and once a month for informal conversation over lunch (second Wednesday), unless other group members volunteer to plan/lead a session.

Okay to invite other congregants/friends to attend sessions?

EXTINGUISH CHALICE / CLOSING WORDS

0.5 min

I never intend to adjust myself ... to the evils of segregation and the crippling effects of discrimination. I never intend to adjust myself to an economic system, which takes necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes. I never intend to become adjusted to the madness of militarism and violence. It may be that the salvation of the world lies in the hands of the [creatively] maladjusted.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

List of white privilege statements from Peggy McIntosh's article entitled
White Privilege: Unpacking The Invisible Knapsack

<file:///C:/Users/Helen/AppData/Local/Temp/Unpacking%20the%20Invisible%20Knapsack.pdf>

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.
3. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
4. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
6. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
7. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
8. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
9. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
10. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
11. I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another person's voice in a group in which s/he is the only member of his/her race.
12. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.
13. Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
14. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
15. I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
16. I can be pretty sure that my children's teachers and employers will tolerate them if they fit school and workplace norms; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitudes toward their race.
17. I can talk with my mouth full and not have people put this down to my color.

18. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race.
19. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
20. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
22. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
23. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
24. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.
25. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
26. I can easily buy posters, post-cards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
27. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared.
28. I can be pretty sure that an argument with a colleague of another race is more likely to jeopardize her/his chances for advancement than to jeopardize mine.
29. I can be pretty sure that if I argue for the promotion of a person of another race, or a program centering on race, this is not likely to cost me heavily within my present setting, even if my colleagues disagree with me.
30. If I declare there is a racial issue at hand, or there isn't a racial issue at hand, my race will lend me more credibility for either position than a person of color will have.
31. I can choose to ignore developments in minority writing and minority activist programs, or disparage them, or learn from them, but in any case, I can find ways to be more or less protected from negative consequences of any of these choices.
32. My culture gives me little fear about ignoring the perspectives and powers of people of other races.
33. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.
34. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
35. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.
36. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it had racial overtones.

37. I can be pretty sure of finding people who would be willing to talk with me and advise me about my next steps, professionally.
38. I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.
39. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.
40. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
41. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.
42. I can arrange my activities so that I will never have to experience feelings of rejection owing to my race.
43. If I have low credibility as a leader, I can be sure that my race is not the problem.
44. 44. I can easily find academic courses and institutions which give attention only to people of my race.
45. I can expect figurative language and imagery in all of the arts to testify to experiences of my race.
46. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.
47. I can travel alone or with my spouse without expecting embarrassment or hostility in those who deal with us.
48. I have no difficulty finding neighborhoods where people approve of our household.
49. My children are given texts and classes which implicitly support our kind of family unit and do not turn them against my choice of domestic partnership.
50. I will feel welcomed and "normal" in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social.