

June 12, 2020

JOINT STATEMENT - FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF ANN ARBOR

Dear Members and Friends of our Beloved Community:

It is with profound heartache that we recognize that our nation, and our broader world, is at an inflection point related to the pernicious harm of individual and systemic racism. Even as we recognize our unwavering Unitarian Universalist commitment to the intrinsic worth and dignity of each and every human being, we live in a culture in which life and death outcomes are unambiguously defined by race and class. There is profound pain and disappointment in facing this reality head-on: many of us Unitarian Universalists have been at the forefront of civil rights justice making, since the 1960s, if not even earlier. We recognize, in our heartache, that the dream of that civil rights movement was never fully realized, and that it is our collective responsibility to continue holding and pursuing that dream.

As we are also aware, the changes that are needed – to institutional systems, cultures, practices, and norms - cannot be brought about by communities of color, alone. Communities such as ours, which are predominantly white, must be at the forefront of working for the more just and equitable world we all need. Racism was not built in a moment. This is sustained, long haul work. This is work that must take place at every level of human society: nationally, locally, within our congregational community, and within our hearts, individually.

Amidst the uncertainty and pain of this moment, many are asking what can we do? How can I/we/my family engage? This is a natural human impulse: staring at injustice, good hearted people want to make a positive difference. We support and affirm that impulse toward building the world we need, as has our congregation: UUAA's visioning process has lifted up our collective commitment to racial justice as one of our congregation's core priorities. And, statements and priorities need to be brought to life through collective action. UUAA will, in the year ahead, engage in community-level action planning in support of our shared vision, which includes our ongoing commitment to racial justice. While we move toward that, we invite you to additionally engage in the following ways:

- Consider reviewing this Medium.com article: <https://medium.com/equality-includes-you/what-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18b0e0234>. This article includes many concrete actions one can take in support of racial justice. We invite you to take some (or even many) of these recommended actions.
- Learn about Sha'Teina Grady El, who recently experienced police brutality at the hands of Washtenaw County deputies: <https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2020/06/charging-ypsilanti-woman-punched-by-police-serves-no-reasonable-useful-purpose-aclu-says.html>. Consider learning more about this case (there are many publicly available news reports) and consider contacting Washtenaw County Sheriff Jerry Clayton on this matter.
- Justice making invites us to be in relationship with and take the lead from local, impacted communities of color. What relationships/friendships/connections might you personally have to local, Washtenaw County-based Black communities? Can you personally help build cross-

community relationships and friendships between those individuals and communities and UUAA? Relationship is how we discover what locally impacted communities need, and how best to stand in solidarity with them.

- Parents and primary caretakers of children, who are interested in integrating anti-racist paradigms into their parenting/caregiving, may wish to check out this resource, featuring UUAA's very own Quiana Perkins:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYHz3zyTdxM&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0ouffeiu4y-2D-6keuKAXvOE21YO91UtdxpDnoZJfzaVNWCRcCi3SY3MI>
- Parents, grandparents, and other caregivers may wish to watch the CNN-Sesame Street Kids' Town Hall on Race jointly with the children in their lives. The full content is available here:  
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/06/app-news-section/cnn-sesame-street-race-town-hall-app-june-6-2020-app/index.html>
- Learn about and support Michigan State House Bill H5837, which supports law enforcement reform measures in our state: <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2020-HB-5837>. You can find out who your Michigan State House representative is here:  
<https://www.house.mi.gov/mhrpublic/frmFindARep.aspx>. Consider contacting your State House representative in support of this legislation.
- Learn about Michigan's Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration here:  
<https://courts.michigan.gov/News-Events/Documents/final/Jails%20Task%20Force%20Final%20Report%20and%20Recommendations.pdf>. Consider contacting your representatives in the Michigan State Legislature to express support for these recommendations. You can find your State House representative here:  
<https://www.house.mi.gov/mhrpublic/frmFindARep.aspx>. You can find your State Senate representative here: <https://www.senate.michigan.gov/fysbyaddress.html>.

We recognize that there is no single public statement, no single class/seminar, no single article, book, or video, no single protest or demonstration that is going to somehow dismantle generations of oppressive practices and structures. This work will take all of us working together consistently, over time.

We pledge our leadership to the long haul work that is needed, and invite you into that work with us. It will take all of us.

Black Lives Matter - to each of us personally, to our families, and to our entire UUAA community.

*In love, faith, and solidarity in that shared commitment to justice,*

*Mr. Erik Stalhandske, President*

*Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti, Senior Minister*

*Ms. Quiana Perkins, Coordinator of Social Justice and Pastoral Care*