

Reflections on UUCPs Shared Work to Eliminate Racism

Report for 2021-2022

Background

Over three years ago, the Racial Justice Ministry (RJM) was formed at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Princeton to engage our congregation in work that would eliminate racism within ourselves, our congregation, and in our communities. During 2021-22, the RJM co-chairs, Sharon Copeland and Kevin Trayner, presented on race and racism at three Program Council meetings to discuss what a multiracial, multicultural congregation might be like and to ask all leaders to think about how their work at UUCP addresses eliminating racism.

A subteam, “Auditing UUCP’s Work Through an Anti-Racism Lens,” was formed to help our internal ministries and groups integrate anti-racism into their work. This team is comprised of Cathy Bauer-Koggan, Sharon Copeland, Tom Prusa and Kevin Trayner. This team developed and sent a reflection tool consisting of four questions to all leaders and groups involved in the Program Council. The tool revolved around the UUCP congregation’s resolution, passed in January 2021, that denounced racism, pledged us to work to eliminate racism, and to support the proposed UUA 8th Principle:

“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.”

Seventeen out of 38 groups completed the survey. (Note that these groups are called ministries and committees at UUCP and in some cases may only be a “group of one.”) A pilot was run with one group in March 2022, with other groups completing the reflection tool during May-June 2022. We thank the following groups for submitting responses:

The UUCP Board of Trustees	The Meditation Group (Buddhism)
Committee on Ministry	
Chalice Circles	Memorial Wall
Denominational Grants	Partner Church
Fellowship Auction	Pastoral Associates
Fellowship Intergenerational Events	Spring Sale
Green Burial Task Force	Welcome Circle
Leadership Development and Nominating Committee	Women’s Alliance
Lifespan Faith Development	Worship Associates

We recognize that we will never know the full impact of COVID on this work. Since a number of groups and ministries could not meet or met only online, their ability to focus on racial justice in 2021-2022 may have been compromised.

Recommendations

The Auditing UUCP's Work Through an Anti-Racism Lens team is very grateful for the time and effort the respondents took to share their thoughts. Based on these responses, we have identified 6 recommendations.

1. Encourage *all boards, ministries and committees* to:
 - Annually read together the Congregational Resolution and 8th Principle, our commitment to denounce racism and work to eliminate racism.
 - Reflect upon and discuss how these statements can be a part of their group's work.
2. Create a list of ways racial justice work can be incorporated into all the committees and ministries at UUCP. This would include how to create goals, plans, and implementation tasks that might address eliminating racism. It may include discussion on how to obtain education about race/racism and how to dismantle racism. This list could be created with these groups during a special meeting facilitated by RJM.
3. Encourage group leaders to attend at least one monthly meeting of the 8th Principle calls hosted by the UUA. These calls, led by Paula Cole Jones and Bruce Pollack, have over 100 congregations in attendance who share their progress in both approving the 8th Principle and actions they are taking to implement the proposed Principle.
4. Encourage groups to read together portions of the UUA book, *Widening the Circle of Concern*, to glean from it ways to work together to become a more inclusive, multiracial, multicultural congregation.
5. Offer training to groups, congregants, and UUCP leaders on specific topics of interest noted in the survey responses. Some topics noted were:
 - How to incorporate diversity into your leadership
 - Writing racial justice goals for your ministry/committee
 - Understanding intersectionality, particularly how poverty work and racial issues intersect but are not the same
 - How white culture is expressed in ourselves and at UUCP
 - Understanding "white savior" approaches where people of color are seen as passive recipients of white benevolence – rather than active partners.

Training may be facilitated by RJM or the UUA or other outside groups with expertise in these areas.

6. The RJM should work with any groups that have specifically requested their assistance. For example, the Child and Youth Faith Development Group is eager to move forward with implementing resources they have already identified. The RJM will also encourage all groups to reach out to them for guidance.

The survey questions and responses

Each group was asked to provide answers to the four questions noted below. This is a summary of those responses. To assist the groups, the following materials were provided

- [The assessment tool](#)
- [A page of “Considerations for the Assessment Questions”](#)
- A copy of the January 2021 Congregational Resolution with the link to our UUCP website: [Congregation Resolution Supporting Anti-Racism and the 8th Principle](#)
- A chart on “Racial Justice in UU Congregations” created by Julica Hermann de la Fuente using materials (with permission) from Rev. Ashley Horan at MUUSJA, Rev. Leslie Takahashi, and the *Dismantling Racism Resource Book*.
- A video from the UUA called, *The UU Iceberg of Culture*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5llfyVq4OM>
- A glossary of terms: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resources/fundamentals/core-concepts>

Question 1. Please read together the UUCP congregational resolution to denounce racism and to support the proposed 8th Principle. How do you build education about race and racism into your team’s work?

Overall Assessment of Auditing Team

1. Not built or considering	2. Planning to build	3. Some education	4. Education integrated into goals/vision	5. Fully practicing
X				

Main theme: Generally, most groups have not actively built education about race and racism into their work, although some incorporate ad hoc educational elements on these topics.

The most common answer from a group was that they have not done anything to build education about race and racism into their team’s work. (*Noted 6 times.*) This is an opportunity to share with these groups what the other groups are doing, and to ask what assistance they may want in order to add this to their team’s work.

Four groups said that they have been educating themselves and have participated in presentations offered by the Racial Justice Ministry through UUCP and/or working with the RJM on how to offer information and education to congregants. Another three groups are attending UUA’s trainings, workshops and conferences on race and racism related topics. Other groups have intentionally participated in offerings by or obtained materials from outside groups which are offered locally and nationally (especially through online options.)

Noteworthy

A number of responses came up just once. However, these are rich in ideas as to how a ministry or committee might go about educating themselves about different races and cultures.

The ideas included:

- reading together (e.g., UUA's *Widening the Circle of Concern*);
- reading the UUCP resolution to denounce racism and the 8th Principle;
- inviting speakers (from UUCP or outside of UUCP) to talk about race and racism;
- talking with another group about cultural differences;
- advertising public events in multiple languages (English, Spanish, Chinese); and
- listening to different perspectives of participants and adjusting programs accordingly.

It appears that the broader the scope of the ministry or size of the committee, the more likely they work with a mindfulness about race and racism.

Question 2. How does the work of your committee or ministry address racial justice?

Overall Assessment of Auditing Team

1. Not addressing	2. Aware of need to address	3. Starting to address	4. Integrated into goals/vision	5. Fully practicing
	x			

Main theme: Most groups do not have specific goals for racial justice, although many refer to addressing “diversity” or “poverty” in their work, which they equate with addressing racism.

Five groups were straight-forward and noted that they did not have goals that addressed racism or racial justice. Only one group sets goals directly tied to anti-racism. This feedback suggests that training might be offered to the Program Council (or to specific leaders) on how to develop goals related to the work that they do that also addresses our shared work of undoing racism within ourselves, our congregation, and in our communities. We also noted that most groups don't talk about racism directly, except in general terms of “diversity,” and sometimes conflate addressing “poverty” with addressing “racism”.

Noteworthy

Several groups gave good examples of how they might address racial justice—whether that was within themselves, within our congregation or in our communities. Here are some of their ideas:

- We engage in mindfulness meditation that helps us become more aware of thoughts and feelings, including our own racism, including the suffering caused by racism and other forms of prejudice.
- By focusing on listening to all, including those of different backgrounds and perspectives, we intentionally include ground rules that respect and nurture each person and give them a voice.

- We help link visitors and congregants to becoming involved in Social and Racial Justice when they have expressed interest; help advertise upcoming justice-related events.
- We select topics for discussion that focus on equity (or race, racism, anti-racism).
- We lend our support to UUCP ministries and groups that address racism.
- We explicitly state our work/services/offerings are for persons from all racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- We intentionally include content in our discussions that addresses the 8th Principle, anti-oppression and anti-racism values, centering the voices of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous People, People of Color) people and LGBTQIA+ people.
- We promote having diverse leaders in leadership positions at UUCP.

Four groups offered examples of how they believe they address racial justice when they actually address poverty. This is a typical misunderstanding, not specific to UUs. It is true that slavery and its legacy has denied many Blacks the ability to build financial assets in ways that Whites do. And historically, state and federal government policies suggest that the poor are disproportionately Black or Latino. Kimberlé Crenshaw’s work on intersectionality demonstrates the importance of seeing how various roles each person holds in race, class and gender creates overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. For more information, see the following articles:

- [Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later](#)
- [Kimberlé Crenshaw on What Intersectionality Means Today](#)

However, poverty does not equal race/racism. We cannot assume we are addressing racial justice simply by focusing on poverty. Let us remind ourselves that in New Jersey, there are many Blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans that are wealthy. There are many Whites that are poor.

We applaud those groups who are addressing poverty and do not ask that they stop doing so, but be aware of the differences. The Racial Justice Ministry should provide to the UUCP more information about how addressing poverty differs from addressing race, racism and acting in anti-racist ways.

Question 3. How do you include diverse peoples in your planning, in your team, in your work?

Overall Assessment of Auditing Team

1. Not addressing	2. Aware of need to address	3. Starting to address	4. Integrated into goals/vision	5. Fully practicing
	x			

Main theme: Nearly no groups incorporate diverse peoples in their planning, team or work. Many attribute this to a lack of diversity in the congregation, which many feel can be partially solved by marketing and spreading our message, rather than internal change.

Only one group reported that their team and their work involved diverse peoples, while about a quarter of the groups did not answer the question. The majority of the groups acknowledged that diverse peoples were not represented on their team at this time. Some groups provided examples of ways diverse peoples are involved in their work; others noted that although their work does not involve diverse peoples, they would like to work on how to do so.

Here are some of the ways ministries and committees are involving organizations and persons of diverse races and cultures:

- Work with diverse persons and/or community organizations that represent various races and cultures in their leadership/persons served.
- Intentionally reach out to diverse congregants for our work.
- Publicize our work through diverse community organizations/groups.
- Include sources of information/curricula/readings written by BIPOC/diverse peoples.

One group hopes to develop programs in the near future specifically for BIPOC and bi-racial families who are congregants at UUCP. This is addressed in the UUA publication, *Widening the Circle of Concern*. The authors note that as a congregation has more BIPOC congregants, it is desirable to provide them opportunities to meet together to discuss their needs and to ensure that the congregation is addressing those needs. Congregations form what are called “identity-based” or “affinity” groups, just as the UUA has done so for ministers and staff.

The question of diversity

Several groups commented, “we are not diverse because currently our congregation is not diverse,” or “as the congregation becomes more diverse, our team and our work will be more diverse.” These ministries/committees feel limited by the mostly White make-up of the congregation. As one group noted, “We are three middle-aged White ladies running it. Attendance accurately reflects the diversity of the congregation.”

Some comments suggested “that we just need to market ourselves better,” and wait, and eventually people of color will realize that this is a place welcoming to them. The implication is that it is only an outside perception of UUCP that is keeping diversity out, and that there is not a great deal to be done inside our walls.

However, Mercer County and New Jersey are already very diverse. And there are several non-white congregations and communities in Princeton itself. Will better marketing change how we tend to choose to work with white organizations – in the familiar and comfortable whiteness we know? Or, as one respondent proposed, should we intentionally choose to work with diverse groups outside of UUCP?

A similar assumption that came up a couple of times was that: “The more diverse our congregation is, the more diversity will naturally appear in our committees and ministries.” However, UUA’s publication, *Widening the Circle of Concern*, states that this assumption is often not true.

As a predominantly white congregation at this time, we continue to rely on white cultural characteristics that we have learned and come to know as, “the way we do things at UUCP.” This behavior turns away people who “do things differently.”

Like other white UU congregations, it is imperative that we continue to train ourselves in what multiculturalism looks like – which includes shared decision-making, especially on decisions related to money, which we hold onto to retain control. It would be more accurate to say, “The more diverse our congregation becomes, the more important it will be to train ourselves and our leaders in multiculturalism, to promote multiracial leaders, and to prepare ourselves for change if we want to have diversity appear in our committees and ministries.” *Widening the Circle of Concern* speaks to the problems of a revolving door for BIPOC persons who get the message that they are unwelcome by how they are treated once they have come in the door.

Question 4. How could UUCP better support your committee/ministry to implement the 8th Principle and the congregation’s resolution?

Main theme: Many groups cite a need for training. Some want guidance in creating racial justice goals, and a few mentioned wanting help to establish relationships with outside BIPOC groups.

The ministries and committees had many ideas for how they could be supported to implement the 8th Principle and our congregation’s committee to work to eliminate racism. These included:

- Request for specific guidance from the Racial Justice Ministry group on how to implement the 8th Principle in their work, for example, “how can we include diverse people on our team, in our planning, and in our committee’s work?” or “how to work with racially diverse organizations outside of UUCP?”.
- Request for training, which could be from or working with the RJM, on topics such as how to identify the “unseen whiteness” in our work; how to use an anti-racist lens to review our work; topics of implicit bias and micro-aggressions in language and behaviors; the various culture/racial traditions regarding death, illness, life transitions, and aging.
- Increase marketing specifically to promote increased diversity at UUCP;
- Expand UUCPs relationships with other congregations and groups that are racially diverse;
- Ensure images on our UUCP walls, website and printed materials reflect diverse races and cultures; provide funds to address this;
- Choose topics, reading materials, curricula that include BIPOC views and racial justice topics such as, for the Faith Development Ministry, to implement/offer “Growing Anti-racist UUs” at <https://uucharlottesville.org/anti-racist-curriculum>;
- Continue the support from our ministers who include stories and reflections that deepen our awareness of the way we interact with all people; and
- Learn more about UU-related organizations that address racial justice issues.

Question 5. Any other comments?

Space was provided to include any other comments on the reflection, etc. Other comments included:

- The links and additional materials were overwhelming. Needed guidance on how to best use the materials and how much time it takes to reflect on and discuss these questions.
- Several groups stated they were open to whatever we can do to support the important work of implementing the 8th Principle in our congregation. “We will work on our culture, our behaviors and our language.”
- Thank you—we found it helpful to look at our assumptions and operations as we move into a new year.

The Racial Justice Ministry will make this report available on the UUCP website and will request that it be reviewed at a UUCP Program Council meeting during the 2022-23 year.