

Racial Justice Steering Committee - Quarterly Report 3/12/17

Introduction:

The Racial Justice Steering Committee held its first meeting in March 2016. The first several months were dedicated to developing a charter, covenant and identifying its strategic mission and goals. In the RJSC charter, under the principle duties and responsibilities section, it states the committee will support UUCF strategic goals with other like partners specifically by:

- a) Intentionally growing our cultural competency in ways that challenge our comfort, expand our awareness and promote social and spiritual healing.
- b) Developing a project or projects that demonstrate and practice UU values in new ways beyond our campus.

The charter identifies actions such as witnessing, advocacy, lobbying, and education as well as outreach partnerships to help achieve its goals.

The following are some of the initiatives and projects undertaken in support of these goals:

1. Beacon House Joint Initiative: Goal - Outreach

Beacon House provides UUCF a way to engage with black communities. Beacon House and UUCF are working together to develop interactions that promote friendship and understanding among young people of diverse backgrounds in our communities. The goal is to provide a way for "cultural bridge-building". Through a workshop entitled "Conversations about Race and Equity with Teens" conducted over 4 months, direct conversations between UUCF members and black participants from inner city DC will be facilitated to help us better understand the issues and causes of racial injustice. The sessions are designed and led by trained and professional counselors and a youth coordinator from each community will lead the community-building social activities.

The Beacon house exchange began 2/12. UUCF had 12 youth interested and so did Beacon house. The second meeting was scheduled for Mar. 12. Future sessions will be Sun., Apr. 23, at Beacon House and Sun., May 7, in the Social Hall at UUCF.

2. Racial Justice Initiative with Youth: Goal - Education

A new initiative was undertaken in February to form an ongoing group to work on how we might incorporate more antiracism work into our work with children. Two people from the Families for Social Justice expressed interest with at least one person from the RJSC and 1-3 will be from the RE Committee. This is in the initial planning stage.

3. Education and Training:

A. Movies:

The RJSC has partnered with Showing up for Racial Justice (SURJ) to show two racial justice oriented movies to the congregation.

1). The first was "Slavery by Another Name" shown Aug. 26. Approximately 40 people attended that showing. The documentary recounts how in the years following the Civil War, insidious new forms of forced labor emerged in the American South, keeping hundreds of thousands of African Americans in bondage, trapping them in a brutal system that would persist until the onset of World War II.

2). The second movie was "13th" shown on Feb. 10. Approximately 30 people attended that showing. The film takes its title from the 13th amendment, which outlawed slavery but left a significant loophole. This clause, which allowed that involuntary servitude could be used as a punishment for crime, was exploited immediately in the aftermath of the civil war.

The showings of the movies was followed by group discussions center around the issues covered in the movies.

B. Racial Justice training:

1). "Courage for Racial Justice, Courage for Collective Liberation: A Program for White People" offered on Sat., Mar. 11, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., at All Souls Unitarian Church. Sponsored by Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) D.C. and seven area UU congregations, including UUCF. This inspiring and interactive program - open to everyone - was designed to help white folks deepen their commitment to racial justice, ground their work in the broader struggle for liberation and connect with the emotional and spiritual resources needed to be courageous, resilient and effective over the long haul. Keynote speaker was author, educator and movement-builder Chris Crass, a UU who works with faith-based communities to help build up the spiritual Left.

2). RJSC is hosting the UU Capital Cluster/Central East Region Leadership Conference. Sat., Apr. 15, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., in the UUCF Sanctuary. Leaders: Rev. Rob Keithan and Rev. Rebekah Montgomery - "Building Authentic Diversity: Intercultural Communication as a Tool for Congregational Change." It will provide the opportunity to learn with other UU congregations about racial justice or multicultural work and how to be more authentically open to new cultures and backgrounds. The workshop will provide both an analytic framework and concrete skills for effectively developing relationships across differences.

This is the same training as the on-line course - "Understanding and Applying the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity - DMIS". The RJSC members are required to either take the on-line course or attend the April 15 conference.

3). A full day retreat for the RJSC was held on January 7 with Rev. Rob Keith leading the training. The focus was on racial justice and diversity issues and exploring our own culture and what each of us bring to the committee.

C. RJSC Book Club:

The RJSC book club seeks to understand the racial injustice and discrimination that exists in our country, today, and begin to explore some of its root causes.

1). RJSC Read Books for school year 2016-17:

Nov: "Just Mercy" by Bryan Stevenson
Approximately 12 people attended the discussion

Dec: "Between the World and Me" by Ta-Nehisi Coates
18 people attended the discussion

Feb: "The Absolutely True Diaries of a Part-Time Indian" by
Sherman Alexie
5 people attended

Mar: "The Distance Between Us: a Memoir by Reyna
Grande" and "The House on Mango Street" by Sandra
Cisneros
7 people attended

2). Future books scheduled:

Apr: "Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian
Americans" by Ronald Takaki

May: "How Does it Feel to be a Problem: Being Young and
Arab in America" by Moustafa Bayoumi

Jun: "The Third Reconstruction Moral Mondays, Fusion
Politics, and the Rise of the New Justice Movement"
by William J. Barber II & Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove

4. Second Principle Project: Goals - Education, Outreach, Witnesses

The UUCF Second Principle Project was launched in October 2016. The project is designed to help UUCF live our commitment to the Unitarian Universalist Second Principle by affirming and promoting justice, equity and compassion in human relations between all people. We plan to do this by examining ourselves, confronting biases, dismantling constructs, encouraging discomfort and claiming our identities as courageous people.

A. Second Principle banners were designed, purchased and displayed around the parking lot.

B. Subgroup on Dialogs on Race:

A curriculum is being developed for use by the covenant groups to help the groups discuss UUCF racial justice oriented actions. We are finalizing the facilitators guide and the introduction to the curriculum. Once those are finished, the covenant groups will be contacted to determine when they will be able to fit this into their schedule. We plan to include someone from RJSC as co-facilitators to these small groups so we can be in touch with chair or leader of that group.

C. Building Partner Relationships Subgroup: The first meeting of the subgroup was in December.

Goals:

1. Be in relationship with other organizations - provide support when the needs arise

2. Work together to deepen our understanding of people from different cultures - improve our cultural competency
3. Meet with others - How can we be helpful accomplices partnering under their leadership

The subgroup is exploring how can we be in relationships with other organizations. We are considering different types of outreach activities such as setting up exploratory meetings, hosting lunches or dinners where others from the community are invited to meet with members of the UUCF congregation and/or arranging for panel discussions or guest speakers. The first guest speaker will be Gay Gardner from Little River United Church of Christ who is scheduled to meet with the RJSC during the regularly scheduled RJSC meeting on March 18.

5. MLK Weekend of Service: Goal-Outreach

On January 14, as part of the MLK Weekend of Service, the RJSC sponsored the collection of Hygiene and Snack kits to be delivered to Opportunities, Alternatives & Resources, Inc. (OAR).

The following were collected and delivered to OAR:

59 Female hygiene kits

93 male hygiene kits

116 snack packs

2 boxes of individual snack and hygiene items 1 box of water

OAR is the recipient of the Share the Plate for May. RJSC has made arrangements for Derwin Overton, Executive Director, OAR to speak to the congregation in May and to also set up a table in the Commons to provide opportunities to speak to members of the congregation about OAR. The committee is also planning to arrange for another collection of additional hygiene and snack kits for OAR during the month of May.

6. Sanctuary Movement: Goal-Advocacy

The RJSC is co-sponsoring a NOVA interfaith orientation on the Sanctuary Movement here at UUCF on Wed., Apr. 5, 7-9 p.m., in the UUCF Chapel, along with the Global Affairs Discussion Group, and the Social Justice Council. The event will give UUCF members and representatives from area interfaith congregations the information they need to decide what role, if any, they want to play in the local immigration Sanctuary movement. It would also help gauge interest among our own congregants.