

Resource for UUA Staff responding to Constituent Concerns about the term “white supremacy”

April 13, 2017

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us on the use of the term “white supremacy.” We are a faith that holds many truths and draws on many sources of wisdom. We open our doors to many people. One truth is that we are a people who have spent years working hard on racial justice and anti-racism, who try our best to live our values in ways that decrease racist violence, and who support movements such as Black Lives Matter and immigrant justice movements. Another truth is that our predominately white denomination exists within a racist society. White supremacy is in our history, woven into all our institutions and our culture. It is in our UU history, institutions, and culture. We name it so we can face it and change it, as author James Baldwin says. We are fully human, holy and flawed, doing our best to right the wrongs of white supremacy both within Unitarian Universalism and in the wider world.

Jim Key, UUA Moderator, recently shared the following: “The term white supremacist once referred exclusively to individuals and organizations that openly espoused the superiority of white people. In recent years the term has come to refer to a culture, or a social narrative that places the needs, desires, stories, well-being, and the very lives of white people over and above those of people of color. It is the water we swim in. It is so much a part of our lives and of the life of our Association that it has just become business as usual. We have chosen to use the term and to endorse the teach-in called for by many of our religious educators because we are absolutely committed to staying awake to the challenges before us. White supremacy is a continuum. When we refuse to acknowledge our place in that continuum we risk being lulled back into complicity. Not this time friends.”

We hope that this information is helpful, and we encourage you to participate in the upcoming #WhiteSupremacyTeachIn organized by Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism:
<http://www.blacklivesuu.com/uuwhitesupremacyteachin/>

We are grateful to our religious educators who have taken the lead in providing a faithful opportunity for deeper learning about this term and the issues it describes. We encourage you to work with your congregational leaders to register for the teach-in so that we can learn more together.