

# The 8<sup>th</sup> Principle History at UUSD

## Task Force Focus

This task force engaged with the congregation about the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle and discussed views on dismantling racism against Black and Indigenous people in our society and within themselves. An important component of the discernment process was in-depth education and discussion about the historic roots of racism and the kind of anti-racist action needed today.

## Quote of the Month

*I grew up like a neglected weed ignorant of liberty, having no experience of it. Then I was not happy or contented.*

— Harriet Tubman, 1855

## Previous Task Force Activities and Updates

### 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Proposal and Discussion Forum

After a year of discernment and study, the UUSD 8<sup>th</sup> principle task group believes that UUSD is committed to being a beloved community that does not tolerate racism or other oppressions. Therefore, it is appropriate for us as a congregation to make a public statement to that effect and to publicly commit to working toward making that a reality. A grassroots movement within the Unitarian Universalist faith community has proposed language for an 8<sup>th</sup> principle that would make such a statement. That statement is in (1) below. Some UUSD members agreed in principle but were uncomfortable with the language and developed (2) below.

1. 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.
2. The liberation, transformation, and love that comes with dismantling racism and all oppressions in ourselves and in our society.

At the congregational meeting in June, UUSD members will have a chance to vote on adopting an 8<sup>th</sup> principle and if the vote is positive, on the preferred language. If adopted, either one would be added to the current principles, which state:

We the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part;
8. (New 8<sup>th</sup> principle).

As a congregation, UUSD has the right to add to the UUA principles, if we so choose. As Rev. Barbara Wells ten Hove explains, “The Principles are not dogma or doctrine, but rather a guide for those of us who choose to join and participate in Unitarian Universalist religious communities.”

The task group will host two open forums for those interested in discussing the desirability of adopting an 8<sup>th</sup> principle and the options for consideration. An in-person opportunity will be Saturday, May 21 at 2:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Childcare can be provided if requested no later than May 14 (send a request to [8thprinciple@uussd.org](mailto:8thprinciple@uussd.org)). For those preferring online, a Zoom forum will be held on Wednesday, May 25 starting at 6:30 p.m. To register and get the link, contact [8thprinciple@uussd.org](mailto:8thprinciple@uussd.org).

## **PERSONAL CONNECTION TO THE 8<sup>TH</sup> PRINCIPLE PROPOSAL**

### **Submitted by Susan Goekler, 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Task Force**

*I am Eli Scarce recent transplant from Phila.*

*I actually was there when this principle was born. It came out of a racial justice training from the UUA that our group, including Bruce Pollack-Johnson had just completed. We all reeled from the realization that we, seemingly anti-racist UU's were ignorant of our own impact to our Black and Brown friends and neighbors.*

*I started my concerted anti-racist journey after adopting African-American children. I have been working to see my own racism ever since and know I have a lot of work yet to do.*

*As I tell my kids, we have been basically brain-washed into our current paradigm in this country and it takes a lot to counter that. I will make mistakes and need to own that and make it right the best I can.*

*The 8<sup>th</sup> principle is one of those ways. I know it is not perfect. But it sends a clear message for working on our own stuff around racial justice. And just as we need to work on our own sexism and ageism and all the other isms, this is a clear enjoiner for racial justice, one of the worst blights this country has perpetuated.*

*It is a message we are sending to other congregations in the UUA, and the UUA itself. That message is “We are committed to battling racism, and we see it as a major injustice that needs to be named and addressed.”*

*I sat in a meeting here recently and heard people talk about language and how it is not inclusive enough. When I see the resistance to a racial justice stance using all kinds of excuses it takes my*

*breath away. It is so important to stop using excuses to not make clear statements against racism. I am asking UUSD to say Yes, and... instead of NO, because....*

*In Philadelphia, that intention was easy to muster within our UU congregations, we just needed to look at our friends and neighbors of color and recognize we needed to make this commitment. Down here, where I have to go out of my way to make friends with People of Color, I can see why it's harder to make that commitment.*

*I recently had a conversation with a child about his behavior at school. He claims he is misunderstood. He is impulsive and makes lots of mistakes. Recently his school saw angry tantrum behaviors, this time his behavior was just carelessness, but the adults misread it and decided to "time him out" so he didn't escalate. He tried to explain that he was fine and not out of control. Unfortunately, the adults didn't believe him and he felt unfairly judged.*

*I explained to him the difference between intent and impact. He had no intention of malice when his laptop ended up in the trash. But he also did not and said he would not make a big deal of apologizing to the adults to let them know his mistake. He felt he could not risk being that humble in front of his friends. I let him know that without the apology and an attempt to make it right his impact outweighed the intent. This child has a hard time admitting he actually gets really angry and scares people with his actions when he does. He feels it is a judgement of his character.*

*I realized that it's exactly the same for White folks when we are blindly moving through our racialized world, unaware of our impact on People of Color. To admit that impact means we risk our own and other's judgement of our character. We can only make it right by admitting our mistakes, apologizing and rectifying the situation as best we can. It is messy work and takes us way out of our comfort zone but we need to risk it. And the first step is stating our intention of anti-racism.*

## **Other May Activities**

**[Black History Test](#)** — Take the quick quiz to see how much have you learned about Black History over the last year or so.

**Day Trip** — The proposed driving **tour** to sites **where Harriet Tubman** lived and worked on the Maryland Eastern Shore is being offered as a UUSD auction item.

## **Film: Who We Are**

UUSD has obtained the rights to show the film *Who We Are*, a powerful documentary about the history of racism in the U.S. Our license allows unlimited number of showings at our site. If you are part of a UUSD-affiliated group interested in showing the film, contact [8thprinciple@uussd.org](mailto:8thprinciple@uussd.org). In the film, criminal defense and civil rights lawyer, Jeffery Robinson, interweaves lecture, personal anecdotes, interviews, and shocking revelations to draw a stark timeline of anti-black racism in the United States, from slavery to the modern myth of a post-racial America. Robinson shows how legalized discrimination and state-sanctioned brutality,

murder, dispossession, and disenfranchisement continued long after slavery ended, profoundly impeding Black Americans' ability to create and accumulate wealth as well as to gain access to jobs, housing, education, and health care. Weaving heartbreak, humor, passion, and rage, Robinson's words lay bare an all-but-forgotten past, as well as our shared responsibility to create a better country in our lifetimes.

### **Continued:**

### **Just What is Going on with White People? —Discussion Group**

**Don Peterson, Facilitator**

**Monday evenings, 6:30 to 7:30, April 4 through May 16 via Zoom**

The American conversation about race, and the stories we tell ourselves about race and ethnicity, are deeply incomplete and often misleading. We need new stories and new understandings, about our history and our current racial and ethnic reality.

Don Peterson will lead a six session, weekly discussion group based on the 14-episode podcast docu-series titled "Seeing White." Participants will be asked to listen to two – three episodes of the podcast each week. Total listening time each week will never exceed two hours. The time is 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. on Mondays, April 4, 11, & 18; and May 2, 9, & 16. The podcast is titled "Seeing White" and addresses: Just what is going on with white people? Police shootings of unarmed African Americans. Acts of domestic terrorism by white supremacists. The renewed embrace of raw, undisguised white-identity politics. Unending racial inequity in schools, housing, criminal justice, and hiring. Some of this feels new, but in truth it's an old story. Why? Where did the notion of "whiteness" come from? What does it mean? What is whiteness for? In this series, *Scene on Radio* host and producer John Biewen took a deep dive into these questions, along with an array of leading scholars and regular guest Dr. Chenjerai Kumanyika.

To register for this class or for more information, contact [8thPrinciple@uussd.org](mailto:8thPrinciple@uussd.org).

## **Previous Activities**

**Implicit Bias Test** — <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>. After clicking on "I want to Proceed," click on the Race IAT. We all have biases that we are unaware of until something brings them into the open. This online Black-White Implicit Association Test examines the traits associated with Black/White images. No prior registration is required. The results are for you alone to see.

You can still go on the **Sussex County BIPOC History Hunt**. [Click here](#) for the History Hunt directions and worksheet. Please send your completed copy to [8thPrinciple@uussd.org](mailto:8thPrinciple@uussd.org), mail it to UUSD Attention: Lifespan Faith Exploration Committee, or put it in the Lifespan mailbox at UUSD.

## **January Activities**

**8<sup>th</sup> Principle Initiative Survey:** To assess where we as congregational members are, the task group created a survey that has been sent via email to all UUSD members and friends. If you did not receive it, check your SPAM folders for January 25 or contact [8thprinciple@uusd.org](mailto:8thprinciple@uusd.org). **Please reply to the survey by February 4.** The surveys are anonymous (unless you choose to provide your name) to encourage honest and heartfelt responses. Let us know where you are with respect to engaging in this work. The results of these surveys will be available at the Community meetings.

## February Activities

**February 20 Sunday Service** – Our worship leader was Bruce Pollack-Johnson, the co-author of the proposed 8<sup>th</sup> principle. Following the service, he will be available to answer questions. His presentation will undoubtedly answer some questions and raise others.

**Community Meetings** – To allow for further discussion amongst ourselves, the 8<sup>th</sup> principle task group hosted four community meetings for discussion of the 8<sup>th</sup> principle and what UUSD might want to do about adopting it. The first three meetings were held on Zoom only. The last meeting was after a Sunday service and was in person at UUSD.

## March Activities

### 8th Principal Assessment Tools

The 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Initiative task force developed a series of readiness assessment tools that foster discussion among committees and other groups within UUSD about anti-racism and anti-oppression and how consciousness of these concepts can be made more explicit in the workings of relevant groups towards building a diverse Beloved Community at UUSD. These assessments will be completed and the results compiled during April.

**[8th Principle Readiness Analysis Explanation](#)** — You may download the forms for the following groups.

- [Adult Faith Exploration](#)
- [Children's Faith Exploration](#)
- [Communications](#)
- [Covenant Groups](#)
- [Executive Team and Administration](#)
- [Expansion and Planning](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [FUNdraising](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- [Leadership and Governance](#)
- [Leadership Development](#)
- [Kitchen Committee](#)
- [Membership and Greeters](#)
- [Pastoral Care](#)

- [Rental and Usage](#)
- [Social Justice](#)
- [Worship and Theology](#)

**African American History Test — TBD**

## **April Activities**

**Showing of the Film: Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America**

**Continued into May:**

**Just What is Going on with White People? —Discussion Group**

## **Resources**

Black and Indigenous Peoples Organizations in Sussex County Delaware

## **Questions**

Contact the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Task Force at [8thPrinciple@uusd.org](mailto:8thPrinciple@uusd.org). Visit the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Task Force table in the Gathering Area following Sunday services. Or, look for those with an “Ask me about the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle” sticker on their name tag.

**Members of the Task Force:** Susan Goekler — Chair, Mac Goekler, Kaz Huston, Betty Kirk, Darlene Sellers, and Rev. Heather Rion Starr.