



UULMNJ Board Statement on Dismantling Racism

Unitarian Universalists have long been spiritually and morally committed to the elimination of racism and oppression. We have a long history of coming forward to answer the call for racial justice, and UUs have shed their blood in these struggles. In this we are motivated by the moral imperative of our covenant to affirm and promote the principles that are the uniting basis of our faith community.

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations

The work to eliminate racism continues to be a litmus test of the strength of our principles and the authenticity of our faith.

The appearance and practice of racism in our society has in many ways radically changed, yet its basic manifestations remain the same. The illusion of a “color blind” society after the victories of the great civil rights movement and the historic election of an African American president has fully dissolved. Even though attention is being paid to the continuing epidemic of unpunished killings of people of color by police, it took a series of increasingly disturbing incidents before anyone paid attention to a long-established pattern of violence. This demonstrates that we have far to go to address the problems of racism. While it could be unfair to compare police killings to lynchings, the simple fact is that the rate of such killings in the last 15 years matches or exceeds the rate of some 5,000 recorded lynchings between 1882 and 1968. About 60 of these have been recorded to be of victims while in police custody. Currently the rate of police officer killings of people of color is reported to be at a rate of about two or more per week in the United States. The divide that exists between the criminal justice system and people of color is not an accident. It is a direct result of institutional racism.

This seemingly easy and all-too-common resort to lethal force in the moment of confrontation between police and persons -- usually men of color -- is only the most brutal aspect of the “New Jim Crow”. To the cry “Black Lives Matter” we hear the casual reply “All Lives Matter.” The problem with proclaiming that all lives matter is that it denies the particular need to focus on black lives. Fundamentally, until our society accepts that black lives matter, the call that all lives matter is simply a denial of reality based on the limited experience of privileged people.

A basic condition of American racism is that the realities of life of people of color are not known

well enough. In all aspects of American life, already drowning in inequality, people of color, as a group, continue to be most deeply victimized in the denial of human and civil rights, employment and income, health, reproductive services and life expectancy, wealth accumulation and home ownership, and in de facto residential and educational inequality and continued segregation. African American author Neely Fuller, Jr., has written, "No major problem that exists between the people of the known universe can be eliminated until racism is eliminated."

Racism continues today to be a key, interactive force affecting all issues in the struggle for social progress. Issues of race and racism infect all issues that the UULMNJ and Unitarian Universalists feel strongly about. From Criminal Justice Reform and ending Mass Incarceration to Fair Housing, to Immigration, to Gun Violence, to Health Care, to the Impact of Environmental Degradation, it is crucial for us to recognize that people of privilege experience these issues in an utterly different way from people of color. We must commit to expanding connection and understanding in order to unleash the full transformational power of a multicultural, multiracial alliance for meaningful and lasting change.

We continue to work to build the Beloved Community of all people, regardless of race, regardless of economic condition, regardless of sexual preference or gender identity, and of other seeming differences. The differences among us are not categories for separation; they only serve to show the amazing variations and possibilities of the human race. Seeing, understanding, and appreciating different realities and experiences is the major goal for achieving the transformational power of the Beloved Community.

The UULMNJ will continue to address the dismantling of racism on every issue and in all aspects of its activity. We ask that the New Jersey Unitarian Universalist Congregations we serve join us in this endeavor.

The Boards of
The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of New Jersey
The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of New Jersey
Public Policy Network

April 14, 2015