

MAY/JUNE 2018

SOUNDINGS



Unitarian Universalist
Church of Charlotte

DISCOVER DEEPER SPIRITUAL MEANING

Depth through reflection

WWW.UUCCHARLOTTE.ORG



Another Year is Coming. Another World is Possible. mixed media art by Ricardo Levins Morales

“*Listen* with humility and respect
as we *learn* to become more powerful agents
for transformative change in ourselves and in our world”

—FROM THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF CHARLOTTE’S
“CALL TO ACTION,” ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
FEBRUARY 2017

IN THIS ISSUE ON:

LISTENING & LEARNING PART II

2 | “. . . the oppressed must be their
own example”

Jay Leach

3 | Keeping Our Minds Open to
Learning

Martha Kniseley

4 | Finding a Safe Supportive Space

Kathleen Carpenter

5 | Environmental Justice Core Group

June Blotnick

Rich Greene

7 | Racial Justice Core Group

Bob Gorman

Margie Storch

9 | *Undoing Racism* Training

Patrick McNeely

Rebekah Visco

11 | Contributors

June Blotnick

Bob Gorman

Rich Greene

Patrick McNeely

Ricardo Levins Morales

Margie Storch

Rebekah Visco



The Mission of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte is to inspire children, youth and adults to discover and articulate deeper spiritual meaning evidenced in lives of integrity, compassion and stewardship of the earth.

La mision de la iglesia Unitaria Universalista de Charlotte es inspirar a los niños, jóvenes y adultos para que descubran y articulan un significado espiritual profundo, evidente en una vida de integridad, compasión y en el manejo de los recursos de la tierra

“... THE OPPRESSED MUST BE THEIR OWN EXAMPLE”

by Jay Leach



The caller explained that her group had been watching our congregation from afar for quite some time. They'd been reading about us, perusing our website and publications. They were now ready to talk about their “plan to address our problems.”

I asked what she meant. It was obvious to them, she explained, that we have some real challenges as a congregation. “You're significantly underfunded, your facility is inadequate, your Vision is overly ambitious, you're not attracting the right kind of people, your Sunday services aren't that good, your children's programming leaves much to be desired, and, quite frankly, you're trying to be far too inclusive.”

I was taken aback, wondering if this was some kind of prank. Before I could voice my protest, she continued. “Don't worry. We understand that you'll never be able to fix these things on your own. That's why we're coming to help you.”

I was furious. I started explaining, in language I try not to use, that . . .

Then, the alarm on my bedside table roused me from this very odd dream.

* * * * *

“We simply cannot go to the laborers—urban or peasant—in the banking style, to give them ‘knowledge’ or to impose upon them the model of the ‘good [person]’ contained in a program whose content we have ourselves organized. Many political and educational plans have failed because their authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality, never once taking into account those for whom “their program was ostensibly directed.”

So writes the famed Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire in his classic *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire made clear that if we're truly interested in transformation, those in the dominating culture cannot define for the oppressed the nature of their problems or the best ways to address them.

He declares: “No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption.”

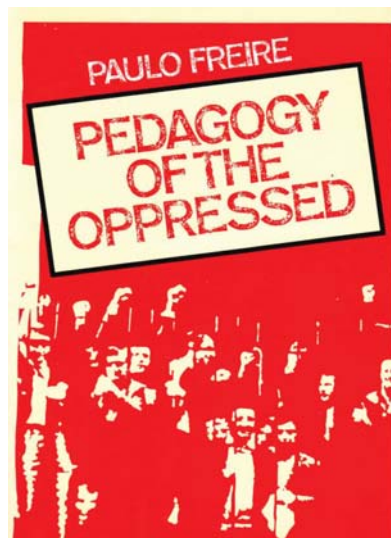
* * * * *

When we set out on our long journey to embody our Vision, we challenged ourselves to rethink our approach.

What might it mean to challenge our inclination to think that “we” were the ones whose impressive history and current ideology equipped “us” to help “them”?

What might it mean to reimagine a defining metaphor that pictured “us” as a “beacon” shining forth into the community?

What might it mean to step back, engage in concerted listening and learning, taking time to understand more deeply the long historical background from which current injustices arise while foregoing our often urgent desire to act?



Pedagogy of the Oppressed
book by Paulo Freire

For months in Sunday services, adult educational offerings, children and youth programming, and in two intentional Core Groups, we've been exploring, reading, probing, questioning, examining. Along the way we've recognized that there's much we never knew. We've come to understand that there's much we need to know. We've begun questioning some of our prior individual and collective approaches, recognizing that they weren't ever going to help foster possibilities for transformation.

* * * * *

This May/June issue of *Soundings* offers another glimpse at our work for this year in the areas of Environmental and Racial Justice. It arrives as this first phase of our work—listening and learning—is transitioning in these areas into our second phase—building relationships. We hope it helps expand our shared understanding and commitment to the engaging course that lies ahead for us as a congregation.

KEEPING OUR MINDS OPEN TO LEARNING

by Martha Kniseley



Looking back at the beginning of the year, I remember the daunting task the ARES D Team had in front of us: providing programming for the congregation that would enable us to have a better understanding of environmental and racial justice. It has been an

engaging and often exhausting journey. I say exhausting, because this experience has required hard work on the part of many of our members as we encountered the need to unlearn assumptions and learn new truths.

While 40 members were involved in intensive learning in two Core Groups, the congregation was offered a wide variety of opportunities for learning. September began with a visit to the Levine Museum of the New South to view the compelling exhibit titled *K(NO)W Justice K(NO)W Peace*. The photographer met with our group and described his own emotional experience during the Charlotte Uprising. Since then we have participated in an African American history course, a *Waking Up White* book study, screenings of eye-opening documentaries dealing with racial and environmental justice. We looked at how our faith and spirituality have everything to do with this work.

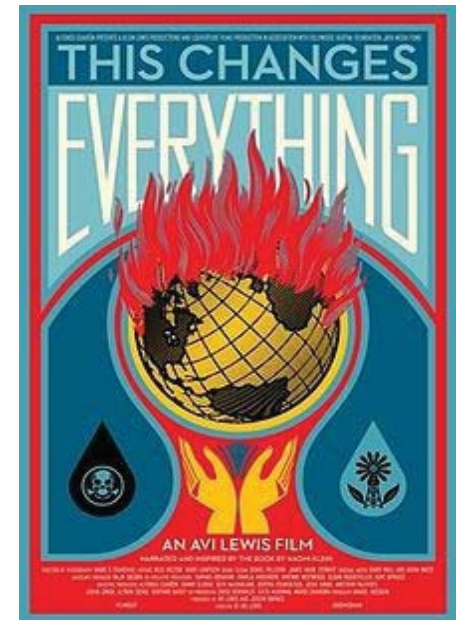
March brought us the long-anticipated *Undoing Racism* training, funded through the Memorial Endowment Trust grant process. Those 18 hours together proved to be life-changing experiences for many of the 40 members as we looked at biases, privilege and racism. As you'll read in the reflections by two of the participants, the learning continues as we apply our new understanding to the experiences of those most affected by systemic injustices.

As we prepare for the next stage of our Call to Action, a local activist was invited to offer a course called Allyship, Accomplice-ship, and Advocacy. We took this as an opportunity to learn more about what it means to partner in the community with those who are most impacted by oppression. And as with the other learning we have engaged in this year, we recognize that we will need to explore the limits of those partnerships, both personally and as a congregation. One member says that he is "just

beginning to understand allyship as it relates to activism on behalf of marginalized communities and those people historically oppressed by racism and injustice." He also realizes that this is hard work but says, "If I want to help fulfill our vision of engaging in the work of justice, I know I need to listen in a spirit of cooperation and not overreact out of white fragility." Another participant, who found herself in a space that was both safe and challenging, admitted that "this is the first time I've reflected so deeply about what our new vision means to me *personally*, and also the first time I've felt so spiritually challenged as a UU." A similar observation came from a member who stated that "the antiracism & allyship sessions are some of the most spiritually meaningful work I've done in my 20+ years as a member here. This is all so hard, confusing and essential, and it really makes a difference to me to be able to explore these challenges in depth with a trusted community, rather than just relying on personal reading and reflection or social media posts."

I am grateful for the strong participation of members this year. May we all keep our minds open to learning so that we can take the next important step of partnering with others in the Charlotte community.

I am also reminded on a daily basis that our congregation is a place that supports our personal spiritual growth as we care for each other in meaningful ways. The ARES D Team will continue to incorporate those needs in our future planning.



This Changes Everything
film by Avi Lewis

FINDING A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SPACE

by Kathleen Carpenter

- “How we treat others matters.”
- “We can talk about things we can’t in other places. Here, we feel safe to say what we believe or to share personal stuff and know that what we say here, stays here.”
- “People here want justice for everyone! Sometimes we hear Jay talk about that kind of stuff in services.”
- “We have important principles like all people are important and we should treat everyone fairly and with kindness. And we are all connected.”



In late April, I devoted a Sunday Children’s Chapel to the arrival of our second minister, Eve Stevens. My goal was to talk to the elementary kids about the experience of waiting and to then relate that experience to the arrival of Eve, for whom we had been waiting for many months. Among other things, we talked about how we feel when we are waiting for something good: “Anxious.” “Excited.” “Happy.” “Nervous.” “Frustrated.” “Antsy.” After a story about Eve which included the background on why her arrival with us was delayed (hello baby Ethan!), I told the kids we were going to create a gift for Eve. That gift included their responses to three questions, the first of which was, “What do you like about the UCC and your experiences here?” Some of their answers were ones I expected like free time on the playground, making new friends, and the snacks in Freeman Hall. But I was pleased (relieved!) that the majority were focused on their experiences here in community. Some of those responses are listed above and some follow:

- “We connect as a community and work to make the world a better place.” (Yes, a fourth grader said that.)
- “We can be who we want to be here.”
- “Our voices matter here. Our opinions matter.”
- “We learn new things that we don’t learn in other places.”

Some of the teachers shared as well:

- “I get to teach kids how we are trying to make the world better.”
- “We get to hear different perspectives.”
- “We help our kids see beyond themselves.”

There were others, of course, but I selected these responses because they demonstrate the messages our children are receiving this year as part of our programmatic response to the congregation’s Call to Action. Here they are being empowered to speak up and ask questions, to learn about personal privilege and the importance of identifying and living their values. Here their honest questions and observations are given full consideration.

To be clear, we do not sugarcoat our lessons. What happens in our nine classes each week differs dramatically based on age, but it is all designed to address the issues that impact justice: truth, love, respect, kindness, marginalization, power, and fairness. While our teachers see this in the confidentiality of their classrooms, the congregation heard it in the very public worship service our middle school youth led when they declared their understanding of the world in which they live. And those who attended the Coming of Age celebratory program in early May heard in the credos of the youth how their values guide them in life and motivate them to make the world a better place.

All of this is the work of justice.



Middle School Youth-Led Service, March 25, 2018
photographed by Kathleen Carpenter

THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CORE GROUP EXPERIENCE

by June Blotnick



The Environmental Justice Core Group has been meeting monthly since September to explore the issue of environmental justice from all angles. I've served as a facilitator for the group, and while I came into this with a lot of experience, it has been helpful to have this "listening and learning"

space, removed from my professional activism, to help deepen my understanding.

Here I'll provide a little "EJ 101" and then tell you what I've learned from my participation in the Core Group. First, the basics:

- While vulnerable communities in the United States have had to suffer from a disproportionate burden of air and water contamination since the industrial revolution, the modern environmental justice movement was launched right here in North Carolina in 1982 at a Warren County protest. A small, predominately African-American community had been designated by the state to host a hazardous waste landfill that would hold contaminated soil that resulted from illegal dumping of toxic PCB along roadways. In response, the NAACP and others staged a massive protest and more than 500 protesters were arrested. While the Warren County protest failed to prevent the siting of the disposal facility, it did launch the national environmental justice (EJ) movement.
- Following the Warren County protest, the Federal government got involved when the General Accounting Office found that three out of four hazardous waste landfills were located in communities that were disproportionately African American and poor. In 1992, the Office of Environmental Justice was created to coordinate EPA efforts to address EJ issues and help vulnerable populations build healthy, sustainable communities.

- Our EJ Core Group learned that while the federal government and organizations across the country have been fighting environmental injustice for more than 25 years, not much has changed during that time. According to a report published last November by the NAACP and the Clean Air Task Force, people of color are still 75% more likely to live in so-called "fence-line" communities – i.e., next to polluting facilities – than other Americans.

On a more personal level, and as someone who has worked in the environmental arena for many years, here's what I learned from the Core Group experience:

- I came into this as an activist, primed to get out there and "do something." Now I see that taking time to study, discuss, and reflect was the best way to go. We're in this for the long haul and need to have time to consider how what we've learned connects to our own experiences. Taking the time to process that information and allowing it to connect to our core spiritual values inspires meaningful action.
- Environmental injustice is really a form of racism that manifests itself in every part of the globe. Whether in Greece, India or the USA, greedy capitalists and state-supported oligarchs alike are more than willing to sacrifice less powerful and marginalized communities for the sake of profits.
- At the same time, affected communities around the world are fighting back, even if it means risking death. What makes me hopeful about the climate justice movement is how broad-based it is with much of the leadership coming from front-line communities themselves.

The human family is coming together and it is a spiritual movement based on love and justice and the inherent worth and dignity of every person on this planet. This movement begins with small steps strategically aimed to provide direct services to those most affected, while at the same time we push for fundamental change to an economic system that has created the climate crisis while placing a disproportionate burden on the less powerful. I look forward to participating as our congregation moves from study to action.

CLIMATE JUSTICE ABOVE ALL ELSE

by Rich Greene



In keeping with the congregation's goal of transformative environmental justice (EJ), an Environmental Justice Core Group has been meeting monthly to explore the manifestations and causes of environmental injustice. We have found that unbridled capitalism – greed and the premise of unlimited growth – is

at the root of exploitative extraction and pollution. Now the Trump administration wants to roll back emissions goals for everything from cars to coal-fired power plants in pursuit of short-term gains in jobs and profits. Their ignorance and short-sightedness are stunning!

We have seen that indigenous and marginalized groups and people in poverty have borne the brunt of environmental degradation. On the other hand, those our economy has privileged have the means to avoid noxious chemical or industrial processes, or to live safely above the flood plain. In North Carolina, it's the rural poor who have disproportionately suffered the ill effects of CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations) and wood pellet plants, two of our state's pressing environmental problems.

Among all the environmental injustices studied by the EJ Core Group, the most consequential by far is the pollution of our atmosphere with carbon dioxide from the combustion of coal, oil and natural gas. The level of the greenhouse gas CO₂ in the atmosphere has risen above 400 PPM which has caused: higher air temperatures, warmer ocean temperatures, acidification of the ocean, melting glaciers and ice caps, sea level change, drought, forest fires, 50-inch rain storms, loss of crops, political instability from migration of refugees, and many other consequences. I fear some parts of the world will, in time, become practically uninhabitable. One could argue that is what's happening in Syria already. We lack the imagination to foresee all the effects of the coming climate change, but it is clear that people who have benefitted the least from

industrialization – people who have polluted the least – will suffer the most.

I have been pleased to put before my colleagues in the EJ Core Group a proposal of Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL) for fighting climate change. For years CCL, in which I participate, has been lobbying Congress to institute a “carbon-fee-and-dividend” system: Fossil fuel producers would pay a fee of \$15 per ton of CO₂, rising by \$10 per year, into a trust fund, which would be completely distributed each month to all households, equally, as the “carbon dividend.” Did you miss it? The whole plan fits in two lines! As fossil fuels become more expensive, clean renewable energy takes its place. We need to transform ourselves from a fossil-fuel to renewable-energy economy and this proposal gives everyone, both individuals and firms, the incentive to guide that transition without regulations or prohibitions.



Green Jobs
poster by Ricardo Levins Morales

The CCL proposal has been criticized for not going far enough to change the system that metes out injustice to so many Americans. True enough, but those of us who are pushing it believe: 1) it would transform the system of energy production that is so basic to our economy by pulling the cost of carbon emissions into the equation; 2) the carbon dividend would have a modest redistributive effect (more collected from higher-income

households but distributed evenly); and 3), most importantly, it's a practical, real-world solution that can conceivably make a difference during the time frame that matters most. Climate change is an urgent issue for everyone, especially for those with the least resources to respond and adapt. We owe it to the economically disadvantaged, in particular, to act with clear-eyed realism as quickly as possible.

While our EJ efforts here at the UUCG may take a different direction, I will continue to participate in the Citizens Climate Lobby. On June 12 I will be back in Washington for my fourth lobbying day. Wish me luck.

WHITE PRIVILEGE AND ME

by Bob Gorman



The recent incident at a Starbucks where two black men were arrested for sitting at a table awaiting a friend brought it all home to me, the reason why I so much wanted to be a part of the Racial Justice Core Group (RJCG). Just a few weeks before that awful event, a friend and I were meeting

at a Charlotte McDonald's. Neither of us purchased anything although we sat at one of the tables for an hour. Never once did it cross my mind that we would be hassled, much less arrested. Why? Because we were both white. It was then that I came to fully understand what is meant by white privilege.

My participation in the RJCG has been an eye-opening experience. I have long thought of racism as a cancer eating at the soul of America. This awareness, though, was incomplete. When I first started hearing terms like white privilege and white supremacy, my initial response was somewhat defensive: these terms certainly didn't apply to me, I thought. I'm a good guy. I grew up in a blue-collar household, the first in my family to go to college; I had to work summers and during the school year to pay for my higher education. Certainly, I wasn't privileged! As for white supremacy, I hate bigotry in all its forms, so what did that have to do with me? After all, I wasn't a neo-Nazi or a member of the Klan.

Being involved with the racial justice group has deepened my understanding of the insidious nature of racism, how America embraced a white supremacist political, economic, social and cultural framework from the very beginning. Most importantly, I have come to realize how I as a white person benefit from this racial construct whether I want to or not. I can go where I want, do what I want, live where I want, buy what I want without having to give one moment's consideration about how my race might affect these choices. I can even go to

Starbucks and sit there for hours if I want; no one's going to notice me, let alone tell me to leave. As columnist Leonard Pitts Jr. recently wrote, "The system was built by and for white people; it's up to them to dismantle it." That, I've come to accept, is the whole ugly truth of the matter.

The process has not been an easy one for me. There have been many occasions when I've been decidedly uncomfortable as we've explored the true meaning of racism. I have done a lot of soul-searching and have not always liked what I've seen. One reason I chose to participate in the RJCG is that I thought it would force me to more deeply explore my own feelings, attitudes and behavior. It certainly has done that!

As we approach the end of our time together as a group, I look forward to exploring ways that I, as an individual, and we, as a congregation, can partner with others as we work toward advancing racial justice. I'm not sure what form this action will take (which for me, as someone who is a "problem solver," has been disconcerting in and of itself), but I do know the problem will not solve itself and to do nothing is not an option.



Lunch Counter
mixed media art by Ricardo Levins Morales

A JOURNEY WELL WORTH THE EFFORT

by Margie Storch



I am grateful to be able to participate in the UUCR Racial Justice Core Group led by Joan Davis, Jay Leach and Melissa Vullo. I hoped to learn something new about “how to” combat the lingering racism peculiar to our country and its damage to people of color and the common good.

It’s not been easy for “Marge in Charge” to commit 10 months to listening, reading and learning without an action plan in sight. As president of several organizations (Penn State Association of Women Students and Charlotte National Organization of Women) and a candidate for the NC House, I was comfortable protesting in the streets, taking the mic, and leading the charge.

However, the deliberate process of listening and learning with the Racial Justice Core Group has been a productive time-out from my typical activist fixing and doing. New information has provoked discomfort, shock, anger, sadness and self-reflection resulting in expanded awareness. The more I learn, the more I realize I don’t know. I’ve become more mindful of the implicit bias within me and all who have been raised in the cult of white supremacy. To undo the web of systemic racism, we need to relearn our history (the whole truth) and understand the forces stoking racism that keep us divided.

Growing up in a white town with white schools, whitewashed history and current events reported by white male media limited my understanding of the world. As a young feminist, I explored women’s history through reading and programs offered through feminist organizations. But I was still missing key parts of American history that illuminate how we arrived at our present situation. Through the Racial Justice Core Group and other UUCR program offerings, I’ve gained a broader understanding of how deeply racism has been intentionally woven into our laws and Constitution. It has been challenging

to learn the magnitude of violence and disregard towards people of color. Dismantling false narratives one has been taught and held since childhood is an easier task when supported by trusted members of our congregation.

Activists segregated by race and/or issue haven’t achieved sufficient change on their own. Our silos serve as barricades to understanding, cooperation, and solutions borne from direct experience. Listening to those with different experiences from our own is what is required to create a new way. Important next steps in our UUCR call to action will be making connections with others committed to dismantling systemic injustice.

Those of us who have received the benefits of white privilege must use our influence and resources to amplify the voices of those who have most suffered. We need to make sure everyone has a seat at the table.

Many (but not all) Unitarians and Universalists stepped up at pivotal times in our American

history as allies in the abolitionist movement, the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and the marriage equality movement. I am proud our congregation has recognized the need to transform ourselves and actively work to undo the racism and greed that undermines all efforts to elevate humanity. Now is one of those pivotal moments where climate change and renewed efforts to institutionalize racism require our response.

As a congregation, will we rise to the challenge or be content to just share service and coffee on Sundays? Together we have the power to create the beautiful world we know is possible. I believe it is a journey well worth the effort.



Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I Have a Dream,
mixed media art by Ricardo Levins Morales

UNDOING RACISM

by Patrick McNeely



I have to admit that when, as a member of the Memorial Endowment Trust Board, I originally reviewed the grant application for the first *Undoing Racism* workshop, I was somewhat skeptical. I was not sold on the usefulness of the two-and-a-half-day workshop process in

delivering hoped for results. And I was concerned that the \$10,000 cost might not be a wise use of the funds of which we are charged as a board to be good stewards.

I had done some research in this area: reading books such as *Between the World and Me* and *The Beautiful Struggle* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving, *Malcolm X* by Manning Marable, *Devil in the Grove* by Gilbert King, and *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson, to name a few; reading Coates' *Atlantic Monthly* articles; and watching YouTube talks, as well as streaming documentaries on our failed and biased justice system and our country's history of legalized racism and pervasive illegal methods of oppression.

So, I guess you could say that I came to the March workshop with high hopes, but low expectations. Being unsure as to what we would be doing for these 18 hours, I walked into the first of three days of this intense workshop in racism awareness, determined to be as open to the process as possible and willing to give my full attention and participation to the event.

As one of the 39 attendees of the workshop, I experienced profound ideological challenge, personal growth and ultimately, expansive understanding of how our *perceptions* of race divide us as a congregation, community, state and nation. I was forced out of my comfort zone of what could be called a concerned but *laissez-faire* space.

Wisely, Martha and Jay pulled us together for a couple of preliminary afternoons and put us through some drills to help us get to know each other better. That familiarity was important for us to feel comfortable enough to do this work honestly and participate fully in the process.

Through the lens of science presented on the first full day, I was able to see race as a cultural construct rather than an absolute. This paved the way to an open and honest examination of the history of racism untainted by my biases. I learned that without exception, racial prejudice + power = racism.

We went into breakout groups to examine and identify systemic racism in our country's most powerful institutions: Religion, Business, Education and Government. My group was highly motivated and informed, which appeared to be the norm as evidenced by the other groups' results. There seemed to be very little cause for debate about the reality of institutionalized racism in the centers of wealth and power in the United States.

I came to understand that I had participated throughout my life in the practice of racism simply by unwittingly living a life of white privilege. It was this acknowledgement of the pervasive face of racism in this country and my participation in its perpetuation that was the galvanizing moment for me in this process.



Undoing Racism Training
photographed by Kelly Greene

We, as a group, came into this workshop from many different roads, with various socioeconomic backgrounds, life experiences and biases. But I believe we all were seeking to find the common ground to become a force for positive change in this aspect of our world. After our shared experience, including a follow-up session at the church, I felt that we were as close to being of one mind as a group of Unitarian Universalists can be. I can't wait to see where this takes us.

A SHARED VISION FOR OUR FUTURE

by Rebekah Visco



I have called myself a Unitarian Universalist for almost three decades. This faith tradition is a core part of my identity. I believe in the power of our principles and I have had confidence in the idea that living out our shared values can change lives. We have high ideals, and we stand on the shoulders of many throughout our history who have worked tirelessly to realize them.

While I have never had illusions that ours is a perfect faith, my own background has allowed me the comfort to believe that our declared good intentions were somehow enough to separate us from those who perpetrate injustice against people of color. It has been difficult to let go of this flawed understanding.

As a member of the Vision Steering Team and now as a member of the Board of Trustees, I have spent a lot of time over the past few years thinking about who we are as a congregation, what we claim as a shared vision for the future, and what it might take to bring this vision to life. Our Call to Action and our commitment to confronting racial injustice inspired a group of us to participate in an anti-racism training called *Undoing Racism* offered through the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. An intense two-and-a-half days gave us an opportunity to examine our country's long history of racism and how it persists within each of us and in our daily lives.

Since the training I have thought a lot about the extent of the white privilege that surrounds me. I have come to see white privilege as less of a passive phenomenon and more of a way that internalized racial superiority manifests itself. The truth is that white people have been

conditioned to think and act in ways that perpetuate a society where white culture is valued over all others. We are taught to think that our experiences are 'normal,' that our collective ideas and opinions are generally the right ones, and that we earn our own success solely through hard work. White privilege convinces us that the way we see the world around us is the right way and diminishes in myriad ways the experiences of people of color. It turns out that no one can challenge systemic racial injustice without taking a hard look at the ways it has infected each of us. I have to make a commitment to recognize the ways that my own thoughts and assumptions are affected by racism and continue to work to change this mindset.

As Unitarian Universalists we are in a unique position. Many of the people we claim as religious ancestors were the very individuals who intentionally shaped a white supremacist society. We cannot pretend that somehow we are different, that racism is not just as deeply ingrained within our religious culture. The task of dismantling racism is overwhelming, yet our UU values require that we persist. I left the *Undoing Racism* training holding on to one thread of hope. Race and racism are human constructions, and therefore, surely they can be deconstructed. We Unitarian Universalists are heavily invested in this long, difficult work. May we never give up.



Undoing Racism Training Participants on Saturday, March 17
photographed by Kelly Greene

THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS:

June Blotnick

June Blotnick has been a member of the UCC for 16 years. As Executive Director of Clean Air Carolina, a statewide environmental advocacy group, she has used her experience and position to educate and engage members of our congregation in various ways to protect the planet. June assisted with the creation of our Green Sanctuary Group and is currently chair of our Environmental Transformation Team.



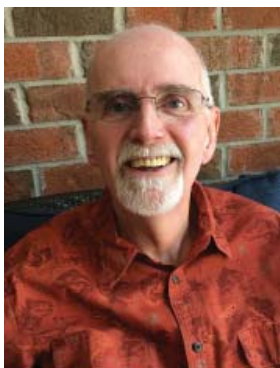
Ricardo Levins Morales

Earlier this year we discovered Ricardo's artwork online and contacted him about using it to promote the social justice work we're pursuing here at the UCC. You'll see his engravings and mixed media pieces reproduced throughout this issue of *Soundings*. Ricardo was born in the coffee growing mountains of western Puerto Rico and moved to the US in 1967. His art has grown up inseparably entwined with his activism and sense of community. For Ricardo, art is "a collection of medicinal herbs and nutrients that can help individuals, communities and societies overcome the cultural toxins that keep them from making needed changes." He lives in Minneapolis, MN, where he works out of a storefront studio. Visit www.rlmartstudio.com for more information about Ricardo and his art.



Bob Gorman

Bob Gorman has been a member of the UCC since 2005. A retired university librarian, he spends much of his free time attending baseball games and researching and writing about the history of the game. He is currently working



on his fourth book, an account of Roger Maris and the 1961 season.

Rich Greene

Rich has been with UCC for 28 years, which is way longer than reasonable. Nancy has been here just as long. So have Peter and Emily. Before that we lived in SE Pennsylvania and Corpus Christi Texas.



Patrick McNeely

Patrick is a Charlotte native and member of the Church with wife, Jan and two sons approximately 33 years. He is a retired commercial real estate finance attorney, now focusing on enhancing his tennis game and backgammon skills.

Volunteer work: NC Lawyer Assistance Program individual case work and serve on the Foundation Board; teaching as part of the faculty of Queens University outreach entrepreneurship program for jail and prison inmates and those recently released.



THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS:

Margie Storch

Margie Storch's occupational interest test in high school indicated her best career match would be army sergeant. Whaaaat?! She saw herself as a feminist warrior for peace and majored in art in college. She is a self-employed graphic designer and currently serves on the board of Health Care Justice - NC advocating for Improved Medicare for All. At the UUCC, Margie is a member of the board, Racial Justice Core Group, Religious Humanist Group and Sunday Morning Meditation Group.



Rebekah Visco

Rebekah has been a member of the UUCC since 2010, along with her husband, Evan, and children Samantha and Adam. She has been a member of three UU congregations over the last 28 years. She works as a nurse and enjoys reading, dancing, traveling, music, poetry and all forms of artistic expression.



SOUNDINGS

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

MONDAY-FRIDAY, 9 AM - 5 PM

PHONE 704-366-8623 | FAX 704-366-8812

EMAIL: UCC@UCCCHARLOTTE.ORG

WEBSITE: WWW.UCCCHARLOTTE.ORG

UCC PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte



Kathleen Carpenter, Director of Religious Education for Children & Youth
704-366-8623, ext. 6034
kathleen@uuccharlotte.org
*Children and Youth Religious Education (CYRE),
Denominational Connections, Young Adult Group (YAG)*

Donna Fisher, Children's Choir Director
donnfish@bellsouth.net
Children's Choir

Kelly Greene, Membership Coordinator
704-366-8623, ext. 6039
kelly@uuccharlotte.org
*Membership Team, New Members,
Stewardship, Visitors, Volunteer Coordination*

John Herrick, Director of Music
704-366-8623, ext. 6037
john@uuccharlotte.org
Music, Stewardship, Worship

Alesia Hutto, Office Administrator
704-366-8623, ext. 6030
alesia@uuccharlotte.org
Administrative Support, Communications

Martha Kniseley, Adult Programming Coordinator
704-366-8623, ext. 6036
martha@uuccharlotte.org
*Adult Religious Education and Spiritual Development (ARESD),
Community Building, Congregational Care, Environmental
Transformation*

Jay Leach, Minister
704-366-8623, ext. 6032
jay@uuccharlotte.org
Chief of Staff, Coordinating Team, Social Justice, Worship

Belinda Parry, Administrative Assistant
704-366-8623, ext. 6033
belinda@uuccharlotte.org
Part-time Administrative Support, CYRE Support

Eve Stevens, Minister
704-366-8623, ext. 6040
eve@uuccharlotte.org
Worship

Doug Swaim, Director of Administration
704-366-8623, ext. 6031
doug@uuccharlotte.org
*Building & Grounds, Communications, Coordinating Team, Envi-
ronmental Transformation, Finance, Memorial Endowment Trust,
Open Door School, Security*