

Meditation Reading

I Offer the words of Nelson Mandela as a preface to our meditation this morning - "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

— Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*

Sermon: UU Humanism: Justice and the 5th Source Turner Stokes 12/29/2013

As a preface to my remarks this morning I would like to encourage those of you with access to the Internet to explore our web site at <http://www.frederickuu.org> from time to time. For those of you who are not yet on our email list for receiving our monthly newsletter "The Unison" and our weekly mid-week announcements there is a opportunity to sign up to receive them on our home page.

I am sure some of you have heard the names John Dietrich and Carl Reese. In a circa 1927 sermon entitled "Humanism", Unitarian minister John Dietrich tells us, "Humanism does not recognize the existence of any supernatural. It adopts a purely naturalistic conception of the universe. That is, it does not believe that there is any personal being outside of this universe who controls and governs it, and who may do so even in violation of natural law." In most quarters, Dietrich is considered to be the father of religious humanism or as I prefer to call it, UU Humanism or if you prefer Unitarian Universalist Humanism.

You will find Dietrich's sermon on our website at http://frederickuu.org/worship/Atheists_Humanists_Agnostics.php. I first found a copy of Dietrich's sermon in our UUCF library in a selection of Humanist sermons edited by Unitarian Minister Curtis Reese. In his preface, Reese tells us that, "Morals grow out of human situations and are binding in virtue of their human meaning. Morals are means to human ends, not ends in themselves. Moral law, like natural law, is a descriptive term, not an objective entity. The sense of ought, the feeling of responsibility, and the like, are products and instruments of the emotional life of humankind, not authorities to be imposed upon humankind." Reese's Preface can also be found on our website together with one of his sermons.

In doing further research, I was not surprised to find both Reese's Preface and Dietrich's sermon included on the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee Required Reading List.

Reese and Dietrich went on to become signers of the first Humanist Manifesto and become founding members of the American Humanist Association which began printing The Humanist Magazine in 1941. Many present day Unitarian Universalists are also active members of The American Humanist Association. I have been a member for thirty so years. That's longer than the ten years I have been a member of this congregation. There is also a group calling themselves UU Humanists that is affiliated with the UUA.

How do we oppose injustice consistent with the worldview espoused by Dietrich and Reese? Where do we look for guidance? Who do we look to for guidance?

Unitarian Universalist Humanist the Rev. William R. Murry, who, if I recall correctly, has preached here at UUCF once or twice, in an address to the Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly thirteen years ago, entitled, "Religious Humanism", has some answers, when he tells us,

"A religious humanism for today and tomorrow must be committed to liberating oppressed people and to economic justice. We ought to have a bias [in favor of] the poor and disadvantaged and oppressed. It must be emphatically committed to women's rights and equality, to gay rights and equality, to economic justice and to opposing racism. Humanism is by definition truly committed to human well being, and that means we must be socially responsible and active in the work of justice."

More recently, in a 2012 presentation at the UU General Assembly, entitled, "Economic Justice: A Moral Imperative for UU Humanists", Murry goes into great detail by backing up the humanist stance on economic justice with a torrent of statistics and justifying remarks.

For instance, he points out the growing income divergence between the top 1 percent and the bottom ninety percent in this country together with the inequality in the distribution of monetary assets.

And Gender inequality – "Women make 77 cents for every dollar made by a man in a comparable job" – Racial and ethnic inequality – Poor schools and substandard housing at the low end of the economic scale – And that people of color and Hispanics are at the low end of the poverty scale.

Murry sums it up by quoting Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize winning economist, [who] in his recent book *The Price of Inequality*, wrote, "Extreme income inequality is really a kind of cancer that infects almost every aspect of our social, political, economic and even legal system. A tiny elite is able to effectively purchase laws and regulations that work in its favor."

We could go on and on listing injustices in the world; bigotry and unjust laws against the gay community in Russia, Africa and the Middle East; tribal genocide in Africa, poverty almost everywhere, so called honor killings of women, stoning adulterers to death, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera!

We cannot, however, ignore the other elephant in the room. There are other forms of injustices and those are the injustices being perpetrated against our planet. I recently attended one of our friendly forums entitled, "*Climate Justice: Climate change is an environmental justice issue*", presented by one of our Green Sanctuary folks, climate change guru Sandi Smith-Gill. Sandi presented data that indicates that we are dangerously close to a "tipping point", beyond which there is no return. Imagine that! No return. Let's hope we haven't already passed that point. Future generations do not deserve that sort of treatment.

For the life of me, I don't know what a ready answer to global climate change might be. What's even scarier, are the other worldwide threats standing in line just behind it (or ahead of it, depending on how you look at it).

There are new and possibly more lethal strains of flu viruses. There is the possibility that nuclear weapons might fall into the hands of terrorists and radioactive contamination due to meltdown. I invite you to make your own list.

There is a positive side of all this. It could give humankind a universal common purpose. If we could forget our tribal, nationalist, theological and political differences and pull together, *just think how different life for future generations could be.*

So be it.