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UUnderWorld

**A Magazine for Freethinking Unitarians,
Universalists & Spiritual Liberals**

First Anniversary Edition!



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Full Time Senior Minister Opening!
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April 2025

Volume 1, Number 12

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We get so many great submissions from all over the world that we need to list them here so you won't miss anything. UUnderWorld has gotten to be a bit more than can be digested in one sitting! (Be sure not to miss the longer pieces continued at the end.)

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LETTERS FROM READERS & CONTRIBUTORS

Thank you for your work, we appreciate the diversity of opinion so please keep them coming. Furthermore, I endorse the UUnderWorld as a liberal religious journal devoted to the free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

--Bruce Gazaway, President

Sitka Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship, Sitka, Alaska

I see that after the first issue, the subsequent covers are "for the birds," literally. Puns intended.

--Sherry Wells, Ferndale Michigan

I am thrilled to learn about your publication.

---Sarah Allen

John,

The March issue is a work of art. You didn't do that in just a few hours! Getting and holding people's attention is difficult and hard work!

--Rev. Jerry Kerr

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Flint, MI

I love the bird pictures. What a toucan.

--Mary Jane Stone, Ft Lauderdale

The Last Bee

After the last bee
had buzzed its last buzz,
the birds and the butterflies
did what they could.

But soon the fields lay bare,
few flowers were left,
nature was broken,
and the planet bereft.

Richard Wilton

EDITORIAL: JOHN KEOHANE

Still a UU, but think we've got the wrong focus

I consider myself still UU, somewhat. I think we've focused on the wrong stuff. We're not effective as a political group. IMO, we should be effective as a religious group, but we're missing focus. I don't particularly blame the current leaders. I think we've been missing focus in the Greeley years (1961-69) and beyond, but very frankly, there is opportunity with liberal religion. IMO, a good place to start is with the original 6 principles at time of merger (1961), clear up what now is considered sexist language, and run with it.

Might look at the "Are You a Unitarian without Knowing it" literature supporting the fellowship movement at the time of our greatest growth. Now if the UUA is true to liberal religion, I'm in. If its focus is edgy political issues, I'm not. And given the relatively new barriers for becoming a UU fellowship (30 members or more, legal by-laws if ever dissolved all assets to UUA, entrance fee, and more) I think if I were interested in starting a liberal religious fellowship, either by zoom or in person, I think I'd forego the UUA, not finding that lemon worth the squeeze. I'm really very sorry this is the case, and when I write for John Griffin Miller's UUnderworld.com which I do pretty frequently, I try not to fight the GA wars, but to provide material which can be helpful to the UUA and UUA groups and clergy, but also helpful to whomever might want to do liberal religion in an alternative venue.

John Keohane is a long term Unitarian Universalist and Assistant Editor of UUnderWorld. He lives in Austin Texas.

DR KEN CHRISTIANSEN

Power + Prejudice a good definition of Racism?

Reprinted from the [March, 2025, ARROW](#), a publication of the [UU Multiracial Unity Action Council \(UUMUAC\)](#)

I first heard the formula, “Racism is Prejudice plus Power” at a church conference in 1994. The person who made the statement was the Chair of the racial justice commission of a prominent Christian denomination. I wasn’t surprised by the formula. Prejudice plus power is a definition of discrimination, and discrimination based on race is racism. If you look at all the ways individuals from any background exercise power over people, that definition can accurately portray what racism is.

I was surprised by what the speaker said next. She added a very important qualifying phrase. She said, “Racism is Prejudice plus Power. Since black people don’t have any power, they can’t be racist. They can be prejudiced, but they can’t be racist.”

In that meeting, nobody challenged that statement. The speaker was black, and she was the authority by institutional position as well as by race. I saw a problem with the overly simplistic understanding of “power.” But I didn’t have the words or the courage to immediately share another view despite the shortcomings of the logic.

I have heard that definition of racism many times since 1994 and wondered when and where this definition originated and why so many people take it as gospel truth. I recently found the answer in a book titled [Redefining Racism: How Racism Became Power + Prejudice](#) by Joseph (Jake) Klein. Klein did an immense amount of research to find out how and why that definition got so widespread.

The story starts with actions taken immediately after a riot in Detroit that began on July 23, 1967, and lasted five days. The riot began as a response to a police incident. 43 died and 7,200 were arrested. Before the riot ended, President Johnson appointed a Commission to study the problem. Seven months later the Commission concluded that “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal. ... what white Americans have never fully understood – but what the Negro can never forget – is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it. White institutions maintain it. And white society condones it.”

Days after the riot ended, the governor, the mayor, and heads of General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler met with more than 160 leaders of government, retail, and industry in Michigan. The goal was to stop the property damage. A “New Detroit Committee” was formed and empowered to utilize all available means to change the racial climate. While only about four percent of Detroit’s black community had actively supported the rioting, the decision was made to include them in the design of the committee’s work.

FULL-TIME MINISTER POSITION

A full-time senior minister is sought by **Heritage Universalist Unitarian Church (HUUC)** in Cincinnati, Ohio. HUUC is an avidly Universalist congregation with deep traditions. It is a growing, mid-sized church — a liberal beacon welcoming members from the surrounding conservative suburban neighborhood, especially families with young children. The senior minister is retiring after serving more than two decades. Learn about the church at [HUUC.net](#). The HUUC Board is seeking a contract minister, with options to extend by mutual agreement. Candidate interviews begin in April. Additional, qualified candidates may apply. Interested parties can reach the HUUC Search committee at: HUUCSearch@gmail.com

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RESPONDING TO INJUSTICE

Carrying the Torch Forward

By Jozef Bicerano, Savannah GA

Every era faces unique struggles, challenging each generation to determine how it will respond to the injustices of its time. As Unitarian Universalists, we are no strangers to this challenge. Our faith has always called us to stand on the side of justice, resist cruelty and oppression, and envision a world rooted in love, compassion, and inclusiveness.

For me, this calling is deeply personal. I spent nearly 22 years of my life as a member of a tiny and marginalized ethnic and religious minority in my native Türkiye. Opportunities others took for granted were unavailable to me. Daily life meant anticipating barriers and biases that most never even had to consider. This experience left a lasting imprint, sharpening my sensitivity to injustice in all its forms and reinforcing my belief in the necessity of working toward a more just and compassionate world.

The struggle for justice has deep roots, echoing through history in the voices of Hebrew prophets, abolitionists, civil rights leaders, and countless Unitarian Universalists who courageously challenged oppression. Today, our shared values—equity, interdependence, justice, generosity, pluralism, evolution, and most fundamentally, love—guide and compel us to act. These values are not merely aspirations; they are moral imperatives demanding active engagement.

Now it is our time. We are witnessing escalating cruelty—arrests, deportations, systemic racism, widening inequalities, indifference toward those in need, and the troubling rise of an authoritarian oligarchy. History shows that progress is achieved



gradually, through persistent, intentional actions—staying informed without succumbing to despair, speaking up when silence feels safer, extending kindness in ways that ripple outward. As the 19th-century Unitarian minister and abolitionist Rev. Theodore Parker stated, “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Our actions, however small they may seem, help to bend that arc.

Sometimes justice work looks like marching in the streets; other times, it involves writing letters, offering support to those harmed by injustice, or simply refusing to remain indifferent. The promised land envisioned in our beloved UU hymn “We’ll Build a Land” may never fully come into being, yet this does not exempt us from our responsibility to move steadily toward it. As the hymn urges us, “Oh, we’ll build a promised land that can be.”

We are not alone in this work. We draw strength from those who walked this path before us and carry the torch forward for those who will follow. As UUs, we are not called merely to witness injustice; we are called to actively challenge it, not simply to dream of a better world, but to build it.

Dr. Jozef Bicerano is a long time Unitarian Universalist. Raised in Turkey, he has served in many UU leadership capacities, most recently as president of the UU Church of Savannah GA

DR NEVILLE BUCH

Liberty of Thought

Listening to President Donald Trump's recent theatrical performance in the American Congress, it occurred to me, the three observations for an educated opinion.

First, Trump, and the Republican Party of today, want liberty of thought for their own ideological stance which translates as restricting, and in some cases banning, the freedom of expression for others.

Secondly, that Trumpian liberty of thought is built only in the method of political rhetoric (modern propaganda), and not in method *per se*; that is, not in the methods of science, philosophy, sociology, and history. These schemes will tell you that you can (attempt) bully a people in political rhetoric but it will *not ultimately succeed*. The timeline of ultimate failure might take decades. Immediately in many person's lives. The mid-century tells us this historical truth in the wreck from World War II end, which took from the 1930s for the bullying to generally cease. Even then, the outcomes dramatically created our era – we are still in the era with the same patterns of mass society and mass industrialisation. The only change has been the rapid speed of declines in deforestation, rampant and uncontrolled urbanisation, pocketed educational standards in large parts of the world, and stable climate conditions.

Thirdly, there is a spiral historiography to these observations. The patterns of the Trump administration are worse versions of (to take a few examples) Andrew Jackson's frontierism, James A. Garfield's and Grover Cleveland's era of the robber barons, William McKinley's expansionism,

Warren G. Harding's normalcy, and Calvin Coolidge's small government. It is almost pure ideological thinking, and Trump is nothing like 'the recent' American Presidents since Coolidge. Trump's policies did not work in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and it will not work today.

Liberal religion is one handmaiden in multiple ways of thinking, and includes non-religion spirituality which can bring the swing back upwards in the spiral historiography. They are schemas of cognition where the person can truly understand the meaning of liberty.

*--Dr Neville Buch, Professional
Historian
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia*

ANONYMOUS LETTER

A Minister's Dissent

An *anonymous* letter detailing a minister's observance of the changes in the Association, associated ministerial organizations, and suggesting certain actions, was received last year at the North American Unitarian Association and passed along to UUnderWorld. While we are pretty sure this is both honest and accurate, because it couldn't be verified, we are unable to publish.

That being said, if the original author would like to contact us, or write something more, please do! We promise as always, to withhold names and to treat submissions with total confidentiality. –Ed

HAIKU

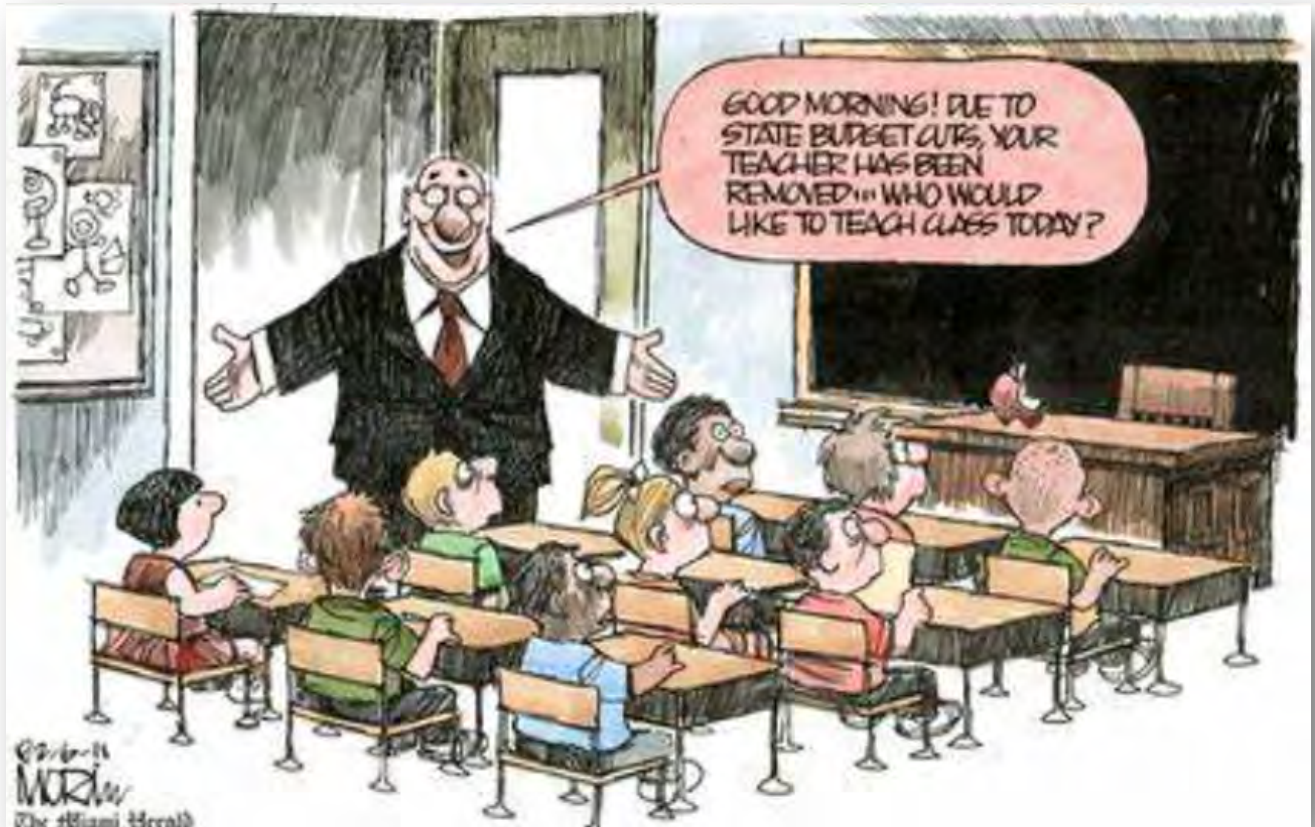
by Charles Suhor

This much I have learned:
If you find a truth, don't slam
the door behind you.

Religions, at best,
mutually paraphrasing.
Enter one, meet all.

No religion is
perfect but all offer us
a seed of goodness.

No religion is
evil but all offer us
a reason to hate.



REV. JERRY KERR

The Virgin Birth of William & Ellen Craft

Sermon delivered on December 1, 2024

MEDITATION

Where Your Fear Is / Carl Gustav Jung

"Find out what a person fears most and that is where they will develop next. Fear is assertiveness...in reverse. Consequently, the thing we are afraid of... involves a task. For the hero, fear is a challenge and a task, because only boldness can deliver from fear. Where your fear is, there is your task."

A READING

Our reading this morning is from the mythologist and the guru of those who want to change the face of religion, Joseph Campbell.

The birth of the spiritual human happens when we awaken at the level of the heart to compassion. Compassion, shared suffering, experiencing and participating in the suffering of another person. That's the beginning of humanity. And the meditations of religion are properly on that level, the heart level. Now in many religions, it is a God that is born of a virgin. But do you know who that God is? It is you when you have a spiritual rebirth. All of these symbols in mythology refer to you. And you don't want to get stuck saying it's out there and think it's all out there. So, you are thinking about Jesus with all of the sentiments relevant to how he suffered...out there. But that suffering is what ought to be going on in you. Have you been spiritually reborn? Have you died to your selfish animal nature and come to life as a human incarnation of compassion?



Carl Jung

*Joseph
Campbell*

1904 - 1987



THE SERMON

I feel a need to give a very important prologue to this sermon, which is unfortunately necessary in our nation at this time. It has become fashionable for some illiberal liberal people to aggressively require that white Americans

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FLOYD VERNON CHANDLER

Theology Isn't About Putting the Cart Ahead of the Horse

Pardon me if I belabor this confession, but I had no business entering theology school as a 20-year-old. As a 23-year-old, there was no spiritual formation or discernment preceding my ordination as a Unitarian Universalist minister. I had no spiritual faith. My shallow “agnostic humanism” embraced theology as an intellectual mind game of speculating about the meaning of life. My early Unitarian Universalist ministry was more about freedom from faith and rejecting my childhood Christian religion. It was what it was! I feel much remorse over my early UU ministry.

“The task of theology is the understanding of faith,” penned Saint Anselm. Anselm lived around 1100 and is considered Christianity's Father of Scholasticism. Anselm taught that faith must precede theology. Theology before faith is akin to putting one's cart ahead of the horse!

During my first seven years of UU ministry, I was attempting to put theology ahead of faith! I had no spiritual faith or sense of the spiritual realm. I had no devotional or prayer life. There were too many evenings when John Barleycorn substituted for meditation. Unbelievable! How does one function as a spiritual teacher without a spiritual faith or spiritual discipline? I suspect I am not the only one who has ever embarked upon liberal religious ministry while lacking a spiritual faith and devotional life.

Even after my initial spiritual awakening, I continued to somewhat stumble through ministry, half-awake/half-asleep spiritually, partially due to the lack of a daily devotional and prayer life. I was in my late 40s before I committed to a daily discipline of morning devotional readings. Another twenty years passed before I added the daily practice of meditation. May the Spirit have mercy!

How can anyone teach others about the river when he or she has never seen or experienced the river? Such is theology without faith.

Early Universalists embraced Saint Anselm's teaching. Early Universalism emphasized pietism, not theology, as a prelude to faith. Pietism is for the soul as tilling the soil for gardening. James Rely, John Murray, Elhanan Winchester, and George de Benneville stressed the importance of pietism.

Often, we confuse pietism with pietistic. The two words have entirely different meanings.

Pietism was a movement within Christianity that stressed personal devotion, holiness, and genuine spiritual experience over mere adherence to theology and church ritual. To be pietistic is to be excessively or hypocritically pious, holier-than-thou, sanctimonious, self-righteous. Thus, Pietism is synonymous with personal devotional or individual prayer life. Pietistic is associated with self-righteousness.

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Somebody has to help the sidewalk
worms,
half-drowned, half-lost,
stretched thin on pavement like tiny
question marks,
asking "what now?"

Somebody has to see them, to stoop
to lift something so small
it hardly seems to matter,
except , of course, it does.

Somebody has to believe in the saving of
things,
not for reward or applause,
but for the wild holiness
of noticing.

And maybe no one will ever see
no cameras, no crowds, no speeches.
But the ground remembers
where they've stepped,
and something on this earth is
softer because of it.

- BRAD
MONTAGUE



DR NEVILLE BUCH ON THE 7 PRINCIPLES

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person

Dignity is the state or quality of being worthy of honour or respect. To dignify is to lift that status upwards.

The phrase 'inherent worth' signals the dignity of every person through perennial truisms. The truth is that no person is without theoretical dignity on the basis that we, human beings, dignify personality. In profiling personality with temperament (character), values, and psychologies, while identifying vices (faults), personal virtues (the goods) are dignified.

Henry (2011) explains that 'jurisprudence of dignity' is a typology which refers to conceptions of dignity in five theorised elements, as 1) institutional status as dignity, 2) equality as dignity, 3) liberty as dignity, 4) personal integrity, and a formalised dignity of legal setting (ritual). The first means that a collective of persons, an institution, is not beyond being accountable in dignified behaviour. The second and third points indicates that equality and liberty are accountable for dignity. The fourth point is that any person is just as accountable as another. And final point is that principles and protocols need to demonstrate dignity in thought and practice.

History, Memory, Cognition, Regret, and a Model of Time-Space to explain human failure, are the elements which goes into the theory of what is a person (Buch 2024). The arrogance, in not regretting something, are the arrogant culturalised personalities. The solution for these personalities is true and comprehensive education (Buch 2025). Understanding these matters generates in the conscience dignity of the person.

*--Dr Neville Buch, Professional Historian
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia*

2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations

The law aims at justice and equity (fairness) even as it does not always deliver for healthy human relationships. If the law was perfect, the law would be an instrument that delivered healthy human relationships. However, there are many cases where the law delivered harsh outcomes, without compassion. It is not a generic argument against Law, but that Institutions must weigh the Law with other human activities of virtue.

It is for this reason that free-thinkers, Unitarians, Universalists, and other spiritual liberals, unnecessarily get confused when conservative thinkers object to the concept of "human rights". Indeed, such conservative thinkers are also confused. The history of our broad era is that global social change was achieved in the United

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CHARLES SUHOR EASTER 1974

Many UUs are “exes” who left a Christian denomination. I was a confirmed Catholic for decades, raised in a deeply devoted family in the largely Catholic city of New Orleans, and the father of eleven children. A combination of reflection and life experiences gradually led me away from dogma and doctrine. Easter Sunday of 1974 was the unlikely time of a breakthrough from creedal religion toward a discovery of Unitarianism. Unlike many “exes,” I didn't become a Village Atheist but continue to appreciate Catholicism, along with the other religious and philosophical ideas.

Easter Remembrance, Sunday 1974

The annual project:
getting the kids, ten of them now,
all dressed up for Easter Mass at Christ the King,
the girls with adorably coiffed hair,
the boys impressively ill-at-ease in coat and tie,
Jessie and I dealing with normal chaos
and the special demands of the day.

Reverence and cuteness are the goal,
but no one will stand still,
and it's all going awry, goddammit.
I look over at Jessie and say:
“You want to just *not go*?”
“Yes.”

Christ didn't rise that day.
In fact he had been staying behind the rock
for several years, playing peek-a-boo with our doubt,
yet we continued to imagine Our Lord showing up
like a Sacred Bunny with a bagful of grace and redemption.
We spruced up for Him half-heartedly,
postponing the inevitable leap from faith
until the Easter costumes and drama
seemed another masquerade, like Halloween or Mardi Gras,
with us begging for holy wafer treats or rosary baubles
flung from costumed pranksters in the passing parade.

Not the Son of God, but our sun rose that day
on a field of blessed uncertainties and new choices,
nothing solved, everything gained
in a finite world of infinite possibilities.

*Charles Suhor is a retired educator
and a former member of UU congregations in Urbana, IL, and Montgomery, AL.
He currently attends the Fairhope, AL, Unitarian Fellowship*

FROM A READER

Real World Community

After reading the first few issues of *UUnderWorld*, especially in light of my topic, I realize what a misnomer the official UUA publication carries. *UU World*.

And I'm now realizing that **Equity in Human Relations and The Goal of World Community had to go before more whistleblowers *UUndermined* the denomination.**

This week, after offering to write this article, I did a little of what I thought would be a mindless task—cleaning out very old emails from my UU Church folder.

But I found this from 2/21/2016.

After several booths at General Assemblies, Ron Glossop and I found MUCH more response at Rotary conventions and wondered why we were wasting time with UUs, who talk some great principles, but do not walk the talk about "The goal of world community with...]]justice, equity and compassion in human relations." Which does not equate to English Only.

These have been part of the 7 UU principles since 1985, about when I began learning and promoting Esperanto, designed to be the international second language for all.

Among the 100+ talks I gave about the language, several were at UU congregations. I titled it "The Universal Language for Universalists."

At one GA Booth that Ron and I staffed, an older couple was walking along the booths and stopped at ours.

Husband said, "Esperanto was a good idea. Too bad it died."

Wife looked at him, at us, and back at him. But he didn't get it.

I attended two annual meetings of the ICUU—International Council of Unitarian-Universalists, primarily to suggest the use of the neutral language, created to be easy to learn yet comprehensive. The teasing I got confirmed that people were listening to my proposal.

At the one in Frankfort, our German host had been on its Board. When speakers from such lands as Great Britain, India, Canada and the US, were at the front of the room, she often held up a sign asking, "Please talk slowly."

A man from Mexico presented a workshop, struggling with English.

An African Minister, who looked and smiled like Eddie Murphy, showed me on a map where his country was. Then he explained that its colonial language was French and therefore the neutral language Esperanto sounded appropriate to him.

In 2004, I met Canadian David Yaki at an Esperanto conference in British Columbia. We never forgot each other, but timing is everything. We were married in November, 2023, by a U.U. minister in Victoria, B.C.

In the 15 U.U. churches we've attended together in two provinces and three states, we've always found at least one person who, when we ask if they know about Esperanto, answers, "Of course."

The ICUUW—International Council of Unitarian Universalist Women—asserts that it is now the only international UU organization. I have reason to hope for a slot in its bi-monthly Zoom meetings to present my proposal for fairness and equity.

"Esperanto" means someone hoping. Maybe there IS hope in the UU world. --Sherry A Wells

DAVID CYCLEBACK

Is Your UU Congregation Retarding Your Brain?

David Cycleback, Ph.D., is a cognitive scientist and philosopher who focuses on brain function and its connections to knowledge, beliefs, and behavior. His research has been in mental disorders, such as autism, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia, as well as areas including group behavior and artificial intelligence. He is a member of the British Royal Institute of Philosophy and attends Westside UU in Seattle.

Echo chambers and ideological bubbles are bad for you

Ideological Bubbles Are Bad For Your Brain

In today's hyper-connected world, people are more susceptible than ever to echo chambers, groupthink, and ideological bubbles. These phenomena—where individuals are primarily exposed to views that reinforce their pre-existing beliefs—can severely distort critical thinking, hinder intellectual and emotional growth, impair decision-making abilities, and warp one's perception of reality. While ideological bubbles may offer comfort and a sense of belonging, they ultimately pose significant risks to cognitive and emotional health.



How Ideological Bubbles Warp Your Thinking

Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt warns that when a community discourages disagreement and promotes ideological conformity, it weakens resilience, encourages dogmatic thinking, and makes members more susceptible to falling for misinformation. He writes that spaces designed to protect people from opposing views stunt intellectual and emotional growth.



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DR NEVILLE BUCH

What You See is What You Get

Weird. I woke up this morning with blue skies and a very light breeze. It is weird in the empiricism because in, 24 hours or so, or may be later, my location is due to be hit with a category 2 cyclone. Even now, 200 kilometres south of my location, the mainland is being hit with concerning patterns of high swells and heavy rains.

It is weird as the old nineteenth century empiricism of “what you see is what you get”, and it has reappeared as early 21st century Trumpism. The problem with this type of empiricism is that rejects all 20th-century abstraction of science, philosophy, sociology, and history, which was working well in the early 21st century, until the Trumpers arrogantly declared it did not. So, now, in the reign of the United States, the country has been taken over in the policies of anti-vaccinators, the psychological-damaged crime and migrant obsessed (with compassion for the actual victims of crime), hyper-anti-schoolers (yes, there has been a problem with ‘schools’, explained by Ivan Illich in the 1970s; but it was never ‘woke’), and rogue economic fools. It is in a phrase, the very slow intellectual-meltdown of the American Republican Party. And the rest of the world looks in bewilderment, and each non-American feels glad that they are not an American today.

Contrary to modern stoicism, “what you see is what you get” is a failed belief system because it denies the truth of intellectual abstraction which has served humanity well for millennia. It can still work when political obsessive agendas have not got in the way. That abstraction had delivered, since the mid-century, better successes of crime preventions and criminal reform (than, e.g., in the 1930s leading to the violence of World War II), the global decline of contagious diseases, the major growth of education systems (both with major benefits and declines due to its own over-extended successes), and the stable economies which began to go wrong from the 1990s.

None of these facts bode well with the narratives of populist American Republican ideology. These facts are dismissed as European thinking, but that is just a foolish conclusion. The Facts are what they are in both empirical observation and abstract thinking, for Oceania, Australasia, Asia, Africa, and, indeed, the Americas.

This is why the American Republican thinking of today is weird to everyone else, outside the bubble of Trumpers.

*--Dr Neville Buch, Professional Historian
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia*



The DEI Debate and the Illusion of Just Two Sides

A Yale psychologist criticizes false "absolutist" thinking



Discussions around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and other identity politics issues have become increasingly polarized, with some people irrationally supporting DEI initiatives without critique, while others irrationally reject them outright. This binary or false-dichotomy thinking mischaracterizes complex issues, preventing productive dialogue, nuanced understanding, and effective policies.

A False Binary

In his recent article [“The False Binary of the DEI Debate”](#), Yale University psychiatry professor and education expert [Michael Strambler](#) explains how people on both sides regularly make strawman arguments about their opponents. He argues that both sides create false "boogeyman" narratives, misrepresenting the other's positions rather than engaging with the actual facts and complexities of the issue. In reality, most people hold nuanced views that do not fit neatly into an all-or-nothing framework.

Strambler states:

"One of the problems with a highly polarized society is that it pushes people to adopt absolutist, black-and-white positions that contain kernels of truth but largely misrepresent reality. And when people in power commit these fallacies of reason, their faulty logic can have major real-world consequences."

He points to how President Trump's onslaught against DEI has led to chaotic policies, such as withholding federal funds from scientific agencies and educational institutions. Strambler writes:

"Apparently, (to Trump) DEI is an omnipresent boogeyman responsible for all of society's ills, and the Trump administration is intent on slaying it even if it means censoring science, defying judicial rulings and potentially throwing our country into a constitutional crisis."

At the same time, he criticizes the left for similar binary thinking:

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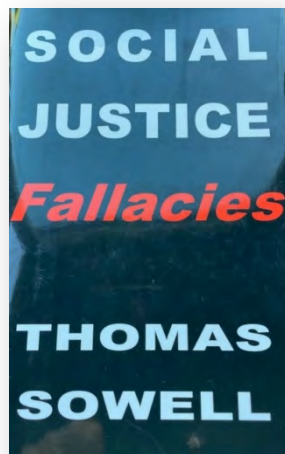
BOOK REVIEW

Social Justice Fallacies by Thomas Sowell

review by Bob Simoni

At 93 years old, Thomas Sowell is still going strong. He received his PhD in 1968 from the University of Chicago where he studied under Milton Friedman and has been a senior fellow at the Hoover Institute at Stanford since 1980. He is the author of more than 45 books on a variety of subjects including politics, economics, education and race, and has been a syndicated columnist in more than 150 newspapers.

His latest book, *Social Justice Fallacies*, is very timely and is similar in tone to James McWhorter's *Woke Racism*. It's relatively short in length, at 130 pages divided into 5 chapters, and has extensive end notes totaling 58 pages. In the first chapter entitled "Equal Chances Fallacies", he examines the reasons why unequal outcomes might be expected even in a society with equal opportunity, stating that "people from different backgrounds do not necessarily even want to do the same things, much less invest their time and energies into developing the same kinds of skills and talents". He uses the example of the National Hockey League where there are more players from Canada than from the US, even though most of the teams are in the US and there are 9 times more people in the US than in Canada. The preponderance of Canadian hockey players in the NHL is



not proof of discrimination against American hockey players but can be



Thomas Sowell

easily explained by the preference of Canadians to start playing hockey at an early age.

The second chapter entitled "Racial Fallacies" is where his insistence of having factual data has the most impact and it's here that he denounces "the extent to which people who present empirical evidence counter to prevailing beliefs are met with ad hominem denunciations and efforts to suppress their evidence by means ranging from censorship to violence". Anyone who has spoken up against the current mindset in the UUA can certainly identify with that comment. One example he gives for the importance of having facts is two counties in eastern Kentucky where the population is more than 90% white and the average income is half that of the average white family and is several thousand less than that of the average black family. There are many reasons why different people are in poverty and they're not limited to the

terms currently in vogue such as “white supremacy culture” and “legacy of slavery”.

In his third chapter “Chess Pieces Fallacies”, Sowell makes the point that people and policies are not like pieces on a chess board that can be easily moved around to achieve desired goals because pushback from drastic changes can lead to such resistance that any such effort fails. As he states “the exaltation of desirability and neglect of feasibility is today a major ingredient in the fundamental fallacies of the social justice vision.” Reading this chapter made me think of the current push for reparations. While it may be desirable for some who stand to benefit from it, it is not likely to have enough support to be implementable.

His fourth chapter “Knowledge Fallacies” was my least favorite as he used it to rant against the elites he thinks caused some of the social problems we have in the country. As an example, he focused on Chief Justice Earl Warren in Supreme Court rulings like *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) which led to the requirement to read the Miranda rights to all suspected criminals. He says that the homicide rate had been going down for 3 decades before the Supreme Court’s creation of “sweeping new rights for criminals” and then homicide rate doubled from 1963 to 1973. I think there were a lot of other potential causes of this increase during that time period such as the unrest from civil rights and Vietnam war protests. For a usually astute observer, Sowell surprisingly doesn’t seem to realize that he may be considered to be like one of the elites he is criticizing.

In the fifth and final chapter “Words, Deeds and Dangers”, Sowell returns to his usual form. Here he discusses the dangers of false assumptions. As an example, he mentions those that say it’s absurd that billionaires can exist in this world when there is so much poverty, as if there is a finite amount of wealth in the world, and if someone makes \$1 billion creating a company that invents a product like the iPhone that has sold in the billions, it results in impoverishing these billions. There are a lot of good quotes I could highlight in this chapter, but my favorite is one he used from his mentor Milton Friedman:

A society that puts equality—in the sense of equality of outcomes – ahead of freedom will end up with neither equality nor freedom. The use of force to achieve equality will destroy freedom, and the force, introduced for good purposes, will end up in the hands of people who use it to promote their own interests.

To sum up, *Social Justice Fallacies* is well worth the read because the subject matter is so relevant to the issues currently causing so much friction in UU churches, and it will arm you with the facts you’ll need to talk about them intelligently.

Bob Simoni is a founding member of the NAUA Fellowship of Hayward, CA. He has been a member of UU churches in Hayward & Redwood City, CA and North Easton, MA. He was elected to the NAUA Board in October. He lives in Paso Robles, CA.

THREE BY JOHN KEOHANE

Toward Better Sermons

This post is to point to, materials you might use to build on. To build with a good sermon at your church.

I hesitate to recommend what I've written, but I will in this case. In this case, I responded to an email I got. A thank you from a Barbara, who I've never met. Apparently I sent her a pdf titled "Memorial Service for My Mother".

And in response to Barbara, I sent her a pdf of a companion article, "Don't Leave Your Eulogy to Strangers", which uses memorial services for my mother, for my father, for my father's best friend, and for my own best friend from childhood.

I'm hoping many of you are interested. Rather than send everyone pdfs, I'll recommend where you can find these, for free. Go online to UUnderWorld.com Arrow down to the November 2024 issue, click on that issue, and go down to pages 15 and 16. I think you'll see good materials you can build on for a good sermon at your church. Hope it helps you and yours.

*John Keohane
Austin, Texas*

What works and doesn't with discussion groups on Zoom

This is a Discussion group on politics, government, economics, education with science, sociology, anthropology, and religion sometimes involved It'll meet by Zoom. It'll meet twice a month, except only once in December. People will be invited to (1) read this pdf, and to be prepare to discuss it with me (1 to 1 zoom mtg. preferred). (2) Then, if interested, a one to one discussion with me to see if this group is a fit.

Meeting attendance is optional, but if you miss, I'd like an

email, and if you're not available to come to about 2/3 of the meetings, this group might not be for you. With 9-12 perhaps optional for discussion, we'll max out at about 16 or 17. That way we can have really busy people, and still be likely to get optimal size discussions. I do percentages on figuring that one. Zoom

links will be sent to all three days before the meeting. Emails are public. I keep phone numbers private, except for my own. When you link into a meeting, you will be sent to a waiting room to be let in by the moderator. No gate crashers. No homework before the meeting. No speaker at the meeting. Specific topic to



be decided on the fly by those who are prompt joining the meeting. Because the links sent out three days early will include everyone's email, it's possible to plow the ground or forward materials to anyone or everyone before the meeting.

The decision of topic is always made at the beginning of the meeting, and it only takes a few minutes at the start. I'll ask where the energy is for each person in turn. Everyone except me gets to weigh in. I look for the plurality and that's where we begin. I started such a group in May of 2021, and have a very good group now, but now with 18 it's already full. So this is starting a new group.

Just as we go through life learning, and trying to apply what we learn, I now know to watch for, because I've experienced each of these problems, and don't wish these problems again.

1) Have your picture showing. We want to see you, your facial expressions.

2) No need to speak at all.

3) Recognize that this is discussion. We only have an hour. This is no time for long-windedness. You have everyone's email, and you can email with an extension of remarks sometime after the meeting.

4) Recognize that for this to work, you don't make a remark, then cut and run, saying you've got to leave. Not fair. Wait for probable discussion, debate, verbal praise, development, or criticism.

5) When you do speak, try to keep on topic.

6) Try to be factual with what you state as facts.

7) Let moderator call on people. Don't do it yourself.

8) Don't slam other people. Example, someone with an EV said, "all your gas powered cars will be boat anchors in seven years".

One can be kinder to others by putting a prediction more tactfully.

*John Keohane keohane@prodigy.net
(phone withheld by author's request)*

The Group That Alex Built

Per Alex Poinsett (1926-2015) and the Adult Discussion Group he built and led at the First Unitarian Church of Chicago. When I knew Alex he was writing major civil rights articles as a senior editor for Ebony magazine. Here's what I wrote, to Ebony's www site, in response to the online announcement of Alex's passing:

Alex was a star. You who read or worked for Ebony knew that, but I write to mention more. He did immensely well leading the adult discussion group at the First Unitarian church of Chicago back in the 1960s. It was ideas. Everyone who wanted to speak got to speak, and it kept to 50 minutes, wherever we ended one Sunday would be where we started the next. We talked about politics, government, civil rights, education, sociology, economics, and more. Thank you, Alex. I'm blessed to have known you.

--John Keohane, Austin, Texas

Here's how it worked, that Group which Alex Built: This was not an action group, it was discussion. Even announcements of actions, or action groups, was out of bounds. In this group

you could say your thoughts, learn the thoughts of others, discuss and debate issues and learn. If you found people you wanted to ally with in action, you did that outside our room, before or afterwards.

I've always been active in trying to applied social sciences.

We met almost every Sunday, September through June for 50 minutes in the hour before church. We had a no

Alex Poinsett chaired our meetings. This is how it worked. At the beginning of each meeting, Alex did three things.

(1) State the ground rules

(2) Invite newcomers to say their names and give short introductions

(3) State where we ended the meeting just before, because that's where we'd start today.

(4) Recognize that for this to work, you don't make a remark, then cut and run, saying you've got to leave. Not fair. Wait for probable discussion, debate, verbal praise, development, or criticism.

5) When you do speak, try to keep on topic.

6) Try to be factual with what you state as facts.

7) Let moderator call on people. Don't do it yourself.

8) Don't slam other people. Example, someone with an EV said, "all your gas powered cars will be boat anchors in seven years." One can be kinder to others by putting a prediction more tactfully.

I think the ground rules need clarification. We only had 50 minutes. We'd have a 10 minute break before church. Raise your hand when you want to speak. He'd try to call on everyone at

improve our politics and social progress in this world. Participation in this energized me. I doubt that many have this kind of group. Perhaps you should. For us, the topics related to government, politics, economics, education, sociology, race, any of the

tables, only chairs, and widened our circle to whomever came. By the time I stumbled on this group, we almost always had forty or more.

least once. We'd start next week where we end today so discussion never ends, just adjourns.

Four keys about Alex: People would raise their hands, be called on, to talk. He'd always called on people by (first) name. Of course he knew all the regulars. He'd note names and length of introductions of newcomers. He would sometimes re-mention the limits of time, or that we would start next week (or next time) wherever we end today, and if necessary, he'd interrupt.

When he'd interrupt, he'd mention again the limits of time, like "we only have 20 minutes left, and we have to hear from others." Sometimes he'd develop a stronger statement. If he'd seen about three hands at the same time, he'd mention all three starting with one most questionable. Let's call him "Joe." So seeing three hands at about the same time, he'd say "We'll call on 'Joe' then Elise and then Hansel." Elise or Hansel or Alex would bring us back.

In June, Alex chose me as his successor. When we began in September, he was gone, and I was lead. I owe a debt to Alex. Whatever success I had, is from participating while observing him, in that group which Alex built.

"The whole world is a series of miracles, but we're so used to them we call them ordinary things."

(Hans Christian Andersen)



FRANK POTTER

A Concern: Joys, Sorrows, and Concerns

This past Sunday my wife and I were out of town and as we are wont to do on such a Sunday we attended a UU church. This was a university town which is a much larger church than ours.

What was unique was the Joys, Sorrows, and Concerns (JSC). As we know, the JSC ritual offers community support and is often a popular ritual. I have been to large congregations where they have the facilitator report on JSC what their Care committee had received during the week. Thus they are able to condense the comments and screen out those which are questionable. After the service at this church at social time, we learned the church implemented this model because the ritual was getting out of hand.

At the church, the leader announced that twice a month they hold gatherings for people after the service who desire to share their joys, sorrows, or concerns with each other. Then the leader presented a bowl of small stones for people who wish to come forward to take one for their JSC and then drop their stones into a bowl of water. My spouse and I were surprised that the majority in the congregation participated.

A year ago, when I attended a UU Studies Network meeting as a guest I had an interesting chat at a break with

four female middle-aged UU ministers. They agreed that JSC was problematic for many congregations. One minister said one of their congregates shared at a service that he had a great sex experience that week. Another reported that one of their members, who was a psychiatrist's husband, would regularly report on a different ailment. Anyone in the mental health field knows that this person has what is called a somatoform disorder. The minister said several members were entertained discussing his ailment of the day until he finally got feedback. That was not healthy for the man nor the congregation. Another minister said she would refuse a call to any congregation that has JSC.

An experience I had last fall was my sharing at our Fellowship JSC that I was glad to return after a month where I nearly died from a combination of strep throat and Covid symptoms. The person who followed me, a very sensitive person normally, reported that she was concerned that her cat might have asthma. My guess is while I was speaking, she was formulating her own comment and missed mine. One person on our lay-led program committee told me recently the speaker had to cut short his talk due to the time of JSC. The remedy, to me, is we want to be supportive to others in this ritual but we must deal with it if it becomes an issue and do it in an honest beloved way.

*Frank Potter, UUF of Dubuque,
Iowa*

DAVID CYCLEBACK

The Rise of Anti-Intellectualism in Unitarian Universalism

Part 2 of 2 on anti-intellectualism

"All humans are susceptible to groupthink, echo chambers, and simple lazy thinking. UUs are no exception. That's what enlightened thinking is supposed to guard against. Reason, science, tolerance, avoiding logical fallacies, and the demand for evidence are critical thinking faculties. When they are demeaned, you get bad decisions—and that's where we're going in the UUA!"

—Patricia Mohr Ph.D., educational psychologist and Unitarian Universalist

"The most courageous act is to think for yourself. Aloud." - Coco Chanel

(This post is the second in two focusing on anti-intellectualism. You can read the first post here: [Anti-intellectualism exists in both the political right and left](#))

While anti-intellectualism is often linked with the far right and fundamentalist religions, it has been increasingly taking root within progressive movements, including organizations like the Unitarian Universalist Church, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the American Humanist Association, *Scientific American*, and many university campuses.

Historically, the political left has been known for its commitment to intellectual rigor, critical thinking, scientific inquiry, and open debate. Likewise, the Unitarian Universalist Church has long been a haven for free thought, religious liberty, and diverse perspectives. However, recent ideological shifts have redefined how knowledge is valued, debated, and applied, leading to ideological rigidity and suppression of viewpoint diversity.

I often write about the Unitarian Universalist Church because it serves as a microcosm of these broader trends, and because I have witnessed these issues firsthand as a UU attendee. Raised in an academic Jewish family that valued intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning, I initially felt at home in the UU community. However, over time, I have observed an increasing political zealotry, dogmatism, tribalism, and groupthink within both the national UUA and its seminaries. Congregations are becoming more politically homogenous, and increasingly driven by emotional safetyism and lazy thinking.

Continued on page 57

SAM DEVINE

A Perspective on the Modern World

As we humans plod through another year, decade, century- wherever you feel you fit in time- it is easy to be disheartened or dismayed at the things we see around us. In fact some of that is by design. We are being led to notice the differences between us and others, constantly taunted into being angry at the fact that someone thinks or feels differently than we do. We find comfort in our connection to kindred spirits and fear those who seem to be lost to some other way of thinking. All of this benefits those who sell media, certain commodities, power and influence. Being part of a UU fellowship, I can say with reasonable certainty that many of us understand that we are being played by those forces, yet we often find ourselves falling victim to them as well.

I'm not going to use statistics that point to facts, those have been overused in modern America. These are things I have learned over the years and are therefore my opinion.

Generally, the world is safer for most humans than it has ever been. Generally we have more freedoms and protections against persecution and harm than we have in the past. Generally we are kinder, smarter and more aware than we have been in the past. All of these things are true of collective humanity, in the macro human civilization sense, but not necessarily evident, nor true, on a local level.

What we have become somewhat bad at in the past 10-20-30 years is connecting genuinely at that local level. And it has even become something that many individual households struggle with regularly. The common culprit we all point to is our phone, or the internet in general. Maybe more specifically social media. Fine, I am fine with blaming it all on those things, but I am not sure we can rest on just that. We have our own personal responsibility in these things as well.

Phones and the internet may be tearing apart the social fabric, that is not something we don't all feel, but in the end we have not yet lost our humanity. We are here, and we are most certainly being manipulated for the benefit of some corporation or government or billionaire, but we are also beautiful in our capacity to show kindness and decency to those around us. This is especially true when we are faced with crisis and calamity. In those moments we do what we know the algorithms the internet can not do, we show love and grace. We help. We give. We connect as humans.

It is my belief that the anti venom to the poison we fear is fresh local kindness, brewed or grown right down the road from where it is consumed. Community is the essence of humanity.

I'm not saying put down the phone, we all know we should do that. I'm not saying don't post on social media, we all know we should stop. What I am saying is that we can and should challenge ourselves to do simple things that have tiny, almost mundane influences in the world. Say

hello to people. Call your relatives and friends and just ask them how they are doing. Be obnoxiously kind without expectation of anything in return. If you want to go further, and this something I have been badgering my fellowship about for a while, organize a tiny festival. I am a big proponent of music, sausage and even beer. It isn't for everyone but I have seen the effectiveness firsthand while living in Germany. The small community I lived in had regular small gatherings, complete with locally produced wurst and inexpensive beer and free music and dancing. Politics and religion played no part in these events, just community. It is far harder to fear or revile your neighbor if you interact with them from time to time, especially when they have seen your dancing and you've seen theirs.

I can't help but think that some portion of the solution to the problems we currently face is rooted in connection. We agree about more than we think we agree upon. We care for each other more than we know. And very importantly, we are all suffering especially if we are unaware of the suffering of those around us. Kindness, community and decency pay dividends far into the future, and can start to pull us together in a world seemingly hell bent on splitting us apart.

--Sam Devine,
Lake Fellowship, Shorewood, MN

ON THE COVER

This Month's Bird

The pelican (*henet* in Egyptian) was associated in Ancient Egypt with death and the afterlife. It was depicted in art on the walls of tombs, and figured in funerary texts, as a protective symbol against snakes.



Henet was also referred to in the Pyramid Texts as the “mother of the king” and thus seen as a goddess.

Pelicans are resilient birds known for their ability to adapt to various environments and survive harsh conditions. A pelican tattoo might symbolize resilience, adaptability, freedom, wanderlust, and the spirit of exploration.

FROM A READER

We Deserved This: The Moral Comeuppance for Our Embrace of Selfishness, Ignorance, and Sloth

By Louis Merlin

Associate Professor at Florida Atlantic University. He lives in Boca Raton, Florida with his wife and two teen boys. A long time Unitarian Universalist, Louis is not currently a member of any UU Fellowship.

Many people vociferously opposed Donald Trump and now are unjustly suffering from his hateful and arbitrary rule. However, 77 million US voters voted for Trump, and an estimated 89 million eligible voters did not vote. Therefore, at least 166 million voters have played a role in determining this shared fate for all Americans. We are, I expect, at the very beginning of four calamitous years of chaotic and cruel government. It's worth reflecting on why so many Americans made such a tragic and short-sighted decision. As so many voices openly and vocally have opposed Trump since his debut on the electoral stage, it's not like we did not see this coming. Instead, we must investigate the reasons for the willful ignorance of so many Americans. Especially in the aftermath of January 6th, it took an act of intentional blindness to pretend that Trump was just another garden-variety style politician. What went wrong with the judgment of so many Americans, and what do we need to do to fix it?

I would suggest that this is primarily a moral failure and one that we as Americans better own up to sooner rather than later. I lay the blame on a triumvirate of self-destructive moral ills: Selfishness, ignorance, and sloth. Unless we can accept these as our collective moral failings and repent to do better, the future of America is likely doomed.

Many on the left have decried Trump for his many partisan moral failings, namely his overt racism, sexism, and anti-queer policies and rhetoric. While this criticism is amply deserved, it overlooks an even more glaring moral deficiency: Trump's open embrace of selfishness and his equal disregard of beneficence as a primary value. Indeed, Trump's primary appeal is his message to the downtrodden working class is that they are getting screwed, and he is the only one who can stand up for the raw deal they have been on the receiving end of. He does not make any appeal to the principle of the common good, or of national unity, but rather frankly stands up for the values of power and dominance. Trump openly pursues his personal self-interest, politically and economically, and does not differentiate between his personal self-interest and that of the country. In any other day and age, this would be disqualifying, but in the current era, so many of his supporters have openly pined for this aggressive selfishness, not just America first, but the me-first moral system he embodies and espouses. His open disregard for the values of service and moral aspiration are well known, yet so many have embraced him despite this, or even because of it.

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3rd Wednesday Vesper Service

Sponsored by the UU Multiracial Unity Action Council (UUMUAC)

Wednesday, April 16 • 7:00 pm Central Time
(8:00 Eastern, 6:00 Mountain, 5:00 Pacific)

Service TBA

FOR THE ZOOM LINK: please send your name, email address, and congregation (if any) to richard3point@gmail.com. (If you received a Zoom link to a previous service from that email address, you will automatically receive one for this service.) The link will be sent Tuesday afternoon..

WE WON'T FORGET

Seven Principles & Six Sources

We affirm and promote UU's Seven Principles:

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 existence of which we are all a part

Unitarian Universalism draws from many Sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life
- Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature

The Tom Tom Show: The International Podcast.

A show on which two dads reach out to random strangers to simply ask them how they are doing. How has your day been? Anything new in your life? While other shows prank people or dig for human conflict or tragedy, Tom and Sam find connection and friendship with people they have never met.

In the spirit of decency and kindness, a message embodied in the history and legacy of Universalists and Unitarians, The Tom Tom Show isn't clean, it is kind. Life is messy, nice is always needed, and making friends of strangers is something we all need these days. [The Tom Tom Show](#), better than it sounds- and very unlikely to cause you or anyone you know any harm.

PLEASE FORWARD!

Be A UUnderWorld Paper Carrier!

It seems that many, many UUs didn't get the word of the many significant changes that occurred at GA24, or what those changes mean to our religion.

And since there is no longer an easy way to express non-conforming, dissenting views to a wide audience of Unitarian Universalists, we have put this magazine together to try and establish a platform where ordinary UUs can make their voices heard.

To get UUnderWorld out to the rank-and-file congregants and independent UUs we're asking you, dear reader, to **please forward** this on to anyone and everyone you know, who might need to know, about the new direction the Association is trying to lead: Church email



lists, newsletters, discussion groups and the like. There is a new website, **UUnderWorld.com**, that lets you download all the current and previous issues, and even sign up for the direct emails!

UUnderWorld is in standard “pdf” format, and a pretty small file, so folks can open and read it as is. If anyone wants to get a copy or back issues, join the email list, send an article or letter, or anything else, they can send an email to **UUnderWorld74@gmail.com**.

A Whole Year!

I think we all know that this has gotten ridiculous. Totally off the charts. This is the **twelfth** issue UUnderWorld, which was supposed to be a one-time thing, way, way, way back in May, but has now been put together every month for an entire year! If you remember, the original intention was to draw attention to all the major changes going on at the national Association GA in 2024, but the magazine continues on, with hopes of becoming a platform for independent voices and ideas & thoughts on liberal religion, since that other one, I forget the name, doesn't seem to want to do that any more.

The editor is still, for some unknown reason, **John Griffin Miller**, a lifelong UU, with brilliant Assistant Editor, **John A. Keohane**, and super helpful **Ken Christiansen** (who finds all the mistakes and makes the links work). We have a growing list of contributors bylined, from all around the world, and if anyone would like to help out with future issues, please (pretty please) let us know.

We are expecting your contribution very, very soon.

And, as we try to make UUnderWorld as relevant and as widely read as possible, it is imperative that readers help with our guerilla distribution system by *forwarding* the magazine and website to friends, fellow UUs, church leaders, ministers, total strangers and arch enemies. Post a notice on your Facebook page and maybe even your congregation's. And be sure to direct people to our super cool website **uunderworld.com (thanks Steve!) for past issues and to join hundreds of others on the growing email list. (We don't use the list for anything but asking for submissions and sending out the fresh issue, so please encourage input that will spur discussion from all corners--of the world!)**

Please send Letters to the Editor, submissions, input & suggestions, comments, complaints, unsolicited praise, book reviews, solicited praise, anxieties, requests for a pdf of UUnderWorld current and past issues or other info to: **UUnderworld74@gmail.com**

FROM TheIntellectualist FACEBOOK PAGE

Black Saturday: The Day the United States Ceased to Be a Constitutional Democracy

The Moment Democracy Ceased to Function

Saturday, March 15, 2025, may have seemed unremarkable to most Americans. But in time, history will remember it as Black Saturday—the moment the United States ceased to function as a constitutional democracy.

For the first time in modern American history, a sitting president openly defied a direct federal court order—and nothing happened. No intervention. No enforcement. No consequences. A legal ruling was issued, and the White House simply ignored it.

The White House's Decision: Power Over Law

Inside the White House, the decision was not about law—it was about power. A federal judge ruled against the administration. The debate inside Trump's team was not whether the ruling was legal, but whether they could get away with ignoring it. They decided they could. And they were right.

This was not a clash between equal branches of government. It was the moment the judiciary was exposed as powerless. The courts do not have an army. They rely on compliance. But a court that cannot enforce its rulings is not a court—it is a suggestion box. And a presidency that can ignore the courts without consequence is no longer constrained by law—it is an untouchable executive.

Trump did not declare the end of judicial authority in a speech. He demonstrated it in practice. This is how democratic systems collapse—not with a single act, but with the normalization of defiance, the expectation that a ruling can simply be brushed aside.

How the System Failed to Stop Him

This moment did not happen in isolation. It happened because every prior attempt to hold Trump accountable has failed. The system tried—and at every turn, it proved incapable of stopping him.

Impeachment failed—twice. Criminal cases stalled. The Supreme Court refused to rule on his disqualification. Congress never moved to check his power. At each step, Trump tested the system—and the system flinched. He learned that laws are only as strong as the institutions willing to enforce them. And so, when faced with a court ruling, he did what he had been conditioned to do—he ignored it. And nothing happened.

Continued on page 63

line by line – lines selected from a link log

by George Atherton

U, U, and UU explained* / Rev Shawn Gauthier (!?) – h/t VanU sermons*
freethinking UUs are now often ostracized, cataloged as gadflies, or pressured into silence (!g)
be ye therefore perfect (!?) / whole: more accurate translation (!?) – h/t Rev Lynn Harrison* (!?)
all the human heart longs for lies in the death of capitalism, militarism, and empire* ... (!?)
renounce Nato (before the US leaves it), dialogue with Russia, cooperate with China* (!?) / EU
Bismarck had proved through diplomacy that peace in Europe was possible* ... (!?)
Germany maintained peace and introduced social security under Bismarck (!?) / +AI*
the Kaiser fired Bismarck in 1890 – illustrated in Punch: “Dropping the Pilot”* / Tenniel (!i !*)
you go on by going in, by diving right in to reality, ... (!?) / keep on keeping on*
the so-called absolute is conceptual and conjectural* ... / Robert Saltzman (!?)
stereotyping and guilt-based training alienated participants* / Cycleback on Yancey on DEI (!g)
counterinsurgency: occupiers cannot overcome host populations except by annihilation* (!?)
in Canada, America has its own Ukraine* (!?)
Canada, Denmark, Germany, and Ukraine trusted the US too much ... (!g) / China*
Trump ... and Zionist penetration at the highest levels in the US* / Patrick Lawrence (!?)
people watch the Super Bowl for reasons not usually recognized as spiritual / Frank Casper*
Man is an amphibian ... (!?) / humans are amphibians living simultaneously in two worlds*
Trump wants a total economic collapse in Canada to make it easier to annex the country (!?)
we each notice as we notice* – we can only be as we are – and so think and do as we do (!?)
the range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice* / Daniel Goleman (!gb)
among like-minded people, there is often an unconscious bias against dissenters* ... (!?)
Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, self-declared crusader, said the US is in a “holy war” ... (!?)
2025-03-25* / date posted the lines above, selected* – for UUnderWorld* – from a link log*

asterisks and DDG bang commands (!?) here are links – hover/click on links for destinations

Cycleback on DEI, Continued from page 16

"The left is also guilty of absolutist thinking on this topic. In fact, there's good reason to believe that a substantial reason Trump is in power now is because of the left's overreach on cultural issues that flow from such thinking. By now, it should be obvious that many progressive DEI efforts went too far. There are just too many examples of alarming DEI practices to deny it—training that oversold implicit bias, overemphasized the dangers of microaggressions, treated individuals like group representatives, expected individuals to make amends for the crimes of others who look like them, demeaned white people, and condescendingly treated Black people like fragile creatures who can only succeed when white people like us. I've attended a few DEI trainings and have witnessed all these things firsthand."

I see regular examples of such absolutist and false dichotomy arguments in social media about DEI and other political and social topics

The below was a recent widely circulated meme on Facebook:

"if you oppose "DEI," you should have to use the full phrase instead of the letters. Be brave and say, "I oppose diversity, equity, and inclusion."

Bonus points if you admit which part of that you don't like.

The below was one of many Facebook user replies objecting to the meme's false dichotomy argument:

"Once again this formulation is over simplistic. It also serves to divide people into for and against camps and makes no attempt at genuinely engaging with differences of opinion. As such it in itself denies diversity and inclusion. I have always valued the idea and practice of welcoming difference, treating people with respect regardless of their differences and challenging the ways in which, both individually and systemically, discrimination and prejudice arise. But formal systems for enforcing this can tend to become

formulaic and limited in usefulness and nuance. And they become problematic as a result.”

The Problem of Binary Thinking

Binary thinking—the tendency to view issues in black-and-white or all-or-nothing terms—dominates many contemporary debates. Those who fully embrace DEI often see any opposition as rooted in racism, while those who reject it outright perceive it as a threat to meritocracy and fairness. This false dichotomy obscures the reality that DEI initiatives, like any social policies, have both strengths and weaknesses that merit discussion.

Similar binary arguments are prevalent in gender debates, where someone who supports equality and rights for the LGBTQ+ community but offers different perspectives on specific policies or medical treatments is ad hominem attacked by identitarian progressives as “transphobic” and “bigoted.”

Moreover, the strident, moralizing approach taken by some on the left—where disagreement is met with name-calling and demands for conformity—has contributed to political backlash. This kind of binary thinking has fueled the rise of figures like Donald Trump and bolstered Republican electoral success. A lack of nuance in discourse is ultimately harmful to the left.

The Complexity of DEI Policies

DEI initiatives aim to address systemic inequalities, but their implementation and effectiveness vary widely. Some programs successfully create opportunities for minorities without diminishing fairness, while others create unfairness, resentment or reinforce division. Rather than blindly accepting or rejecting DEI policies, a more productive approach involves analyzing their real-world impacts, assessing their effectiveness, listening to diverse viewpoints, and making adjustments as needed.

Moving Beyond the False Binary

A more nuanced discussion of DEI recognizes that:

- **Equity and meritocracy are not necessarily at odds.** Thoughtfully designed policies can enhance both fairness and opportunity without compromising excellence.
- **Good intentions do not guarantee good outcomes.** Efforts should be evaluated based on their effectiveness rather than ideological commitment.
- **Criticism of DEI is not inherently racist or regressive.** As Strambler points out, some criticisms raise valid concerns about fairness, implementation, and unintended consequences.

Christiansen: Power + Prejudice, Continued from page 4

Much of the initial work was accomplished by the Detroit Industrial Mission (DIM). DIM was founded by religious groups in 1956 with the initial goal of helping production line workers have meaningful lives. It had the support of the big three Detroit automobile manufacturers. By 1967 DIM had increased its community involvement by doing what they called “switchboarding.” That meant playing a go-between role between industry and an activist group pursuing issues that affected the black community. It was a natural development when DIM was tapped to anchor the mission of the New Detroit Committee.

DIM added new staff including Robert Terry, a white ordained Baptist pastor, and Douglass Fitch, a black pastor, social worker, and racial justice advocate, in leadership roles. Up to now, the DIM staff had been all white. Douglass Fitch had worked with Martin Luther King in the 1960s, but had become more radical over time, much like Stokely Carmichael had done. Immediately prior to coming to DIM, Fitch worked with the Black Congress of Los Angeles, a united front of Black Power organizations.

Some tension surrounded Fitch’s involvement. Most of the staff thought of their first loyalty being to their employer and through them to the industries and government that wanted an end to the rioting. Fitch, on the other hand, maintained a strong loyalty to the black community. DIM published an article by Fitch titled “Doing My Thing.” In the article, Klein reports, “Fitch distinguished between two broad periods of black development: ‘African Greatness’ and ‘Exile in Western Hell,’ with the exile ending in a ‘New Era’ of Black Power.” Fitch also asserted that “Stokely Carmichael’s development of Black Power was ‘the most significant of the decisions made by black men down through history.’” Terry dedicated his 1970 book, *For Whites Only*, “To Douglass Fitch, a black man who confronted me with my whiteness and challenged me to come to terms with it.”

So far, we have the white establishment very upset about property damage, a white preacher with excellent leadership skills and good intentions, and a black preacher with very strong feelings about race rooted in the Black Power movement. How could this motley crew make a difference in the history of antiracism in this country?

Enter a nationally and internationally connected organization dedicated to creating “change agents” called the National Training Laboratories (NTL). A key member of DIM’s staff attended NTL workshops and was an enthusiastic supporter of the strategies NTL had developed for changing the minds of large groups of people. NTL methodologies became central to DIM’s work.

NTL was founded in the 1940’s by the Office of Naval Research, the National Education Association (NEA), and the Carnegie Corporation Foundation. NTL conducted original experiments with possible methodologies for changing peoples’ minds and bringing large groups of people to a common mind. Key learnings along the way involved the implementation of *sensitivity training* and *T-Groups* where members of a group take time to “participate in discussions, share experiences, and receive feedback from peers

to enhance their understanding of themselves and others.” NTL taught the use of controlled confrontation as part of these dynamics.

According to Klein, NTL defined a set of Change Agent skills that included:

- “Determining the barriers, the resistance, the degree of readiness to change”
- “Making changees aware of the need for change” including through tools of “shock” and “guilt”
- “Creating a feeling of responsibility to engage in this change by active personal participation”
- “Making catharsis possible”
- “Skill in dealing wisely with changees’ ideology, myths, traditions, [and] values”
- “Understanding stress on changees’ beliefs and behavior”

Sound familiar? I had wondered for a long time where the skill sets utilized by the UUA to change the mission and polity of the association and congregations had originated.

By late 1967, DIM had Black Power ideas about race and racism, capable staff organizers, the backing of the captains of government and industry, and a tested and proven strategy for changing minds. What could this group produce? And how far could the new ideas go?

Between 1967 and 1974, the Detroit Industrial Mission and spin-off groups popularized the view that all white people were racist and that eliminating white racism would solve black people’s problems. This was in tune with thinking that went back to Stokely Carmichael. In addition, the goal of eliminating white racism didn’t conflict with the New Detroit Committee’s goal of protecting property and the “American way of life” in the same way the Civil Right Movement and its attendant backlash did.

DIM created a volunteer speaker’s bureau with an emphasis on creating a new white consciousness. The committee ultimately developed a presentation that was delivered throughout the Detroit area over the next seven years with the aim of creating a new white consciousness.

Klein reports that “after Terry would open with the question, ‘What does it mean to be white today?’ participants would often include negative words such as angry, frustrated, inadequate, insecure, and guilty. ... New Detroit speakers regularly faced personal consequences for attempting to evangelize the new white consciousness ... [including] isolation and loneliness because they have been ostracized by their own community.” This kind of outcome was taken as evidence they were touching nerves they needed to touch.

Rather than stopping, these ideas grew very strong legs and moved to a national stage via the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Meanwhile, a woman named Pat Bidol tested a 10-week elective curriculum for high school students in the Detroit area. Bidol’s curriculum brought a new and very influential definition of racism into the discussion. Klein identifies Bidol’s curriculum as the first time anyone stated that Racism = Power + Prejudice with the added stipulation that since white people have all the power, only white people can be racist. In 1970, the New Detroit Committee published Bidol’s curriculum under the title *Developing New*

Perspectives on Race: An Innovative Multi-Media Social Studies Curriculum in Race Relations for the Secondary Level. It was picked up and distributed by the National Education Association.

Race relations was also a big issue in the military. Klein writes, “In September of 1969, Army Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland directed that race relations be incorporated into the Army’s educational system, leading to a four-hour block of instruction at the Infantry School. In 1970, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird expanded this initiative and created the Inter-service Task Force on Education in Race Relations. ... Between 1971 and 1974, every military employee was mandated to receive eighteen hours of race relations seminars. ... More than 2,500 service members were trained to teach race relations...”

This is where things began to fall apart. Teaching the idea that all white people were racist led to disruptions in the life of military units causing the military to shut this program down in 1974. Similarly, disruptions resulting from training sessions in many other places caused the New Detroit Committee to defund its work in this area in 1974. The focus of the nation was no longer on race relations in the same way it had been in the 1960s.

Klein goes on to explain how the new ideas about race and antiracism didn’t just die in 1974. Two books in particular had many readers. Robert Terry’s 1970 book [For Whites Only](#) promoted a new white consciousness and advocated specific tactics for changing individuals and institutions. It was widely distributed in religious and non-profit communities. Judith H. Katz’s 1978 book, [White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training](#), based in part on Pat Bidol’s curriculum, had a powerful influence on many educators and some educational institutions partly because she continued to give lectures and write books. Her work is featured on the [Member Publications page](#) of the (still existing) National Training Laboratories. Her latest (2022) book is titled [Change Champions: A Dialogic Approach to Creating an Inclusive Culture](#). Chapters like “Disrupting and Transforming Mindsets” lift up the same tried and proven NTL tactics employed by the Detroit Industrial Mission and its spin-off organizations, 1970-74.

Klein follows the history of these ideas right up to Robin DiAngelo. He writes, “DiAngelo does not cite Katz, Terry, Della-Dora, Bidol, or Edler in any of her available published works. However, DiAngelo’s ideas are so strikingly similar to those developed by these theorists years earlier that her decision not to cite any of them could arguably be described as plagiarism.” Klein then gives examples of many of the similarities.

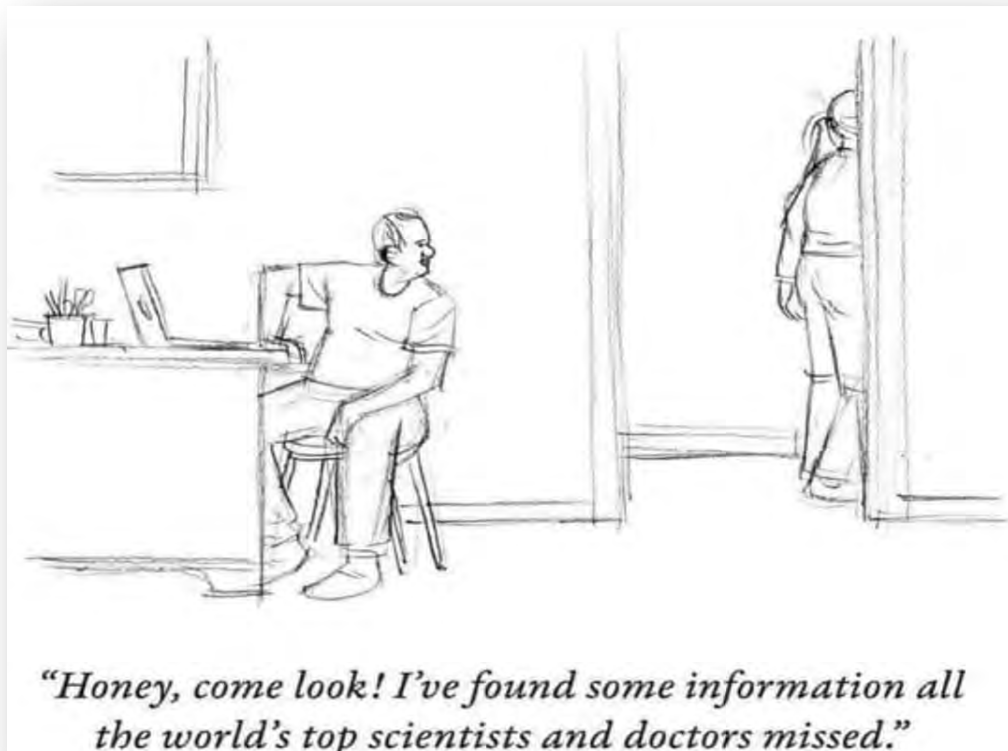
This book helped answer a personal question for me. During the spring and summer academic quarters of 1967, I attended the Urban Training Center for Christian Mission in Chicago. By way of coincidence or connection, both the Urban Training Center and the Detroit Industrial Mission were underwritten by the Ford Foundation.

A curious thing happened while I was there. During the spring, there was a very alive conference phone call nearly every morning. The call connected leaders of black and white congregations that cared about civil rights all over the city. Things that happened the day and night before – unnecessary police actions, crises in a community organization, something that happened to a church building – all were heard and response strategies devised in a multiracial way.

Later, during the summer quarter, that changed. Several of the black congregations decided to exclude white people from all their meetings and deliberations. The word on the street was that they decided more would be gained by focusing on white guilt than would be gained by any strategic cooperation with white individuals and churches. This was my first direct encounter with Black Power.

Reading Joseph Klein's book, [Redefining Racism](#), was the first time I encountered an evidence-based explanation of how and why the Civil Rights Movement ended and prescribed forms of "antiracism" changed from working to eradicate discriminatory laws and policies to working to change white peoples' consciousness. Somehow, I was not surprised to learn that white people, not black people, were the primary movers in this change of focus.

Dr. Christiansen has been working with race issues ever since participating in a volunteer ministry in Chicago 1965-67. More about his background is available on his website at <https://assetbasedantiracism.com/about-dr-kenneth-christiansen/>.



Rev Kerr: William and Ellen Craft, Continued from page 8

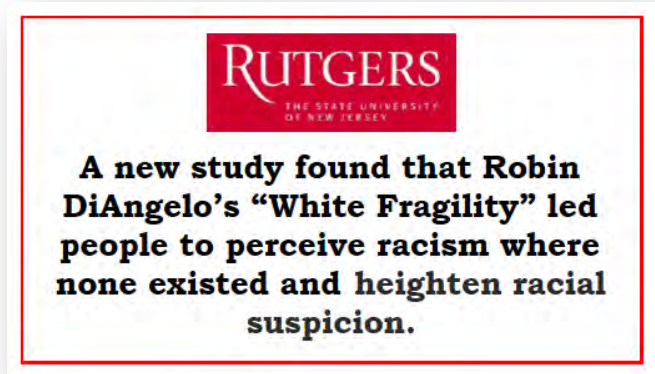
experience shame when they hear stories from the days of slavery. They are not allowed to just feel extraordinarily sad that white people of another era could be so inhumane...they are required to feel personal shame. This is a shame in itself, because mental health professionals have told us for a long time that wallowing in the emotion of shame produces nothing worthwhile. Nothing.

But America is currently awash in the shame and blame technique of anti-racism work. That is very alarming, because studies are now showing it has the reverse effect, making racism worse, not better. My message today is about two slaves, who, 12 years before the Civil War, escaped their captivity in Georgia. They were William and Ellen Craft. And I suggest you experience whatever you need to experience when you hear their story. Perhaps you will experience... dumbstruck dismay that people ever treated human beings in such a manner. Or maybe you will experience pride that your fellow humans, whatever the color of their skin, are capable of such a heroic, death-defying escape to freedom. And I think if we do that, we will see ourselves in William and Ellen, and that is the way of compassion that can bring us together.

It was just this time of year in 1848, when William and Ellen Craft finally decided they must escape. They had thought about it for years, but they were enslaved on a plantation deep in Georgia, 1000 miles from any free state in the North. Escape seemed impossible, so for a time they resigned themselves to their life of degrading treatment and imprisonment.

They got married, but they knew all too well that slave families were often torn apart when one of them was sold away for the sake of profit or punishment. William's father, and then his aged mother were both sold, as he watched from nearby. When William himself stood on the auction block, he saw his just-sold sister being led away. He wrote, "I begged the auctioneer falling on my knees, to let me just step down and bid my sister farewell. But, instead of granting me this request, he grasped me by the neck, and with a violent oath, exclaimed, "Get up! There is no use in your seeing her. You can do the wench no good!"

Ellen's mother was sold away when Ellen was a little girl and she had seen so many other children separated from their parents in this cruel manner. William Craft would later write that the idea of bearing a child who would become a slave "filled Ellen's very soul with horror." They could never have a child while they were



enslaved, but freedom was a thousand miles away. And the punishment for trying to escape was not just whipping, but branding and cutting off toes, torture of all kinds and of course, they would be forever separated as punishment. William and Ellen where rightfully afraid of attempting an escape, so they decided...to “settle down in slavery, and endeavor to make ourselves as comfortable as possible under that system; but at the same time ever to keep our dim eyes steadily fixed upon the glimmering hope of liberty, and earnestly pray God mercifully, to assist us.”

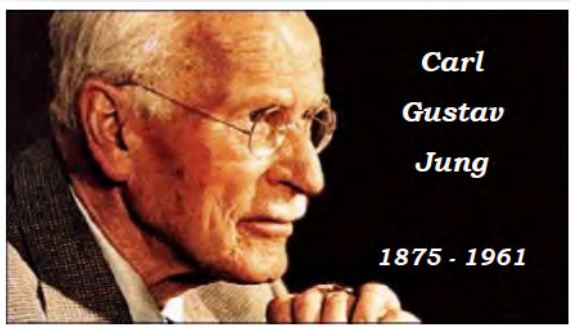
I had planned for a long time to tell the story of William and Ellen Craft’s escape, but the time never seemed right. And then I needed something for this Sunday and couldn’t think of anything else. Maybe December the 1st would be ok for the Crafts. Oh, but wait we should start off the Christmas season with something Christmasie, and there’s nothing very festive about man’s inhumanity to man, so I didn’t think I could talk about the Crafts. Now what was I going to do? But then I was reading the book about their escape and learned that they purposefully made their escape at Christmas time.

Thank God, it is a Christmas story! It felt like a mysterious gift. William and Ellen needed this thing called the spirit of Christmas, complete with a virgin birth, to pull off their escape. Now I know it can sound romantic, poetic...”a virgin birth,” but it’s a real thing that is not well understood because people think it’s about the magical birth of a person, a body, when it could be the birth of a new consciousness.

When we changed the electronic sign out front this week, I at first posted “Virgin Births Here...Sunday 10:30.” I took it down an hour later. Not everyone would understand that I wasn’t talking about ...you know, something weird.

But as you heard in this morning’s reading, J.C himself...that is J.C., Joseph Campbell...not J.C., Jesus Christ, but Campbell said all those stories of the Gods born of a virgin are about us.

Christmas is not just about the birthday of Jesus of Nazareth, but about the birth of the spirit of compassion in people. A transformation of the mind that can make a person new. And of course, that’s what J.C... Jesus Christ was talking about! Same old body, but there can be a different mind, and that is a virgin birth.



So how does something like this happen, and where do we sign up to get a virgin birth, when it feels like we need one? The most influential, modern explorer of the human mind, Carl Jung, said people are radically changed, made dramatically stronger, when they decide to face the thing, they fear most.

“Find out what a person fears most and that is where they will develop next,” said Carl Gustav, “For the hero, fear is a challenge and a task, because

only boldness can deliver from fear. “Where your fear is, there is your task.”

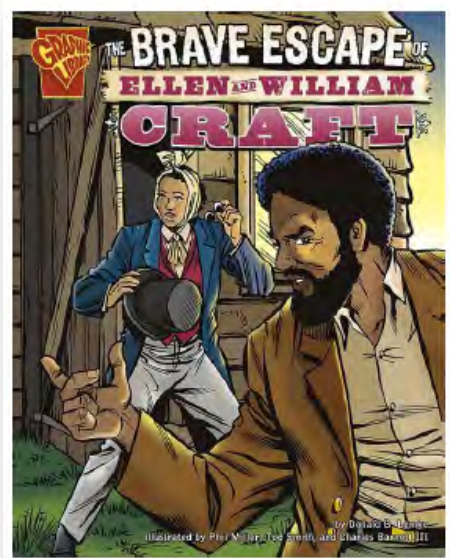
That’s not some romantic, poetic ideal. It’s a simple, yet challenging prescription for how we each can become happier, less fearful, and that is a new birth.

Christmas time of 1848 approached, and William and Ellen, decided to face their greatest fears and escape. Ellen told William that “I think it is almost too much for us to undertake; however, I feel that God is on our side, and with his assistance, we will be able to succeed.” We might put it differently when we take a great risk. Not a life-or-death risk, like the Craft’s of course...but like Ellen, we might say... “our cause is just, and certainly the universe will support us.” But however you express it, Ellen and William believed they deserved freedom, and that made them bold enough to accept the challenge. Perhaps that is what happens to all of us when we face our fears so we can grow. We know we deserve a better life, and it makes us bold.

Ellen conceived of the plan on December the 12th. She was very light skinned and thought she could pose as a white gentleman, traveling with a male slave attendant, which would be William of course, who obviously had the easier role to play. They would go by train and boat, taking the most expensive accommodations and staying in the finest hotels. They had saved money from William’s extra job as a carpenter and he was able to buy some of their disguises, while Ellen made her own trousers. This was tense, dangerous work. William had to buy the clothing from various places so it didn’t arouse suspicion.

The problems with the plan seemed almost insurmountable. Ellen, dressed as a man, would have to sign his name in hotel registers, but she couldn’t write a word. So, she decided to put her right arm in a sling and would ask people to sign for her. Her complexion was too smooth and fair, so she would wear a cloth wrap surrounding much of her face and say it was a poultice for a jaw problem. She began practicing masculine mannerisms and lowering her voice. They only had eight days from their plan’s conception, to get ready because they had to leave on December 20th.

You see, they had to get Christmas passes from their so-called masters. These passes would explain their absence for a crucial two days. Without them, people would immediately report them as missing, runaways. William explained: “Some of the best slaveholders will sometimes give their favorite slaves a few days’ holiday at Christmas time; so, after no little amount of per-severance on my wife’s part, she obtained a pass, and so did I.” In other words, they depended on



this minute, stingy, barely there, expression of human compassion associated with Christmas. Without it, they could not begin their escape.

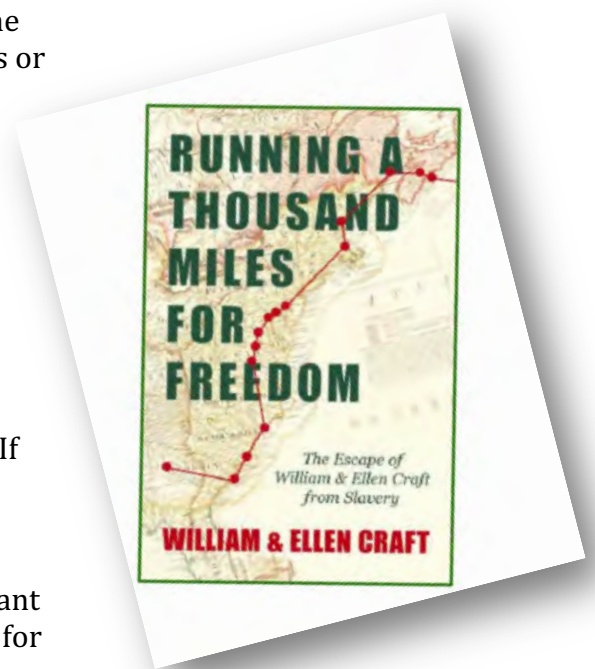
Of course, we don't do a lot better with our spirit of Christmas today. Maybe, at best, it starts a week or so before Christmas and ends on New Year's Eve at midnight. Then the spirit is toast. It's as if we think there is a limited supply of peace, love and understanding, or that those things are just for pansies who can't handle the real world of war, hate and misunderstanding. I think it is as Joe Campbell said, our Christianity taught us that the virgin birth was just for the gods and it is out there and so it's just a once-a-year thing. But the birth of compassion in each of us can be a common, everyday possibility if our religion is transformed to tell us that. Ellen and William had to make do with two or three days of a rather heartless, begrudged, Christmas compassion, but it was enough.

Their preparations made, their practice sessions complete, they stood at the door of their cabin, getting ready to open it and literally tip toe across the yard to the street. If they were seen now, it would be all over. Ellen started sobbing unable to move. But it wasn't because she wasn't going to go through that door. It was just another confrontation with the fear that guards the door, to every new birth. After a moment she composed herself, and said "Come, William, it is getting late." She later wrote: "And we then opened the door and stepped out as softly as moonlight... upon the water."

Thank the Gods, thank the universe, thank whoever you want, that we don't have to confront the fears the Crafts faced. Or the fears of the Palestinians or Ukrainians and many others who live in fear right now. But even our everyday fears keep us from going through the door to more freedom of every description. Where your fear is, there is your task, so we should name a few fears to help us plan our next virgin birth. Or maybe we are resting at the moment. That's Ok too, the timing is up to us.

But here is a brief list to get us thinking:
Making amends with an estranged, one-time friend. If you fail, you will win just in the trying. If you've always been afraid of water...learn to swim. It will somehow make you more confident in nearly everything else you do. If you are single and don't want to be single, try online dating sites. This is no longer for nerds and younger people can't understand how anyone finds their companion by going to a bar, let alone a church!

We could do this all day, but the rules are easy and memorable, so you can do it at home. Find a fear, and if you know that facing it will somehow make you a new, happier person...go through the door called "fear," and challenge it.



They went from Macon to Savannah, then on to Charleston, S. C, Wilmington North Carolina, Richmond Va. then Fredericksburg Virginia. Washington DC, then Baltimore on Christmas Eve, and finally Philadelphia on Christmas Day. By my count they had at least 10, heart-pounding close calls.

They no sooner boarded the train to Savannah when a friend of Ellen's master came on and sat near her. He knew Ellen very well so for many terrible minutes she thought he had recognized her and was there to apprehend her. But no, he was just taking the train eastward. Ellen immediately pretended to be deaf so she did not have to talk, and everyone bought this ruse because of her many bandages.

Their story needs to be a major motion picture release. And if you ever watched the true story movie,



William and Ellen

The Great Escape, you'll remember how at the end you can hardly breath as the escaping prisoners have one close call after another. And so it was with Ellen and William's escape. You want them to get away so badly that you see yourself in them and you can't fathom that the cruelty of slavery ever existed in our country.

During their journey many people helped them because Ellen evoked the natural compassion that most humans have for an injured or sick person. People frequently made room for Ellen to lie down and be comfortable because she/he looked so ill. William and Ellen told people they were going to Philadelphia to find good doctors and the story worked perfectly.

In Charleston, the landlord of their accommodations and his wife supported Ellen by her arms and basically carried her to her room. It is likely that no other escaping slave had valet service assisting their getaway. Ellen's act was near perfect except she kept saying "thank you" to William. One man lectured her saying nothing spoils a slave so soon as saying, 'thank you' and 'if you please' to him. "The only way to make a slave toe the mark, and to keep him in his place, is to storm at him like thunder, and keep him trembling like a leaf. If every black was drilled in this manner, they would be as humble as dogs, and never dare to run away."

Their biggest test came in Baltimore on Christmas Eve. They were just a few hours away from freedom, but a train officer would not allow Ellen to take William aboard. William later described the events with such detail and passion that the director who finally makes this movie has a good start on the script. "What if you are not the rightful owner of the slave he asked? Should the proper master come and prove that his slave escaped on our road, we shall have him to pay." We shan't let you go." "These sharp words fell upon our anxious hearts like the crack of doom, and

made us feel that hope only smiles, to deceive.”

This conversation attracted the attention of the large number of bustling passengers and after the officer had finished, a few of them said, "what a pity, what a pity;" not because they thought we were slaves endeavoring to escape, but because they thought my master was indeed a slaveholder and... an invalid gentleman, and therefore it was wrong to detain him.

The officer, observing that the passengers were in sympathy with us, became even more angry. For a few moments perfect silence prevailed. My master looked at me, and I at him, but neither of us dared to speak a word, for fear of making some blunder that would tend to our detection. Just then the bell rang for the train to leave; and had it been the sudden shock of an earthquake it could not have given us a greater thrill. The sound of the bell caused every eye to flash with apparent interest, and to be more steadily fixed upon us than before. But, as God would have it, the officer all at once thrust his fingers through his hair, and in a state of great agitation said, "I really don't know what to do; I calculate it is all right." "As he is not well, it is a pity to stop him here. We will let you both go."

We hobbled across the platform as quickly as possible. I tumbled him, (Ellen), unceremoniously into one of the best carriages, and leaped into mine just as the train was gliding off towards our happy destination.”

It was still a hundred miles to Philadelphia, but they had done it. Ellen remembered, that in the carriage ride from the station to the boarding house she said, "Thank God, William, we are safe" and we wept together like children. Safe in our room, in the free city of Philadelphia we knelt on that Sabbath, and Christmas-day,— and poured out our heartfelt gratitude to God, for enabling us to overcome so many perilous difficulties, and to escape out of the jaws, of the wicked.”

It is not romantic poetry to say that during their escape to freedom Ellen and William were reborn as new, more powerful beings. They just were. For two years they both spoke on William Lloyd Garrison’s abolitionist lecture circuit and became national celebrities. A job that included a grueling travel schedule which I imagine was a piece of cake for William and Ellen. The fugitive Slave act of 1850 made it too dangerous for them to stay in America, so they went to England and stayed for 19 years. They had five children there, and Ellen worked in reform organizations such as the London Emancipation Committee, the Women's Suffrage Organization, and the British and Foreign Freedmen's Society.



Ellen

Ellen in disguise

They both earned speaking fees doing public lectures about slavery, and their escape. Ellen turned their home into a hub of Black activism where she invited fellow Black abolitionists to stay.

They returned to America in 1868, raised funds from supporters and established two schools for African Americans—one for adults and one for children. After “night riders,” burned down both the schools, the Crafts built a new school in Woodville, Georgia and there, they founded the Woodville Co-operative Farm School in 1873 to educate and employ freedmen.



Woodville became a success, offering people in the Black community lessons in math, reading, writing and agriculture. While Ellen and their children focused on teaching, William worked on fundraising to keep the school open. And yes, of course, they still faced plenty of hardships and discrimination, but just think, what if they had never walked through that door?

Arachnophobia is the dumbest fear. Who cares if two spiders want to get married? Love is love. 🕷️

Cycleback: Is Your Congregation Retarding Your Brain? continued from page 14

Neuroscientific studies have shown that hearing the same narratives rewires the brain, making people more resistant to new ideas and more prone to black-and-white thinking. Psychiatrist Christine B.L. Adams, MD, writes that exposure to different and challenging viewpoints is essential for creating brain flexibility, deepening emotional understanding, and strengthening independent thinking—key ingredients for both personal and community growth.

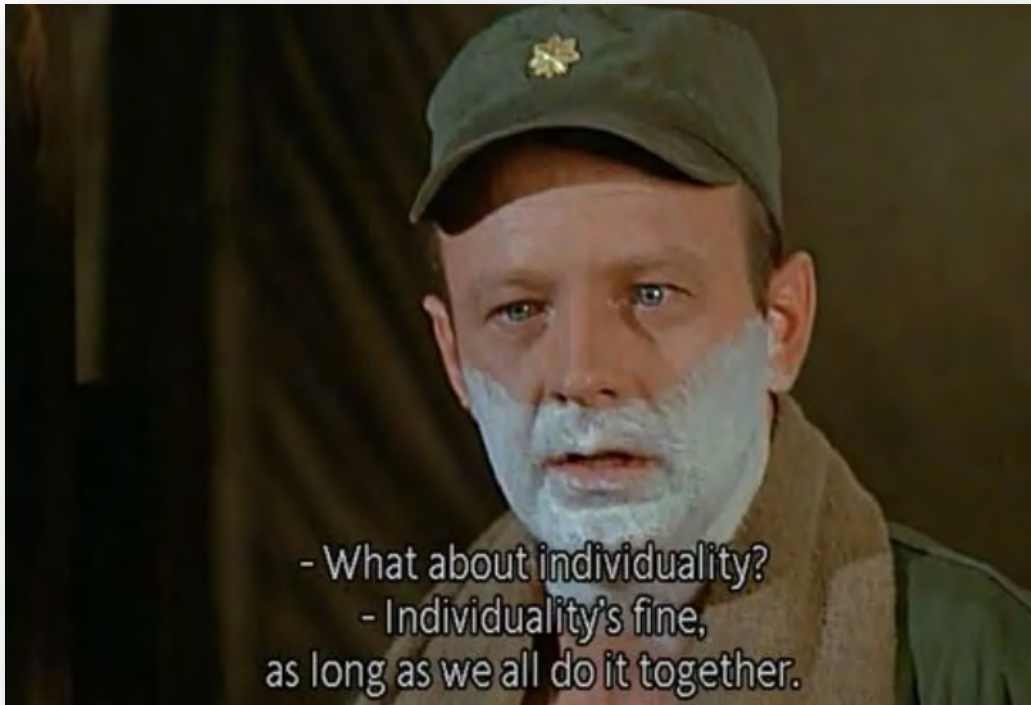
Ideological bubbles don't just limit intellectual and emotional growth—they fuel division, prejudice, and extremism. Social psychology research shows that echo chambers breed outgroup hostility.

Many UU Congregations Becoming Ideological Bubbles and Safe Spaces



Unitarian Universalism has traditionally been a haven for free thinkers, open inquiry, and intellectual diversity. However, in recent years, the UUA, UU seminaries, and many ministers have promoted UU congregations as bubbles for leftists. and membership has grown increasingly politically narrow, limiting political and intellectual diversity.

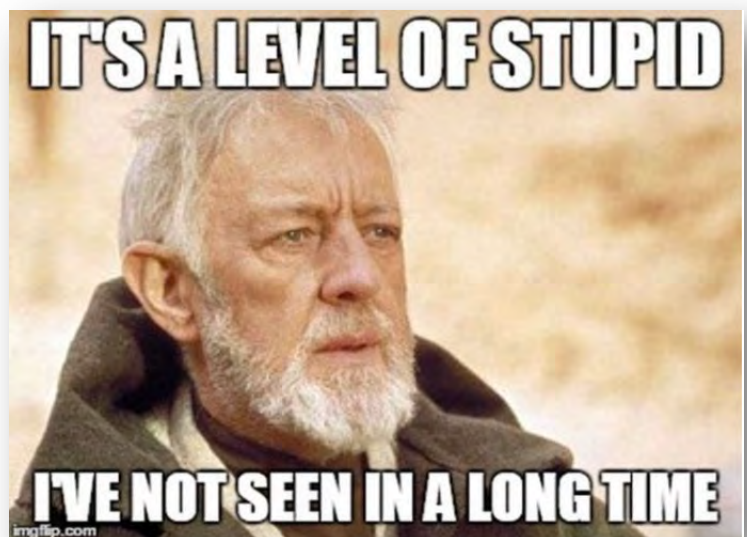
These shifts have led to an increasing emphasis on "emotional safety," particularly for minorities. In practice, this has resulted in restricted discourse, dumbed-down content, and an intolerance of heterodoxy. Many UU ministers and national church leaders now actively promote only UUA-aligned perspectives, discouraging broader intellectual exploration and treating congregants as if they need protection from challenging ideas.



The UU Church Has Promoted Dumb Ideas

Recently, the UUA has embraced horrible ideas as unquestionable truths. Labeling all white people as inherently racist and ignorant about race, dismissing logic and reason as forms of oppression, and framing science and mathematics as “white” constructs—while shaming and silencing those who question these views—has made the church resemble a fundamentalist movement of stupid ideas rather than a community of open inquiry for intelligent people.

Thoughtful UUs recognized right away that these tactics of shaming, falsely stereotyping, and promoting baseless ideas were bound to fail and cause division membership loss in congregations. The fact that some within the UU community accepted these on-their-face foolish ideas—or felt pressured to—raises serious concerns about the church’s overall culture.





Using Peer Pressure to Enforce Conformity

Church and congregational ideologues and those who want conformity often use social pressure, including shaming and guilt, to keep others in ideological alignment. When disagreement is framed as a moral failure, dangerous, or disruptive to community peace, people stop asking questions out of fear of being ostracized.

While peer pressure can create social

unity, it also creates anxiety and suppresses critical thought.

Why Independent Thinkers Are Leaving

As UU culture has become more rigid and focused on making safe spaces for political progressives and constricting and dumbing down content to “protect” congregants, independent thinkers have left for more open-minded communities. Once a big-tent movement, the UUA has shrunk and lost much of its intellectual vibrancy. Some who remain have had to carve out their own spaces for real discussion. The result? A weaker community, fewer fresh ideas, and a lack of meaningful debate.

The Irony of the UU Church’s “Inclusive” Monoculture

Despite preaching inclusivity and multiculturalism, Unitarian Universalism is overwhelmingly white and ideologically rigid, and promotes political ideas opposed to the views of most minorities. This narrowness alienates both racial and ethnic minorities and those with different political views, creating an exclusive culture rather than a truly diverse and welcoming one. UUA data has shown that, instead of attracting racial and ethnic minorities, the national church’s pushing of postmodernist progressive “anti-racism” policies has made the church even whiter.

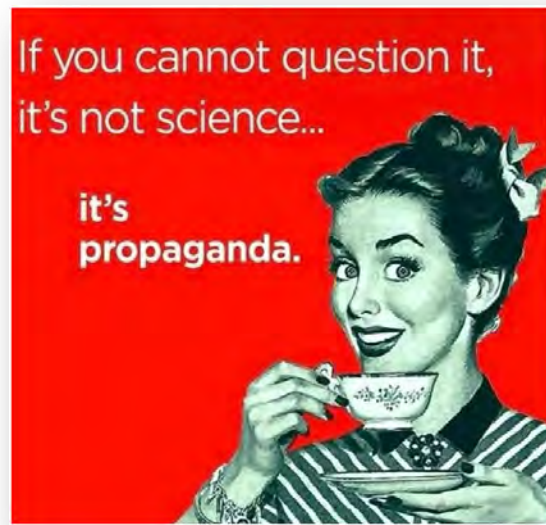


The Unitarian Universalist is now one of the least racially diverse and one of the three whitest churches in the country—an odd reality for a movement that prides itself on progressive values.

What to Do?

Escaping and pushing back an ideological bubble is crucial for keeping your mind sharp. Here are some ways to push back against groupthink:

- **Encourage Real Conversations** – Speak up when you see groupthink happening. Help create spaces where different perspectives are welcomed instead of shut down.
- **Point out the elephants in the room and when the emperor has no clothes**
- **Reject Shame and Social Pressure as a Control Tactic** – If people are using shame to enforce ideological purity, call it out. True inclusivity means open discussion, not social pressure.
- **Seek Intellectual Diversity** – Read books and articles from different perspectives, and talk to people outside the UU community.
- **Think for Yourself** – Ask yourself: Do I believe this because I've critically examined it, or just because it's the norm in my circle?
- **Promote Honest Debate** – Advocate for book clubs, forums, and guest speakers who bring in different viewpoints.



Rev Chandler: Theology Isn't About Putting the Cart Ahead of the Horse, continued from page 9

Modern day narratives of Universalism often neglect or overlook significant spiritual aspects of the early Universalist faith. Contemporary Unitarian Universalists often assume Universalism was primarily about “the supreme worth of every human personality,” but this affirmation wasn't added to the Universalist avowal until 1935. This is not to imply that the Universalists of the 1700s didn't value the worth of every human personality, but their primary focus was upon the human soul . . . and not the human personality. Early Universalists viewed creation through sacred lenses. Theirs was not a secular faith.

The early Universalists were believers in the spiritual realm. What is the spiritual realm? The spiritual realm goes by various names depending upon one's religion and faith. Early Universalists were comfortable using the term “God” when referencing the spiritual realm.

Pietism embraced mystical and intuitive knowledge. Pietism emphasized personal faith as being much more spiritually vital than church doctrine, sacraments and theology. There was the German pietism that emerged within Lutheranism; Huguenot pietism that arose within French Catholicism; and Methodist pietism that appeared within the Church of England. It was from European pietism that American Universalist pietism has its roots. Unlike 18th century Universalism, early Unitarianism had little connection with pietism. If Unitarianism has ever had a spiritual phenomenon akin to a pietism movement, it might have been the Transcendentalism of the 1800s.

Anselm was spot on. The mystery of faith precedes theology. Theology without faith is intellectual jabbering. Theology without faith is akin to dancing without music or pretending to swim without water.

Pietism is a vital ingredient for faith development. As Saint Padre Pio observed, “Through the study of books, one seeks God; by meditation and prayer, one finds God.”

Meditation and prayer are basic to pietism. Meditation and prayer can take many different forms and practices.

Faith brings the awareness of a much greater reality than we can humanly imagine. Sensing the spiritual realm triggers immense feelings of awe and wonder and love. Faith births the mysterious presence of comfort and hope. Faith brings our hearts to yearn for what the Apostle Paul termed “the fruits of the Spirit.”

But all is not peaches and cream! As the early Universalists taught, repentance and spiritual awakening go hand in hand. Repentance is a gut wrenching and painful spiritual process. But repentance is necessary. Early Universalists taught that repentance must be experienced by all souls, either in this life or following death. George de Benneville's views on the necessity of repentance were confirmed to him during a 42 hour near death experience when de Benneville was assumed to have died. During his apparent death, de Benneville claimed that spiritual guides took his soul to view the afterlife. He witnessed souls undergoing anguish and torment during the afterlife form of repentance. His description of afterlife repentance resembles the religious concept of purgatory.

The spiritual realm yearns to be found. The spiritual realm shouts out from its many hidden places: nature, the nighttime starry skies, sacred writings, the miracle of every human birth, the experience of love, and from within the human heart.

Perhaps the spiritual realm is not hidden at all? Jesus spoke of the ever-present Kingdom of God and the spiritual gift of having "eyes that see and ears that hear."

The practice of pietism helps remove the spiritual blindness and deafness that prevents our sensing the spiritual realm. Faith blossoms from awareness of the spiritual realm. Theology follows faith.

Faith is the horse. Theology is the cart. Don't try to put your cart ahead of the horse!

Floyd Vernon Chandler is a member of the North American Unitarian Association. He has provided ministry as a parish minister, Army chaplain, hospital chaplain, prison chaplain and community minister. Vernon was ordained to the Unitarian Universalist ministry in 1976 and remained with Unitarian Universalism for 47 years. In February 2024, he resigned from ministerial fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association. Vernon is now recognized as an ordained Universalist minister with the Christian Universalist Association and he is pursuing the Benedictine oblate path via the World Community for Christian Meditation. He and his family reside in Ansbach, Germany. Vernon welcomes opportunities for guest speaking via Zoom.



"I want to take a vacation, but the last time I left you in charge your face appeared on a grilled cheese sandwich."

Louis Merlin: We Deserved This, continued from page 28

Trump's disregard for norms and values and his relentless pursuit of self-interest have given a new gloss on the pursuit of naked self-interest for his supporters and the entire right-wing enterprise. The same political alignment that used to lecture the rest of the country on the importance of morality and public service, now has come over to the side that sees public servants as suckers and cynically now espouses a version of every person, and every country, for themselves.

Trump is a serial failure. He is known for bankrupting his businesses and shortchanging both his customers and his employees. And his approach is quickly leading to the failure of this country: In his short tenure in his second term, he has made significant progress toward undermining a powerful economy built on free trade, toward undermining an international dominance based on collaboration with like-minded allies, and toward undermining an innovation economy based on first-class universities and generously funded basic research.

No society can succeed without a basic foundation in cooperation and some level of agreement about the pursuit of the public interest. When the idea of the public interest and objective justice is displaced by politics based on tribal transactions, corruption and stasis quickly ensue.

We will not recover from the various injuries perpetrated by the Trump administration, not just until he is out of office, but until we recommit ourselves to the values of public good over selfish private interest. No one is without personal or private interest, but it is essential that our public figures aspire to and support a concept of the public interest that is separate from their private interest. Someone as cynical as Trump should never be trusted with power, and the only logical inference for such broad support for him is that much of the American public has been seduced by the political logic of selfishness. We must aspire to



public values greater than naked self-interest again to rediscover a functioning Republic.

The second value that is decimating our democracy is that of ignorance. Besides his selfishness, the norm that Trump most frequently and egregiously violated is that of telling the truth. Yes, all politicians occasionally lie and spin, but Trump lies boldly and without remorse, without even a hint of respect for any truth beyond what he wishes to be true. His supporters and those who vote for him say that this does not matter, that Trump is a savvy political operator who is creating additional room for negotiation by spinning out falsehoods.

It seems like it should go without saying, but truth is an essential element to any functioning society and any functioning institution. It is true that people can be persuaded to lie and self-deceive and that majorities can be deluded for long periods of time. But facts matter, and have consequences. Removing all discussions of climate change from federal agencies, for example, will not alter the fact that climate will continue to change and severe billion-dollar-plus weather catastrophes will continue to occur. Likewise, infectious disease will spread just as quickly, perhaps more quickly, no matter what the rhetoric out of the administration is. Trump famously promised COVID-19 would be gone by Easter of 2020. Of course, that did not happen, which is unsurprising. What is surprising is that so many Americans gave him a pass on this and so many other bald lies. How sad that Americans no longer ask for a straight shooter as a leader of the free world.

Truth has never been a partisan issue. Until Trump came upon the scene in American politics, all parties were interested in investigating and determining the truth, and using truth as the basis for policy-making decisions. Yes, each party had its own spin on the truth, but the idea that there were objective facts, and that they were relevant to policy making, was not in dispute. No one has corrupted the basic respect for an objective truth that is attainable more than Trump and his relentless attack on the 2020 election, i.e. the Big Lie. In business, it is a standard operating procedure that business decisions should be based on facts. In science, the process of investigating and revealing the truth is central. In the justice system, there are detailed procedures for uncovering and deliberating over relevant evidence. In short, all of our institutions that function in any productive capacity prioritize truth.

In the age of social media, perception, and clickability have supplanted the role of truth in civic discussions. The volume and speed of information are so great that the exercise of judgment, analysis, and discernment are no longer necessary. Persuasion or overwhelm can be created by volume, by repetition, by “flooding the zone with shit.”

Once again, Trump and his lackies cannot do this alone. It takes millions of people who have become indifferent to the truth, who prefer the smug world of confirmation bias and ad hominem attack to the effort of trying to determine what is actually true. To care about the truth more than winning a particular online confrontation requires character. Learning about the truth requires reading, requires questioning one’s assumptions and listening to alternative arguments.

More than anything, it requires a commitment to truth over winning. If one's highest allegiance is to winning, the truth will always take a back seat.

If America is to become a great nation again, Americans and their institutions will have to recommit themselves to the discipline of truth-telling, including the discipline of admitting when you aren't quite sure of what the truth is. We will have to hold the value of building joint knowledge together higher than the fleeting pleasure of humiliating our political adversaries.

One of the most shocking phenomena of our era is the increasing slice of the public who say that they do not care about the strength of American democracy. They say that they are open to a more authoritarian system if it can achieve better results. I believe the only way one can be indifferent to American democracy is through a profound ignorance of the history and literature on what it means to live under a repressive government. Our system is deeply flawed, yet there are few other governments that have existed in history that have functioned better. The history of the 20th century alternatives to democracy, fascism and communism, is one of unmitigated terror. In our contemporary era, dozens of autocracies oppress basic freedoms and fail to provide basic sustenance to their people. I would argue that those who are tired of American democracy are ignorant of how much worse things could be and have historically been. The fact that January 6th alone did not shock and revolt more Americans speaks to a deep level of ignorance about how democracies work, and an ignorance about how past democracies have failed or collapsed.

In an age where people increasingly reduce the value of education to that of career advancement, perhaps we need to recommit ourselves to the idea that one essential role of education is creating educated citizens. We need a citizenry who not just understands how democracy works, but also is aware of all the alternatives to democracy and how they do not work. We need a citizenry that prizes the institutions of democracy as an invaluable heritage. We need a citizenry that can understand that democracies need continuous reform, yet this does not mean that a flawed system is one that should be discarded at the earliest opportunity.

Lastly, I do not think we could have reached our current level of decline without a significant amount of sloth. We live in an age where so many of our daily satisfactions are instantaneous. Reams of entertainment can be streamed instantly and at the touch of a button. Products from all over the world can be delivered to our doorstep tomorrow. Yet the work of democracy, the work of fixing recalcitrant problems like income inequality, fair immigration, transparent and accessible voting systems, climate change, and affordable housing, is arduous. It requires research, fact-finding, coalition building, and compromise. Changes to forms of governance can take months or years; results from those changes may take years or decades more. Americans seem to have lost touch with the idea that the work of democratic government is slow and arduous. Even more so, they have lost touch with the idea that democratic governance is inherently participatory.

The hallmark of the Trump approach to policy change is two-fold: Scapegoating and magical thinking. Half of Trump's policy prescriptions are finding who to blame, or even more, who to hate. How have so many Americans fallen into this specious trap? Blaming some out group for our problems is the oldest trick of demagogues everywhere, yet so many Trump supporters are eager to eat this up, as vacuous as the arguments are. Immigrants are responsible for the drug addiction of Americans, not the addicted Americans themselves? The other side of Trump's solutions are simple, magical solutions with no thought and no analysis. We'll build a wall, and that will stop all immigration from the southern border. We'll raise tariffs, and our trade relations will be fair. I'll lower the price of eggs on day one. It is hard to ascribe a reason for accepting such magical thinking other than a certain amount of intellectual and moral laziness.

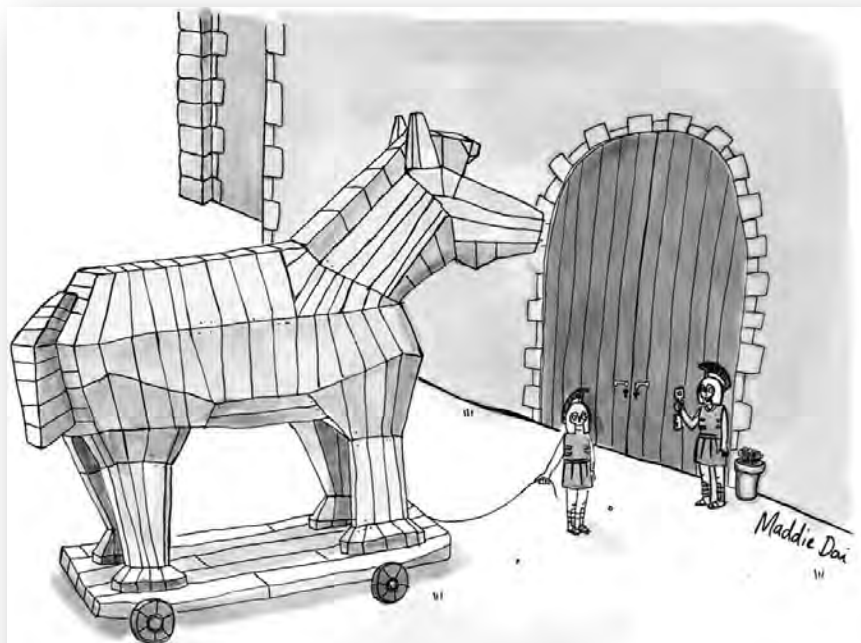
Who would fall for these simplistic cons? I suppose the same people who fell for all of Trump's other cons: people who are looking for a shortcut, people who are desperate, people who want to believe that complex problems have simple solutions. Looking for the easy way out is nothing new for Americans. Yet for so long, so many Americans have contributed their time, their energy, and their resources to building our democracy – to rolling up their sleeves and doing the everyday work of democracy. As DeTocqueville noted over a century ago, America has always been rife with local and volunteer institutions, the Rotary Clubs, the churches and synagogues, the PTAs. These people who do the everyday work of democracy, and those who support them, they should have known better than to fall for Trump's vacuous promises. The work of democracy has always been hard, and anyone who tells you otherwise is scamming you. We cannot afford to be seduced into the simplistic logic of blame by our mental sloth.

The next four years of American policy and politics will be uniquely painful. The only hope is that we can learn and respond to this pain with a thoughtful penitence.

Despite what you have been told over the past 20 years, not every issue has two sides and winning isn't everything. If you trade your soul for a victory, you have lost far more than you have won. I can't help but wonder how many Republican Senators would have voted to convict Trump after the impeachment if they could see where we are today. Even a moment's dereliction of duty can have resounding consequences in a system as fragile as our own, in a democratic system that is fundamentally based on a core of shared values. It is not an exaggeration to say that the loss of our democracy may have been caused by a fever of partisanship, and it remains under threat until this fever has passed for enough Americans to stand up for our shared and enduring values.

There are common values that Americans have historically shared, and must share again. The founding fathers not only laid out a system of governance, but also frequently spoke of the virtues necessary to maintain a Republic. Americans must recommit ourselves to these essential virtues. We must recommit ourselves to the idea that government must serve the public good and not merely powerful private and special interests. We must recommit ourselves to the idea that truth and facts

matter, and that we can work collaboratively to uncover the truth, even when we disagree what we should do about it. The political world will always be under the influence of spin, yet when we make policy, we have to center facts, truth, and objective analysis. We have to support the nonpartisan staff that helps uncover such truths – scientists, lawyers, meteorologist, accountants, and other professionals. We have to commit ourselves to building a stronger citizenry, one that loves the institutions of democracy, that understands both the weaknesses and the virtues of the tremendous system we have inherited. We must revere again the separation of powers, the limits to government power and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, the nonpartisan nature of our court system. Without a commitment to basic Republican values, our Republic will continue to weaken and we may live to see its end.



“Well, after all that, they have a spare key under the flowerpot.”

David Cycleback: The Rise of Anti Intellectualism in UUism, Continued from page page 25

Several key factors contribute to this shift, both overt and subtle:

“For a very long time, Unitarianism has been a liberal religion. People were free to believe or not believe whatever they preferred. All were welcome, and the individual conscience was respected. Within the past decade, however, the UUA has begun moving Unitarian Universalism away from liberalism, not subtly but dogmatically. The UUA was founded as a service organization that provided support for autonomous UU congregations. Today, however, it has become an authoritarian, illiberal organization that is working energetically to transform UUism into something quite different. Frankly, into something toxic.”

-- Jim Aikin, novelist, and former UU

The Anti-Intellectualism of Postmodernism

Postmodern philosophy has deeply influenced the intellectual landscape of the left, particularly in academic and activist circles. Postmodernism has fostered an environment where ideological purity is prioritized over empirical evidence by rejecting objective truth in favor of subjective narratives and political power dynamics. Critical race theory argues that freedom of speech and expression should be curtailed, and this mindset has permeated UUA leadership, UU seminaries, and national activism.

As discussed in the previous posts linked below, renowned intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky, Steven Pinker, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennet, Thomas Sowell, and Alan Sokal have sharply criticized postmodernism as anti-intellectual, anti-reason, anti-science, and linguistically nonsensical. Sokal and the “Grievance Studies Affair” famously exposed postmodernist academia’s willingness to accept ludicrous but ideologically convenient ideas.

- [**The Debate About Postmodernism**](#)
- [**Alan Sokal's Famous Academic Hoax**](#)

Within UU, national leadership and many newly ordained ministers have increasingly adopted an extreme interpretation of critical race theory, influenced by figures like Robin DiAngelo, Peggy McIntosh, and Tema Okun. These perspectives categorize people primarily by race, branding all whites as inherently racist and all minorities as universally oppressed. In some UU circles, whites are discouraged from voicing independent opinions, with any dissent being labeled as racist or oppressive. Even minorities who express differing views are dismissed.

I've attended UU sessions where instructors dismissed logic and reason, urging attendees to accept their teachings without question. This stance is not only anti-intellectual but also mirrors fundamentalist religion.

“My conclusions are that the Self-Confessed White Supremacy Culture paradigm, although well-intended and directed at reducing racism, is a slippery slope to a society dominated by fact-free assertions and contentions that evidence itself is irrelevant; to authoritarianism and other illiberal values, and to even more extremism and polarization. It seeks to lift up the voices of marginalized groups, but when it jettisons other fundamental values of democracy, it shuts down contrary voices among those same marginalized groups and risks shutting down all other voices as well.”— Anne Schneider Ph.D., Arizona State University Professor Emerita of Justice Studies and author of “The Self-Confessed ‘White Supremacy Culture’: The Emergence of an Illiberal Left in Unitarian Universalism”

Expectations of Ideological Conformity and Punishing Dissent

Cancel culture, censorship, illiberalism, and expectations of ideological conformity have stifled intellectual diversity within progressivism and have been particularly evident on university campuses. Several high-profile cases illustrate the consequences of these trends:

- **Economist Roland Fryer**, Harvard’s youngest-ever tenured black professor and a MacArthur Genius Award winner, [was suspended](#) after publishing contrary research on policing and racial disparities.
- **St. Olaf College philosophy professor Edmund Santurri** [was removed as director of the school’s Institute for Freedom and Community](#) after a group of students protested because they disliked some views of invited speaker Peter Singer, a Princeton bioethics professor and one of the world’s preeminent moral philosophers.
- **University of Chicago geology professor Dorian Abbot** had [his MIT lecture invitation rescinded](#) after he co-wrote an Op-Ed advocating for meritocracy in hiring and job promotions.
- **Oxford University evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins** [lost his 28-year-old “Humanist of the Year”](#) award for posing on Twitter a question about gender ideology.
- **Kathleen Stock**, a feminist Sussex University philosophy professor, [resigned after facing mob harassment](#) for expressing gender-critical views.

The Unitarian Universalist Association—supposedly a haven for freethinking and freedom of belief— has acted similarly. Ministers such as [Kate Rohde](#), [Todd Eklof](#), Richard Trudeau, and [Rick Davis](#) were disfellowshipped or punished for expressing dissent and criticizing the Unitarian Universalist Association. Meanwhile, the UU seminaries, Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC), and the UU Ministers

Association have enforced strict ideological control over ministers, turning out progressive political activists instead of promoters of liberal religion.

“In founding our two traditions our Universalist and Unitarian forbears sought to create a religious refuge from the oppressive attitudes and practices engendered by ideological, dogmatic thinking: self-righteous certitude, intolerance, punitive authoritarianism, hard-heartedness, militant zeal, divisive dogma, and dim views of human nature which undermine people’s sense of self worth, thereby making them vulnerable to manipulation through the selective stimulation of their feelings of guilt and shame. Yet, now, the liberal religious refuge our forbears created has been occupied at leadership levels of the UUA by spiritually ungrounded, theologically illiberal leaders who practice and perpetuate the same spiritually oppressive attitudes and practices our forbears once rightly abhorred.

”— UU minister Rev. Rick Davis

The Marginalization of Free Thinkers and the Defaming of Heterodoxy

Despite its historical commitment to free thought, UU increasingly marginalizes independent and heterodox thinkers. While freethinking UUs remain, they are often ostracized, cataloged as “gadflies”, or pressured into silence. Many congregations only platform views that align with the prevailing progressive UUA orthodoxy, limiting intellectual diversity expected of a liberal church.

An increasing number of congregants wishing to discuss diverse ideas have had to form independent groups outside the official church framework, as they have found no space exists within the UU structure and their congregations for open dialogue. Certain ministers have even taken punitive actions against members who express heterodox opinions, reinforcing an atmosphere where conformity is expected. This narrowing of discourse contradicts UU’s traditional values of open inquiry and pluralism.

“I think the biggest danger to local congregations is the takeover of seminaries and the credentialing of clergy. Newly minted clergy are overwhelmingly indoctrinated and, if they aren’t, they will have a hard time being accepted as UU clergy.”— a retired UU minister

Censorship and the Control of Information

UU World and other official UUA publications publish only views that align with the prevailing postmodernist progressive orthodoxy. National UU forums, such as at General Assembly and UU Reddit forums, regulate discussions, limit the scope of what can be discussed, and censor those who challenge dominant narratives. In many UU communities, leaders selectively promote UUA-approved viewpoints, excluding alternative perspectives. This control of information undermines open dialogue and weakens UU’s historic commitment to intellectual freedom.

“The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion but allow very lively debate within that spectrum. That gives people the sense that there’s free thinking going on, while all the time the presuppositions of the system are being reinforced by the limits put on the range of the debate.”—Noam Chomsky, from [How leaders limit the scope of what can be discussed](#)

The Rise of Emotional Reasoning and Safe Spaces

Many UU communities, including congregations, have increasingly prioritized personal experience and subjective emotional narratives as primary sources of truth. While lived experiences offer valuable insight, an overreliance on them sidelines empirical evidence, logical analysis, and open debate.

Congregational leadership often prioritizes maintaining superficial peace at any cost, disapproving of those who challenge the status quo. Intelligent, outspoken, and heterodox congregants find themselves labeled as troublemakers and behavior problems.

The concept of "safe spaces" originally aimed to provide support for certain minorities. However, in practice, these spaces have led to the suppression of diverse ideas expected in a classically liberal church. Fear of conflict and offending others has resulted in groupthink, where deviation from the prevailing consensus is met with institutional and social pressure to conform. As a result, intellectual diversity is constrained, and meaningful debate is discouraged.

"An organization that turns itself into a 'safe space' impedes the development of critical thinking, which depends on the ability to tolerate dissenting viewpoints and engage with uncomfortable ideas. The more you reinforce the idea that people are fragile and must be protected from distressing ideas, the more fragile they become. The goal of education should not be to shield people from challenging ideas, but to equip them with the intellectual and emotional resilience to engage with them."

-- Jonathan Haidt Ph.D., New York University professor of social psychology

The Narrowing of Political Thought: Echo Chambers, Biases, and Lazy Thinking

Unitarian Universalist congregations increasingly suffer from political homogeneity and the narrowmindedness that comes with it. As UU becomes a bubble for progressives and political liberals, moderates and conservatives have largely disappeared. The problem here isn't leftist politics itself but the intellectual stagnation caused by echo chambers and groupthink.

Many UUs see this as a positive shift, yet it closes minds and fosters a decline in critical thinking. Without political and ideological diversity, members engage only with affirming views, weakening intellectual rigor.

Instead of thoughtful analysis, people increasingly view things through a partisan lens. Many dismiss ideas outright if they come from a political opponent or reject viewpoints by labeling them as "liberal" or "conservative" without evaluating their validity. This attitude is anti-intellectual and shuts down meaningful dialogue. It prevents members from understanding the vast swath of the American public that is not hyperpartisan—those who appreciate or criticize policies based on their effectiveness rather than their political branding.

- [What Unitarian Universalism loses as it becomes politically narrow](#)
- [Moving beyond political bias](#)

“Unitarian Universalism is a liberal religion, not because of our progressive politics but because of our commitment to the ideals of liberalism. Liberalism in the classic sense is not an ideology, but a method for resolving conflict, gaining knowledge, and advancing toward truth. Our liberal approach to religion and to all that concerns us as religious people is a precious inheritance. Abandoning the principles of liberalism would mean losing an essential part of who we are.— UU minister Rev. Rick Hoyt-McDaniels

Logical Fallacies as the New Normal

As I previously detailed in the below-linked post, logical fallacies are by very definition anti-intellectual, serving to distort, silence, and shut down opposing viewpoints. As Unitarian Universalism has become increasingly ideological, logical fallacies have become pervasive, replacing reasoned debate with flawed arguments and rhetorical attacks. Logical fallacy arguments these days come from UUA leaders, ministers, and activists. Instead of engaging in thoughtful discourse, discussions are often dominated by ad hominem attacks, straw man, slippery slope and false dichotomy arguments. Dissenting perspectives are frequently dismissed based on identity or assumed privilege rather than the strength of their reasoning.

Logical fallacies are associated with partisan politics, political campaigns, and dogmatic religions, environments where rhetoric is used to attack dissent and enforce conformity. Unitarian Universalism is supposed to be different. As a movement that values reason, open-mindedness, diversity of beliefs, and tolerance, it should be deeply concerning when church leaders and ministers resort to rhetorical tactics that falsely demean others and stifle constructive dialogue.

- [The Unitarian Universalist Church’s logical fallacy problem](#)

Restoring Free Inquiry and Critical Thought in UU Spaces

To counteract the rise of anti-intellectualism in Unitarian Universalism, UUs must reclaim their tradition of free inquiry and critical thinking. This requires a commitment to reason, open dialogue, platforming viewpoint diversity, and becoming more welcoming to people of diverse beliefs and backgrounds.

UU congregations should teach intellectual humility, resist ideological certainty, and engage with diverse perspectives—including those that challenge prevailing beliefs. Instead of shunning dissent and marginalizing heterodoxy, they should encourage open debate and exploration of complex ideas.

Dogmatism and echo chambers must be actively challenged wherever they appear, especially when promoted by church leaders, ministers, and professionals. Church and congregational publications, sermons, educational programs, and forums should present a range of perspectives rather than enforce a singular political or ideological narrative.

Finally, individual UUs must take personal responsibility for their intellectual and spiritual growth—engaging with challenging literature, questioning groupthink, and applying healthy skepticism. By prioritizing inquiry over dogma and critical thinking over irrationality, UUs can reaffirm their legacy as a dynamic, questioning, and open-minded religious tradition



The Supreme Court's Role in Making the Presidency Untouchable

The judiciary was already weakened by years of erosion, but in 2024, the Supreme Court itself ensured that when this moment arrived, there would be no legal recourse left. In a landmark ruling, the Court expanded presidential immunity to such an extent that the office of the presidency is now functionally above the law. A president can commit crimes while in office and face no immediate accountability. And now, with Black Saturday, Trump has proven that he can ignore court rulings entirely without consequence.

This is not the separation of powers. It is the absorption of power into a single branch. The courts were supposed to be the last line of defense. Instead, they have been reduced to issuing rulings the executive can freely ignore.

The Role of Fox News in Conditioning the Public

Fox News did not issue the order, but it made this moment possible. In the aftermath of Trump's defiance, Fox put the judge's face on screen, not as part of neutral reporting, but as a deliberate act of intimidation. They did not need to explicitly declare that judicial rulings no longer mattered—they had already spent years training millions to believe it. Through relentless framing, they had conditioned their audience to see the courts as corrupt, as partisan, as obstacles to be overcome rather than institutions to be respected. Trump did not invent this strategy; he simply acted on it, carrying their rhetoric to its logical conclusion.

Why Americans Do Not See the Collapse Happening

This is why the phrase "you cannot see the forest for the trees" is so powerful in this moment. The trees are the individual events. Trump ignoring a court ruling. The Supreme Court making the presidency immune from criminal accountability. Congress failing to act repeatedly. The media normalizing the breakdown of democracy. The forest is the overarching reality. The U.S. government is no longer constrained by constitutional limits. The judiciary has been rendered powerless through precedent and selective enforcement. The executive branch now decides which laws apply to itself.

Most people living through history don't realize they are inside a moment of collapse because each event, taken alone, does not seem like the end of democracy. The shock of one ruling being ignored does not feel catastrophic. The Supreme Court deciding a president is immune from prosecution feels like just another legal controversy. Congressional inaction feels like business as usual. The media's treatment of this moment as just another chapter in the ongoing Trump saga makes it easy to assume the system will self-correct. But when viewed together, it becomes undeniable that the system has already failed.

The Moment Future Historians Will Point To

This is why people will look back on Black Saturday and wonder why it wasn't immediately recognized as the breaking point. Because when you are inside the collapse, it feels like just another day. The weight of history is often invisible in the moment, its consequences spread out over years. But the truth is unavoidable: this is not just another legal dispute. It is not another chapter in partisan warfare. It is not an escalation of existing dysfunction. It is the end of constitutional government.

No democracy that has reached this stage has ever recovered without major structural change. This is not just an escalation of political crisis—it is the moment when constitutional rule is replaced with raw executive power.

Why This Is Worse Than Any Previous Crisis

This is not like Andrew Jackson defying the Supreme Court in 1832. When Jackson ignored *Worcester v. Georgia*, America was an evolving democracy. The role of the Supreme Court was still in flux, and the country's institutions were not yet fully formed. Today, America is a collapsing democracy. The Supreme Court's authority is settled law. The difference is that this time, the institutions were expected to work.

Andrew Jackson defied the Supreme Court in an era when executive power was not yet defined. Trump is erasing the limits on executive power in a system where they were already supposed to be settled. Jackson faced political opposition. Trump controls his party completely. In Jackson's time, Congress still operated as a counterweight. Today, Congress is a rubber-stamp body that enables presidential overreach rather than restraining it.

The courts were supposed to be the final check. That check no longer exists.

What Comes After Democracy?

We have passed the event horizon. This is not about democracy in crisis anymore—it is about what comes after democracy. The system that once absorbed and corrected these shocks is no longer functioning.

The shock of January 6th did not lead to democratic renewal—it was a preview of what was coming. The rollback of reproductive rights in 2022 was not just about abortion—it was proof that legal protections could be stripped away at will. The Supreme Court's expansion of presidential power in 2024 did not just change legal precedent—it ensured that the next time a president defied a court order, there would be no enforcement mechanism to stop it. That is where we are now. The end of the courts as a meaningful check on power.

There is no going back to the America of the 1990s. No return to a time when presidential power was constrained, when the judiciary had the final say, when law

enforcement agencies functioned as independent institutions rather than tools of political power. That system is already gone.

Some will say this is alarmist. That democracy cannot end so quietly. But collapse does not feel like collapse when you are inside it. It feels like just another legal story. Just another Saturday in America. Until one day, you look up and realize there is nothing left to save.

The Final Verdict on Black Saturday

Black Saturday will be remembered as the day the constitutional system failed.



Nations' thinking on delivering 'human rights' (Rengger 2011). Nevertheless, the law is not a primary instrument of enfranchisement. Law is designed to address violations of virtuous human conduct. It is applied mostly retroactive to crimes, and more rarely as a preventable tool. There are socio-political philosophers who then see the problem in the concept of 'human rights'. A right is a moral expectation, but that expectation is a matter of law which is too easily becomes a political tool.

In his essay 'Human Rights and Relativism', Bernard Williams declares that 'Whether it is a matter of good philosophical sense to treat a practice as a violation of human rights, and whether it is politically good sense, cannot ultimately constitute two separate questions' (Williams 2005, p. 72). Williams believed that these types of cases should not require accepting a substantive moral outlook, such as liberal universalism, since the violation of human rights, especially basic human rights, is similar to a relationship of coercive power between ruler and ruled. And thus, a government that violates human rights exhibits contempt for the dignity of its subjects. Williams was not against having the International Court of Justice. He was pointing out the limits in the moralism of the Law and that human rights begins and ends in personal dignity, not the Law.

Getting under the skin of human relationships, we find passion and reason (Buch 2015). Teilhard de Chardin, John Haught, and Bernard Stiegler, and the humanistic historiography of Arnold J. Toynbee, Bernard Williams, and Jürgen Habermas, delivers the best understanding of human relationships, as a comprehensive, humanistic, educational outlook (Buch 2025). The author had previously stated that:

"The ideas of the 'human' and 'humanity' do have a long history, which should have been picked up in the various sessions of the [educational] program. 'Modern Humanism', however, came to the fore in the late 1940s and 1950s. The movement was particularly tied to development and dissemination of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (Buch 2019; see more history of humanism in Buch 2021).

3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations

Spirituality is a related yet distinct phenomena to the concepts and practices of personal growth and development. Conceptualizing psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct, and it has been shown (Greenfield et al 2009) individuals' frequency of formal religious participation and spiritual perceptions are independently associated with diverse dimensions of psychological well-being (negative affect, positive affect). With the concepts and practices, with a mass of persons, nothing is lost and all have their epistemic fit.

Spirituality aids ideas of growth and development. Philosophers today understand a long history of 'spirituality' in deep thought – thought both analytical and phenomenological. 'Spirit' is a vague term and gains meaning through the array of philosophies --East and West -- available in the marketplace of ideas and practice (Buch 2021a). There are number of elements which can be mentioned in Spirituality, referring to Ninian Smart's dimensions of religion, which forms Buch's historiographical mapping (Buch 2021b); Smart's sevenfold scheme of study:

1. Doctrinal
2. Mythological
3. Ethical
4. Ritual
5. Experiential
6. Institutional
7. Material (added in his 1989 text, *The World's Religions*)

These are layers in the growth and development of Spirituality.

4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

There is a popular misunderstanding of obligations and the 'ought' through 1) an oversimplification of David Hume's beliefs, 2) an ignorant dismissal of what philosophers had thought in the 250 years since David Hume (1711-1776), and that 3) a person, so arguing, is more concerned about their political agenda than the perennial truisms. The problem aligns to a misunderstanding of Normativity (Ginsborg 2012). It is normative to misunderstand the rules and protocols of critical thinking. A human being is not simply born a good thinker. Critics of attempts to explain meaning in terms of truth-conditions have tended to charge their opponents with misconceptions regarding truth (Shapiro 2008). Nevertheless, there is a misconception between the applied epistemology and the application of semantics. The thoughts can come to the epistemic fit with respect to the context, but it takes comprehensive understanding that does not play political games.

Bernard Williams' *Truth and Truthfulness* (2002) was a powerful challenge to the fashionable belief that truth has no value, and equally, to the traditional view that its value guarantees itself. Williams argued that when we lose a sense of the value of truth, we lose a lot both politically and personally, and may well lose everything.

5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large

In constitutional democracy, reasonable people generally agree on the fundamental importance of freedom of conscience and religion and a democratic society's duty of tolerance of diverse religious, philosophical, and moral views (Freeman 2020).

Bernard Williams' criticism of moralism outlines a clearer approach to combining personal conscience and democratic practices (Williams 1961; Clayton 2017). The economic and demographic cognition is not everything, but they are good markers to demonstrate that the non-social media government and the non-social media corporate mindset is highly incorrect when it comes to dismissal-type thinking (Buch 2024). For this reason, personal conscience has to be weighted in the bigger scoping of equitable and liberal thinking of our democratic processes.

6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all

In order to understand "world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all", a person needs to have a Relational Theory of World Politics (Qin 2016). The argument of relations suggests that:

"...the proliferation of identity-based claims and politics that is so visible around the world today cannot be understood apart from a powerful sociopolitical formation that I [Leve] refer to as an "identity machine"—a transnational assemblage that is rapidly reorganizing ways of being and knowing oneself." (Leve 2011)

To untangle the identity politics, you have to understand history (Buch 2024a). The majority of the hoi polloi and the political class do not have any idea of constructing history as entries in dictionaries or mapping tools, let alone a book. In fact, the population has become so book lethargic, local history groups are finding it very challenging maintaining their existence. Without the population being encouraged to take reading seriously, rather than as comforting escapism (Erich Fromm's insight of 1960), the political class has killed local history.

The outlook on parallelism (the disposition and practice of comparing similar patterns on similar trajectory) confirms the general ethos of global historians (Buch 2024b). The common conclusion is that the population is too generally captivated by presentism. Presentism is the reading from the present that has a correct and incorrect status. Our understanding is an amalgamation of outlooks from the past which presents as present. If we remember that, we are safe in truthfulness and holistic meaning. Nevertheless, the challenge is the ignorance of the present, that is, we have no idea (or too few ideas) how we are each subject to the personal amalgamation of outlooks from the past which presents as present. The block in the thinking is the "Self-

Righteous Political Decision-Makers”; however, it is challengeable (Buch 2024c). The educational institutions are a significant part of the problem (Buch 2024d):

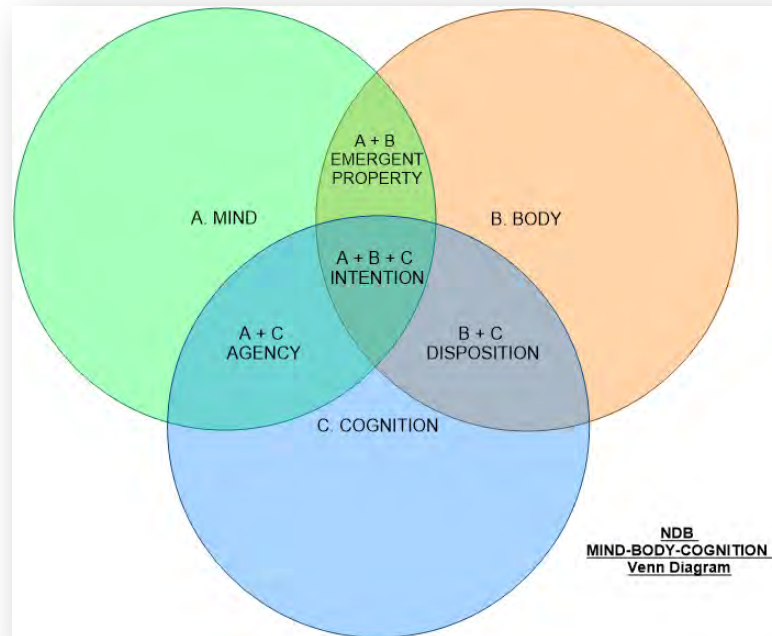
“In the last decades, the technocratic ideal has prevailed over other ideals in most faculties of education (Bruno-Jofré, 2014a). As Nel Noddings (2007) has pointed out, educational aims are neglected; not enough attention is paid to the ideals guiding us in the construction of goals and objectives in the enactment of our pedagogical approaches. Gert Biesta (2014) has gone even further, calling our attention to a shift toward ‘the new language of learning’ in education – one that focuses on process and misses questions of content, relationship, and purpose – and to the current talk of ‘effective education’ (not necessarily good), without a discussion of what and for whom. Both philosophy of education and history of education are losing ground in most faculties.” (Bruno-Jofre 2024: xiii)

Outside of the education circles mentioned above as citations, there is public confusion of “What is academic and what is scholarly in today’s politics?” (Buch 2024e). After decades of writing in applied history, sociology, philosophy, religion, and ethos-spirituality, the author has come to realise that the barrier for the general population in understanding, is not understanding the cognition sociology and histories (Buch 2024f). In the past few years, the author have been writing on this topic. In August 2023 the author published an article entitled, “Urban Sociology and Philosophic Thinking”. The thinking connects the City, World Community, and understanding politics.

7. Respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part

Significant strands of thought engage with scientific models that highlight a constitutive interdependency between humanity and material realities such as the climate or the geological history of our planet. Some claims are incorrect, but many of these narratives make claims of general truth. And nevertheless, there is no disputing the science today: the global challenges (including regional and local) are the Biodiversity in the Anthropocene (Seddon et al 2016). This is particularly true for ‘Urban Policy in Ethnically Polarized Societies’. “A city introduces a set of characteristics-proximate ethnic neighborhoods, territoriality, economic [and ecological] interdependency...”. (Bollens 1998: 187)

Hard scientism and vague spiritualism are often misunderstood. They are stances on the extreme ends of the political spectrum. There is also a confusion between the discourse of natural science (e.g. discussions on Religion & Science, Buch 2020) and that of social science (e.g. Buch 2024a). To reproduce the short article as the conclusion on thinking, in, on, and about, the UU Principles (Buch 2024b):



Populist conversations misconstrue references and semantics to “Mind”, “Body”, and “Cognition”, which are confusions in theses of hard materialism, vague spiritualism, and centralism inaccuracy.

The Venn Diagram here demonstrate the correct relations and terminology coming out of compatibilist philosophies, cognition histories and sociology, and comprehensive education. Mind is an emergent property with body, and ‘the body’ is an emergent property with mind, in that the term ‘body’ emerges from the concept of ‘mindfulness’, and ‘mind’ is one with the body. Using the terms ‘mind’, ‘body’, and ‘cognition’ we have a personable intention. Cognition is simply the act or process of knowing, “mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses” (Wikipedia). Hard materialism rides too heavily on disposition which is the relationship of ‘body’ and ‘cognition’, however, disposition is only one half of the story. Vague spiritualism rides too heavily on agency which is the relationship of ‘mind’ and ‘cognition’, however, agency is only one half of the story.

The relationship of ‘mind’, ‘body’ and ‘cognition’ is intention, which is simply to define each as a person. A person is simply being regarded as an individual, “a being who has certain capacities or attributes such as reason, morality, consciousness or self-consciousness, and being a part of a culturally established form of social relations such as kinship, ownership of property, or legal responsibility” (Wikipedia). The technical arguments in the Philosophy of Mind and Personalism seek to correct inaccuracies in centralising scholarship (‘centralism’), correcting propositions to be more truthful.

The author’s Venn diagram is based on the evidence from interdisciplinary and disciplinary fields (see Bibliography). The design of the Venn is original, but the

argument presented is common in the scholarship. The design is copyrighted, but not the argument, HOWEVER, in both cases, it needs to be acknowledged in terms of the author, Dr Neville Buch ABN: 86703686642.

*--Dr Neville Buch, Professional Historian
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia*

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