



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

CONGREGATION OF FREDERICK
Spirituality · Community · Justice

Black. Lives. Matter.

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Earlier this year, I was asked, “Why ‘Black Lives Matter’ and not ‘All Lives Matter’?” And, I am ashamed to say that I didn’t have an answer ready. It was something I seemed to know in my bones, but I didn’t have the language to communicate an answer. I apologize for not having the words then. I do now.

Black Lives Matter because for hundreds of years, Black Lives **Did Not** Matter. For too long, Black Lives were merely ‘chattel, a word too sterile and dry to convey the degradation of meaning. So let me put it another way: *for hundreds of years, we’ve Black Human Lives no better than our livestock.*

Black Lives Matter is my work, a white person’s work, a white woman’s work, an elder’s work. It is my work because I was ignorantly complicit while my tax dollars were used to build the prison industrial complex. Because I unknowingly collaborated when I voted for representatives who used their power to build and maintain the institutional racist system we live in today. It is my work because I now know better. *Ignorance is not absolution.*

I know now that our America is exceptional in that we chose to build our form of capitalism on the backs of slaves: African, Native American and Indentured Whites and that this continues today. Our founders, and then each succeeding generation, turned their backs on injustice and inequality rather than admit Truth. I know that we honor our myths more than our reality: we decry those who do not ‘respect’ our National Anthem even though it is clear that, in so many ways, we are not ‘the land of the free.’ I know at least some of our American family’s ‘dirty secrets’ and can no longer join in keeping them hidden.

I know that in our Western world-view, ‘white’ is good and ‘black’ is evil. That ‘light’ is safe and ‘dark’ is scary. That we are taught to see things literally in ‘black and white’. This is what ‘anti-blackness’ is. Think of how villains are portrayed in popular culture: Darth Vader or the bad cowboy wearing a black hat while the hero wears a white one. Knowledge is viewed as

‘enlightenment’, while ignorance is described as ‘being in the dark’. We are an ‘anti-black’ society on so many levels.

But I also know that in other cultures, in Chinese philosophy for example, that yin and yang, black and white, are seen as complementary. One cannot exist without the other and that each brings its unique aspects to the whole, which would be impossible without both. And so, I know that our either/or mentality is not the only, or even the best perspective. We need each other, black and white. Our liberation is collective.

At General Assembly this summer, I sat in a session where UU people of color shared their pain of loving the UU principles and community, but feeling like ‘tokens’. One young woman (15 years old) shared that *if* she grows up and has children, she will not raise them in UU because she wants them to be in a community that ‘looks like them’. They pleaded to see people like them at the pulpit and in the classrooms and in the choir and sitting with them in the sanctuary. They asked why we do not share our principles with the community at large; ‘why are we so quiet about who and what we are as UUs?’ they asked.

At last year’s GA, our delegates voted to affirm the Action of Immediate Witness for [the Black Lives Matter Movement](#). At this GA, we generously gave over \$89,000 to our BL UU. But studying and writing checks are not enough. On the final day of this GA, our [Youth Caucus and BL UU members](#) joined to draft a ‘responsive’ resolution calling for a multi-year report on anti-racism *work* and *progress* within the UUA. What they really were saying, though, is that the time for studying has passed. We must take action NOW. From this moment forward, we know better, we are accountable for our choices and ‘no choice’ is a choice for the status quo. UUs are generous people and now we need to be equally generous with our action.

Because, Black Lives Matter.