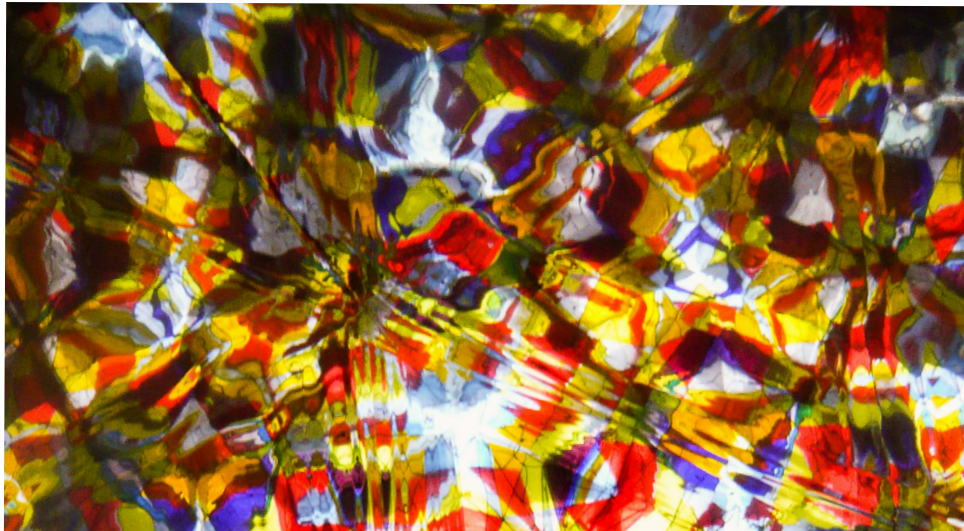


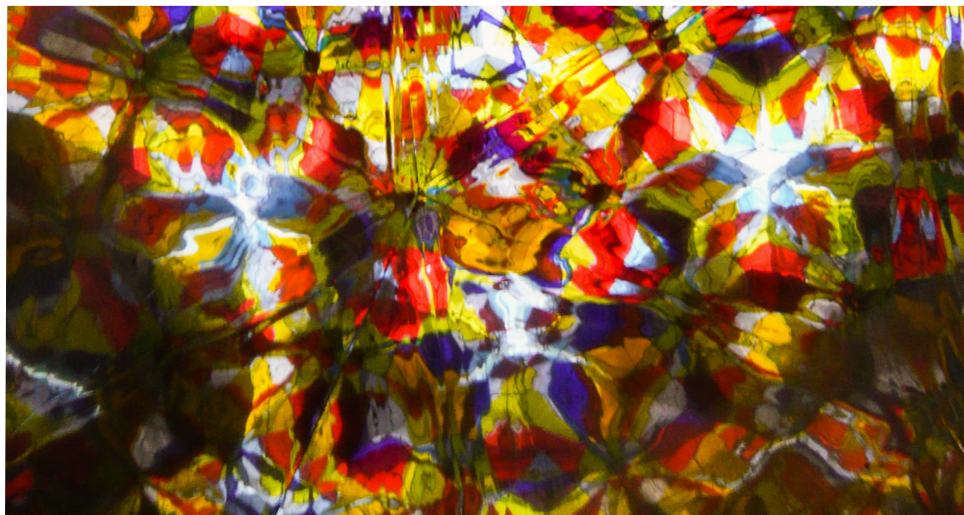
February 28, 2020

# SPEAKING OF JUSTICE

*Faith In Action*



## INTERSECTIONALITY



Issue No. 009

**First Unitarian Portland Social Justice E-Magazine**

Portland, Oregon

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Portland, Oregon



*My graduate teaching professor Dr. Elka Todeva left me with an image for envisioning intersectional organizing. She said that at our best, communities are like a kaleidoscope not merely because of the diversity of colors, but because the fragments are all visible at different depths, sizes, and shapes. Although each fragment is unique, the ever-changing combination is a dynamic experience that evokes positive emotions in the viewer. It's through this lens—where we see the unique pieces while also observing the dynamic beauty of the whole—that we strive to behold and engage with one another.*

Brandon Lee



## *FROM THE EDITORS*

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Welcome to our 9th issue of *Speaking of Justice: Faith in Action*, the First Unitarian Portland social justice e-magazine. We are so glad you are joining us as together we explore intersectional organizing. What does it mean to strive for justice where we see and value the unique, lived experiences of those at the front lines of oppression, while also recognizing that our liberation is bound up in each other?

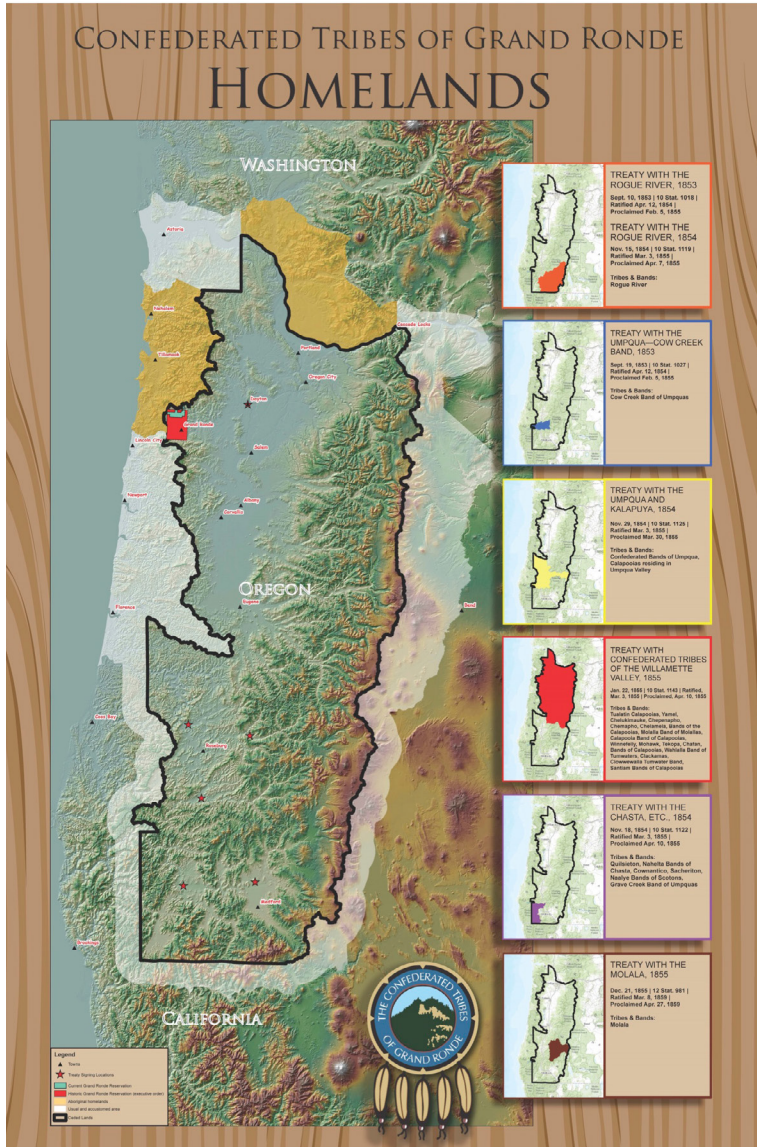
We hope you will take time to read, reflect, and be changed by the many offerings in this issue. Thank you for joining us here.

**With Gratitude,**

Dana Buhl,  
Director of Social Justice  
Nikki Beezley,  
Program Assistant of Social Justice

Mindy Clark  
Janet Collier  
Ethel Gullette  
Daniel Karnes  
Amanda Luell  
Jamie Marucha

# HONORING OF LAND & PEOPLE



[Click to enlarge](#)

[First Unitarian Church](#) is located in the heart of downtown Portland. We honor the indigenous people on whose traditional and ancestral land we sit.

We recognize the Multnomah, Clackamas, Clowwewalla (or Willamette-Tumwater) and Cascades (or Watlala) bands of Chinookan peoples, and the Tualatin Band of Kalapuya.

These indigenous peoples signed the Willamette Valley Treaty of 1855 and were later forcibly removed from their homelands to the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation; their descendants live today as members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. Many other indigenous nations of the Columbia River have connections to this place as well, and their descendants also live on.

We acknowledge the ancestors and survivors of this place and recognize that we are here because of the sacrifices forced upon them. We honor their legacy, their lives, and their descendants who carry on Tribal traditions for present and future generations.

[\*The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde\*](#)

# *JUSTICE AT THE INTERSECTION*

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**Words:**

*Dana Buhl & Jamie Marucha*





*This intersectional approach to organizing sounds a lot like the Beloved Community that mirrors our Unitarian Universalist principles in a vision of democracy, justice, and diversity.*

Was there a job at General Motors for [Emma DeGraffenreid](#)? Apparently there wasn't, and, in 1976, she and several other Black women sued the automotive company for discrimination. The court dismissed their case on the grounds that General Motors both hired African Americans and hired women.

Lawyer, activist, and scholar [Kimberlé Crenshaw](#) saw something that the judge had missed. The court's dismissal, on the grounds that the company did hire African Americans and that they did hire women, failed to see that the issue was that DeGraffenreid was not hired because she was a Black woman. Black men had been hired on the factory floor and as janitors. Women—white women—were hired in secretarial and front office roles. Consequently, Crenshaw observed that the discrimination occurred at the intersection of being Black and female, and, in 1989, she coined the term “intersectionality.” Crenshaw posited that “many of our problems, such as racism and sexism, are overlapping and gave rise to multiple levels of social injustice.” She further explained, “Intersectionality is just a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes combine to compound themselves.”

The [concept of intersectionality has evolved](#), broadening from the recognition of intersecting aspects of identity, to include a recognition that the societal problems we wrestle with—poverty, environmental catastrophes, access to health care, mass incarceration, and immigrant and refugee crises—impact marginalized groups more intensely than the dominant white population. More recently, intersectionality has proved a useful framework for social change and justice organizing that understands, includes, and centers the experience of those at the intersections of identity, the issues of discrimination they face, and the structural causes of oppression.

As we work toward common causes, a diversity of viewpoints brings something greater to the work than what individuals each bring alone. People bring unique experiences and viewpoints. Injustices impact people differently along race, gender, abilities, age, and sexual identity and orientation, and these injustices are compounded for members of multiply marginalized groups.

As [Henia Belalia](#), activist, writer, and theater director, points out, “Intersectionality isn't only structural. It is also personal. Most of us carry overlapping layers of privilege and oppression.” She adds, “On a bigger scale, we need to provide resources and access to those who don't have them in ways that are not tokenizing. Organizers have to stop talking of ‘empowering’ people on the margins, as if they didn't have their own power already. It's about getting out of the way for others to take up space while valuing the fact that power already exists in marginalized communities.”

Our faith building and social justice organizing will be more effective if we embrace varied viewpoints and the lived expertise and leadership of people at the front lines of oppression. American writer and speaker Ijeoma Olou writes that the first step to intersectional organizing is to establish a team. The most effective team is not composed of members with the same skill set and focus, but a team that covers all the angles.

[Eric K. Ward](#), Executive Director of the Western States Center, asserts that building fear is a goal of white nationalists, and he offers a solution. He advises us to talk to our neighbors and join organizations committed to an understanding of mutual respect, diversity, and human dignity. This intersectional community and organizing approach is a direct confrontation to the rise of white nationalism. It creates momentum toward the nation we seek: a country that is grounded in



opportunity and equity. This intersectional approach to organizing sounds a lot like the Beloved Community that mirrors our Unitarian Universalist principles in a vision of democracy, justice, and diversity.

Our collective efforts to pursue intersectional justice reflect our shared UU covenant as outlined in the seven principles. Specifically, we recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every person while also respecting that the interconnected web of existence means a rich diversity of experience, skill and interest. We believe in justice, equity and compassion in human relations, along with the right of conscience and use of democratic process. We share a goal of world peace, liberty, and justice for all that at its core understands that justice is a mutual endeavor. At First Unitarian, striving to build the Beloved Community means weaving strong, conscious relationships that honor diversity and mutuality.

First Unitarian has a seat on the steering committee of [Portland United Against Hate \(PUAH\)](#), a coalition that consists of more than eighty community-based organizations, neighborhood groups, and several local and regional government agencies. PUAH arose in response to the spike in local racist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, homophobic, and anti-LGBTQ+ hate incidents. PUAH takes an intersectional approach to building strong communities by honoring our diversity while recognizing our common right to move freely and have peace. Because of this strong web of affinity groups coming together, we are stronger and are building a sense of mutuality and interconnectedness. Our congregation

generously contributed to PUAH through a shared plate last October.

First Unitarian also supports the Oregon Poor People's Campaign through a shared plate collection, as well as providing space for the organizing collective to meet. Forty states have revived the [Poor People's Campaign](#) to come together nationally to learn to build capacity and resources. The campaign builds on Martin Luther King Jr.'s teachings, as he and others invited people who had been divided to stand together against the "triplets of evil": militarism, racism, and economic injustice. They organized a voter registration drive last fall and are planning the Mass Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington, D.C., this June. The movement includes people of all backgrounds—young and old, people of any faith and of no faith, all sexual orientations and gender identities, people of different abilities and races—from across the country, amplifying the voices and demands of poor people at the intersections of oppression.

Our social justice action groups are also involved in organizing on intersectional issues of justice. You'll learn more about these efforts in this issue of *Speaking of Justice* in pieces by Community for Earth, Ending Mass Incarceration/Advancing Racial Justice, Immigrant Justice Action group and our Police Accountability Team. You'll also hear from Reverend Bill Sinkford and First Unitarian members who explore how their spirituality is deepened when we, as a faith community, honor diversity, center the voices of those in the margins, and recognize the roles of power and privilege.

# DARRELL ON... SHAPING THE NARRATIVE & HEALING EXPERIENCES

Words:

Nikki M. Beezley

As soon as I join Darrell, the energy around us livens. And for that hour, I am deep-seated in curiosity. We are joined by the smells of espresso and the hum of focused minds at Coava down the street from First Unitarian Portland. We center the room. He tells me that he is coming from another interview covering his chamber opera, [Sanctuaries](#), the exploration of gentrification in Portland's historically African-American Albina district, which is coming out this year.

Jazz pianist, composer, and professor at Portland State University, [Darrell Grant](#) blends his works with social justice and activism. He talks to me about his experiences of creating with a purpose and will soon bring [Step by Step: The Ruby Bridges Suite](#) to the [First Unitarian Portland stage](#), on May 9.



Darrell Grant

Photo by: Nikki M. Beezley

Earlier this year you stated, “I think as artists we have this responsibility to be curious, to be inquisitive, but we also need to recognize that we have a responsibility to shape the narrative.” Can you talk a little bit more about this?

One of our roles as artists is to use our art to bring voices into that narrative that are not heard. Those

not being in the narrative make future actions seem inevitable, because once you start to hear “well, wait, there was this” and “that doesn't fit the narrative,” then all of a sudden there's some flexibility in action. So I feel like for me one of the most powerful things artists can do is use our creativity and our imagination and our artistry to bring things into that narrative from disempowered

communities or individuals that are not seen or just different perspectives. That's what we do as artists. Who you are not hearing from. It's very hard when everybody is shouting, but if you're singing... maybe it'll be heard. If you're playing music, maybe there is a way that those voices can be introduced into the narrative in a way that you can't do in politics or speech rhetoric.

**So on May 9th, you are bringing *Step by Step: The Ruby Bridges Suite* to First Unitarian Portland. Since you have done this suite before, what do you remember about the time leading up to the first performance?**

The first performance was very different because it was just me. The original version of the piece was just eight musicians. The instrumentation was slightly different, and there was a narrator, but there was no choir.

I had met Jason Shelton in Nashville, and he heard the piece. He said, "We should do this at my church in Nashville, and I want to write choir arrangements for this." This is the piece now. It was only the beginning of what it has actually become and, I think, still becoming.

**When you put a story like Ruby's and form it into a creative expression...what are you hoping the audience takes away?**

First of all, how I came to make this suite was [that] I play tennis. There was a very aggressive player, and he would play on the court beside me and yell. Sometimes he would throw his racket.

Then, one time there was an African-American guy who used to play tennis. Clearly economically disadvantaged. He would sit on the bench and talk to me as I practiced. The guy that was playing got really annoyed, and he's like, "Hey, this is not a park, can you guys keep the conversation down?"

That really pissed me off. I just thought, "This guy is a jerk." He'd come a lot. Never talked to him. But one day, I had done something that made me realize that this anger I was carrying around was hurting me.

So I was encouraged to go tell him about it. He got out of his car, and I said, "I need to tell you something. I've been carrying around this resentment of you, and I don't want to do that anymore."

Then we became really friendly. Turned out that he had twin daughters in second grade, and their teacher was teaching them about Ruby Bridges. He found out I was a jazz musician, and said, "They're reading this great book, you should put this to music!" People say this to me all the time, but when I got the [commission] for Reed College, I remembered that, and I read the book and said, "Absolutely."

It was interesting that there was this reconciliation that was a component of me even discovering the story of Ruby Bridges.

One of the things I want people to know is that art doesn't stand on its own. It's a part of this circle of human endeavor that we undertake. This is not a piece of artistic work that is on some pedestal, but that actually came from a very human learning experience.

**What are the conversations you think this congregation should be having?**

I think that [with] the Ruby Bridges conversation, we will be able to talk about the history of race in this country. And look for an avenue where we can start to see ourselves and describe ourselves differently. That will help us get down to the business of dismantling the power and privilege that is [viewed] with this idea of whiteness.

The thing that's exciting to me the most is that [*Step by Step*] becomes a motivator for bringing communities together. If it's done in the Unitarian context, then it represents the highest possible diversity that the Unitarian Church can bring. I want that to be what the participants experience, because when we're talking about race and our own personal connection to race, we are healing ourselves. Performing this piece can be a healing experience for everybody.

# FAMILY SEPARATION: A WHITE SUPREMACY POLICY SINCE OUR FOUNDING

Words:

Ethel Gullette, for *Ending Mass Incarceration/Advancing Racial Justice (EMI/ARJ)*,  
and Evie Zaic, for *Immigrant Justice Action Group (IJAG)*

**F**amily separation is a government policy that is intersectional. It involves racial justice, immigrant justice, economic justice, and the crisis of mass incarceration. It also intersects with imperialism, as asylum seekers at our U.S. borders are often fleeing repressive regimes instituted with the help of U.S. government policies. Environmental justice intertwines with family separation as well: Refugees fleeing increasingly unlivable environments due to climate change are among those who seek asylum. Our Unitarian Universalist principles demand we take action to end family separation in all its forms.

The current administration's series of strict immigration policies has increased the time children spend in detention, despite the government's own acknowledgment of the trauma and long-term physical and emotional impact detention has on children. In 2019, nearly 70,000 migrant children were held in government custody—up 42 percent from the previous year. Children were also detained for longer periods away from parents/guardians. Shortly before Trump took office, federal agencies held approximately 2,700 children for an average of one month before reuniting them with relatives or sponsors. In June 2019, that number topped 13,000, and children awaiting family reunification stayed in custody, on average, for two months.

Immigrant children seeking safe haven in the U.S., whether arriving unaccompanied or with family, face a complicated evaluation and legal process. The conditions in which children are detained and the support services that are available to them are of great concern to

pediatricians and other child advocates. In accordance with the internationally adopted [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), of which the U.S. is a signatory, immigrant and refugee children should be treated with dignity and respect and should not be exposed to conditions that may harm or traumatize them. [Prominent U.S. medical associations agree](#) that “there is no acceptable amount of time for a child to be placed in detention” and that separating children from their families causes greater harm. Furthermore, the Department of Homeland Security facilities do not meet the basic standards for the care of children in residential settings. From the moment children are in the custody of the U.S. government, they deserve health care that meets guideline-based standards, treatment that mitigates harm or traumatization, and services that support their health and well-being.

Though the current news of family separation at the U.S./Mexico border is deeply disturbing, this practice has historical roots. With just a little probing into U.S. history, one can observe the practice as a tool to preserve a system of white supremacy upon which the nation is founded. Family separation has long been used to weaken, disable, dehumanize, and terrorize Black and Indigenous Peoples and other Peoples of Color, supported by the manufacturing of myths and lies about the relative lack of worth and inferiority of those who have not been granted the status of “white.”

Starting with colonization of North America, and continuing through the establishment of the United States, European colonizers and settlers—those who were granted the legal status

of “white” through government law and policy—perpetrated a dual atrocity: the uprooting and annihilation of indigenous populations and the kidnapping and importation of African people as slave labor. [Family separation was commonplace within slavery as an institution](#), with slaveowners frequently selling children away from their parents, often to weaken the bonds among enslaved people, or as punishment, and always for profit.

From 1860 through the 1970s, family separation played a dominant role in oppressing Native American populations through “[Indian Schools](#).” During this period, the U.S. government forced tens of thousands of Native American children to attend assimilation boarding schools. Native children were brutally forbidden to use their names, to speak their languages, to have contact with families and tribes, and to practice their customs and religions. In addition to rampant abuse, many children were susceptible to and died of deadly infections such as tuberculosis and the flu. Many never again saw their families.

Current family separations under the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement echo another period of U.S. history. During the Great Depression, up to 1.8 million people, mostly of Mexican descent, were rounded up and forcibly removed under what was called [Mexican Repatriation](#). They were blamed for taking jobs and public resources away from white Americans. An estimated 60% or more of those deported were U.S. citizens; for those people, “repatriation” was in fact exile from their home country. When the roundups

took place at workplaces, seldom were there notifications or provisions for spouses or children left waiting at home.

Turning our attention to contemporary mass incarceration, we see that hundreds of thousands of adults and children, disproportionately Black and Latino, are in jails all over this country. About 65% of people in local jails across the U.S. on any given day have not been convicted of a crime but remain in jail because they cannot afford bail. The U.S. incarcerates more people per capita than any other country, and it goes without saying that those who are incarcerated are separated from families and communities. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) reminds us, “On any given day, nearly 60,000 youth under age 18 are incarcerated in juvenile jails and prisons in the United States.” They, too, are apart from their families.

First Unitarian’s Immigrant Justice Action Group (IJAG) and Ending Mass Incarceration/ Advancing Racial Justice (EMI/ARJ) are working together to combat family separation. Last year, we collaborated on a postcard-writing project, advocating for several Oregon bills including juvenile justice reform. This year, IJAG will address family separation at the April 19 Social Justice Sunday event and by engaging children in our Learning Community in the [The Butterfly Effect: Migration Is Beautiful Project](#). EMI/ARJ will sponsor a Restorative Justice program on Sunday, March 8, and, on Saturday, March 14, a second Oregon DA for the People candidate forum in which declining charges and abolishing cash bail promise to be addressed.

Unaccompanied minors and children separated from their families in detention playing volleyball in a fenced, guarded, concrete enclosure. They live inside this windowless former Walmart north of Brownsville, TX, operated by Southwest Key Services, which has federal contracts totaling \$460 million/year on average.

Photo by: Dana Buhl



# THE SLAVE AUCTION

Poem by: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

The sale began—young girls were there,  
Defenseless in their wretchedness,  
Whose stifled sobs of deep despair  
Revealed their anguish and distress.

And mothers stood, with streaming eyes,  
And saw their dearest children sold;  
Unheeded rose their bitter cries,  
While tyrants bartered them for gold.

And woman, with her love and truth—  
For these in sable forms may dwell—  
Gazed on the husband of her youth,  
With anguish none may paint or tell.

And men, whose sole crime was their hue,  
The impress of their Maker's hand,  
And frail and shrinking children too,  
Were gathered in that mournful band.

Ye who have laid your loved to rest,  
And wept above their lifeless clay,  
Know not the anguish of that breast,  
Whose loved are rudely torn away.

Ye may not know how desolate  
Are bosoms rudely forced to part,  
And how a dull and heavy weight  
Will press the life-drops from the heart.



---

*Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911) was a poet, fiction writer, and journalist. The only child of free African American parents, she was a traveling speaker on the abolitionist circuit and helped slaves escape through the Underground Railroad. During Reconstruction, she was an activist for civil rights, women's rights, and educational opportunities for all. She was active in both African Methodist Episcopal and Unitarian churches.*

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## *EXCERPT FROM BRAIDING SWEETGRASS*

By: Robin Wall Kimmerer

*Kaié:ri, wísk, iá:ia'k, tsiá:ta.* From time beyond memory, Mohawk people inhabited this river valley that now bears their name. Back then the river was full of fish and its spring floods brought silt to fertilize their corn fields. Sweetgrass, called *wenserakon ohonte* in Mohawk, flourished on the banks. That language has not been heard here for centuries. Replaced by waves of immigrants, the Mohawk people were pushed from this generous valley in upstate New York to the very margins of the country. The once dominant culture of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy was reduced to a patchwork of small reservations. The language that first gave voice to ideas like democracy, women's equality, and the Great Law of Peace became an endangered species. Mohawk language and culture didn't disappear on their own.

Forced assimilation, the government policy to deal with the so-called Indian problem, shipped Mohawk children to the barracks at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where the school's avowed mission was "Kill the Indian to Save the Man." Braids were cut off and Native languages forbidden. Girls were trained to cook and clean and wear white gloves on Sunday. The scent of sweetgrass was replaced by the soap smells of the barracks laundry. Boys learned sports and skills useful to a settled village life: carpentry, farming, and how to handle money in their pockets. The government's goal of breaking the link between land, language, and Native people was nearly a success. But the Mohawk call themselves the *Kanienkeha*—People of the Flint—and flint does not melt easily into the great American melting pot.

*Milkweed Editions, Minneapolis, 2015, pp. 254-255.*

# REFLECTIONS ON INTERSECTIONALITY & COMMUNITY-CONSCIOUS POLICING

Words:

Brandon Lee

*First Unitarian congregant, **Brandon Lee**, is a proud black man from Oakland, California, and Houston, Texas. With a lifetime of experience advocating for justice against profiling and institutional racism, he is an expert in transforming traumatic circumstances into hopeful, victorious ones. Brandon is co-founder with his wife, Hun Taing, of [Training For Transformation \(T4T\)](#). Together they lead and organize community-conscious police training and diversity, equity, and inclusion organizational transformation.*

*In 2019, Brandon published, [Best Practices in Community Conscious Policing: A Reflection on Law Enforcement Community Building Workshops](#). Brandon has been coaching First Unitarian's Police Accountability Team as we deepen our community-conscious ethic and practice.*

*Central to T4T's approach is a deep understanding and practice of intersectionality and the relationship of healing to justice. We asked Brandon to reflect on what intersectionality means for community organizing and police accountability work. What follows are excerpts from his responses.*

My graduate teaching professor Dr. Elka Todeva left me with an image for envisioning intersectional organizing. She said that at our best, communities are like a kaleidoscope not merely because of the diversity of colors, but because the fragments are all visible at different depths, sizes, and shapes. Although each fragment is unique, the ever-changing combination is a dynamic experience that evokes positive emotions in the viewer. It's through this lens—where we see the unique pieces while also observing the ever-changing beauty of the whole—that we strive to behold and engage with one another.

Intersectional organizing is not just a skill or an art, but, considering emotional intelligence, it is a “vibe.” It creates a kaleidoscope representative of the most affected people in our community. This is possible when we have

authentic relationships within these diverse networks as volunteers, residents, service users and providers, teachers, students, advocates, and family members.

For police accountability work, we include and prioritize those from the community who have lived-experience engaging with law enforcement, whether positive or negative, instead of centering the experiences of academic researchers or of law enforcement leaders. Our outreach strategies are focused on those who are impacted most by law enforcement. Data and experience show that black/African American, Native American, Latinx, Southeast Asian, biracial/multi-ethnic community members are most highly targeted by over-policing and police abuse. This requires that we lead the conversation with race. We then look at the intersection of other identities



most often impacted by law enforcement. We reach out to our transgender friends/siblings, veterans, people with disabilities, people experiencing houselessness, displaced persons, LGBTQ+, elderly, youth, communities in recovery, faith-based organizations, former gang members, people who have formerly been incarcerated, and a variety of community members whose first language is not English.

In community-engaged policing, we have a goal of increasing the safety and security of community members and police alike. It is essential to have a variety of lived experiences participating not only in civilian oversight of police, but also in training and legislation to provide context for the laws and policies enacted that protect our civil liberties. When community engagement is not intersectional, many people who are impacted by law enforcement, negatively or positively, are left out of developing the legislation and tactics that are used to govern them. As a result, institutional racism persists and trauma, liabilities, and violence continue.

Intersectional organizing in the 21st century is done through a process that is healing-centered and trauma-informed. Because we bring academic, professional, and lived experience into this work with law enforcement, we at T4T recognize the trauma that negative encounters with police can create not only for domestic people of color but also for immigrants, refugees, and displaced persons. Maintaining a dynamic, intersectional lens means recognizing that the impact of policing can appear differently over time and in different communities. For example, as presidential policies change, law enforcement may primarily target African Americans one year, but the focus may shift to black and brown immigrants, refugees, Native women, Muslims, or transgender people as political paradigms shift.

Through feedback on our work, whether from law enforcement or community members, we see that most people are dealing with some level of trauma, or historical trauma, that has impacted the filter through which they interact

with others. Because of this, I am mindful about how I enter, engage, and disengage with every person or group who invites me into their sacred space; I try to volunteer and support ideas that are close to them, or their community, first. It's important that community members get to vet me in their comfort zone and language to ensure their contributions are not perverted for the benefit of others. I use the same approach when I engage with law enforcement; I create a space where they can be vulnerable, ask questions, revisit personal stories, and practice incorporating lessons learned from people they hear from during our workshop.

Our research of best practices has shown that the most effective police accountability work has been a healing justice platform. (Black Lives Matter uses this approach.) Accountability is needed to begin the process of healing from the trauma of racism, and I feel fortunate that I have been successful in this area. Through winning a lawsuit for police misconduct and working to establish and fund civilian oversight of law enforcement boards, I've become more compassionate to the demands placed on all public servants and first responders in the present day.

Healing from the trauma of racism increases our capacity to engage with one another, not through the illusion of our filters, but rather through an understanding of interbeing, the power of vulnerability, and increased emotional intelligence. This is why we conduct our workshops through experiential learning exercises. If community engagement is not done in an intersectional and healing-centered way, then ultimately trauma, wasted resources, liabilities, and violence will continue.

Intersectional organizing is an extension of my faith and practice. I am a descendant of the first civil rights organizer in the United States of America, Prince Hall. He established the first African American institution in this country, and it is still active today. Mr. Hall was a preacher, and his descendants founded the AME Baptist Church. The combination of my spirituality and the practice of intersectional organizing, quite simply, is social justice.

# CLIMATE JUSTICE & INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Words:

Bryan Brumley, Community For Earth (CFE)



---

*The effects of climate change* are grabbing headlines around the world, from disastrous wildfires in Australia and the Amazon forest to the forced migration of millions of poor people no longer able to raise traditional crops.

The Community for Earth (CFE) will focus on the intersection of climate justice and institutional racism in 2020 through supporting [an Oregon bill passed last year](#) to curb diesel emissions in urban areas, as well as through supporting the implementation of the Portland Clean Energy Initiative, passed by Portland voters in November 2018, that resulted in the establishment of the [Portland Clean Energy Fund](#).

Diesel pollution is one of Oregon's greatest toxic air pollution problems. Long ago, Oregon set a goal of reducing diesel pollution, but years later, we are only 2% of the way toward meeting those targets. That pollution is costing us heavily in health expenses and even deaths. A recent Portland State University study added to the accumulating evidence that climate change disproportionately affects the disadvantaged, including communities of color that long have been the victims of racist housing policies. Portland's poor, including African-Americans,

systematically have been segregated into less desirable neighborhoods, including areas that are near interstate highway systems along which diesel trucks travel.

The Portland Clean Energy Initiative established a structure based on including input from community groups and being responsive to a set of equity provisions, including one stating that "At least 50% of the Fund's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency projects 'should specifically benefit low-income residents and communities of color.'" CFE will be working to ensure that the provisions of the bill and the distribution of projects defined in the equity provision are implemented.

In addition to the initiatives above, CFE will be working for passage of state legislation to curb carbon emissions in Oregon, and toward stopping the proposed Jordan Cove liquefied natural gas pipeline.

The Community for Earth will be working with other UU Social Justice Groups, including the [Younger Adult Caucus](#), on these issues.

# “DECENTERING” AS A DOORWAY

Words: Mark Woodlief, Police Accountability Team (PAT) and Lay Minister

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**Recognizing and affirming intersectionality** has helped me to grow spiritually. I've realized deeper intersectionality via the spiritual practice of what I call "decentering." Many of us are familiar with the concept that the margins hold the center. My white, straight, male, middle-class, cisgender, "educated" voice and privilege have been "centered" in culture and society long enough. My practice is to occupy space in the margins so that long-oppressed voices can move to the center and be amplified.

Most exciting for me while I work on decentering my privilege has been recognizing the importance of centering my disabled (unseen, unheard) voice. Twenty-five years ago, I was clinically diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), and I truly spent almost 20 of those years operating from an ableist's perspective. It's a little cognitively dissonant for me to be centering and decentering

simultaneously, but claiming my voice through a Disability Justice lens is empowering.

The Disability Justice movement is a framework developed by disabled black, brown, queer, and trans people. It is based on 10 principles, as articulated by the Bay Area-based Sins Invalid group: intersectionality, leadership of those most impacted, anti-capitalism, cross-movement solidarity, recognizing (a person's) wholeness, sustainability, commitment to cross-disability solidarity, interdependence, collective access, and collective liberation.

Ableism—similarly to other oppressive systems—is deeply culturally ingrained in people. And intersectionality helps me (hopefully all of us) realize that none of us is free if any of us are oppressed. Intersectionality has helped me to both make space and hold space at the same time.

# CAUCUS SPACE FOR IMMIGRANT JUSTICE

Words: Ann Zawaski and Lena Lee, Immigrant Justice Action Group (IJAG)

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**Social justice work**, specifically anti-racism and accompaniment of immigrants, continues to evolve. As people of faith whose values direct our activism, we appreciate the opportunities we have had to develop spiritual practices that help us process difficult emotions, staying with discomfort and, hopefully, learning and changing. This all takes time, patience, and commitment.

One of the significant changes in work on dismantling white supremacy culture has been the use of caucus groups, separating those who are white-identified and those who are people-of-color-identified during some of the initial parts of the times we are engaged together. This separation helps create brave and authentic spaces for each group to explore deeply their feelings and reactions.

Understanding the spiritual value of a white caucus space has inspired us as allies in immigrant

justice work. We have begun to understand the experience of being "other" as we have reflected on and examined the ways we have perpetuated the culture of white supremacy. Learning to center the voices of directly affected communities and taking direction from those most impacted helps to shift the power. This work truly holds us accountable to those who are struggling for a voice in our community.

Within a caucus space, we find that each of us comes with our own perspectives, experiences, and understanding. The group gives us the space and time to practice humility, patience, and empathy, as well as an opportunity to explore our own biases, cultural expectations, and the impact of white supremacy culture in our personal lives. These are essential prerequisites to helping create the Beloved Community where all are welcome and respected.

# ACCOMPANYING ONE ANOTHER

Words:

Rabbi Benjamin Barnett

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*Benjamin Barnett, Rabbi of Havurah Shalom in NW Portland, and Dana Buhl are on the design team for the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice cohort project "Building an Interfaith Community to Counter White Nationalism." We invited Rabbi Benjamin to share what draws him to intersectional organizing for social justice.*

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## *I return often to the moment*

in Torah when Moses encounters the Divine at the burning bush. Specifically, it is God's response to Moses's doubt that speaks to me. "Who am I," Moses asks, "that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?" God answers, "I will be with you."

Regardless of how we imagine the Divine, or even if we don't at all, the essence here is that Moses learns he will not be alone. Amidst moments of fear and uncertainty, this sense of feeling accompanied can be a lifeline. For me, this is at the heart of interfaith organizing. We build strength through walking side by side, and when necessary showing up at each other's doorsteps. That is why, in our work with the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice to counter white nationalism, we are centering the relationships we build across religious and cultural lines. The more that marginalized and vulnerable communities, and communities who are in solidarity with them, are connected, the less power white nationalism yields.

Accompanying one another is a practice. At times it feels seamless, but at others developing mutuality means being stretched and challenged. Some of my most meaningful interfaith work has involved being pushed to make room for others' truths, or showing up authentically, trusting that someone else will make room for mine. In interfaith organizing, we are asked to locate our similarities while simultaneously honoring our differences. In my experience, it is in the creative tension encompassing both these aspects that we come to know genuine mutuality.

As I invest in the work of anti-racism, I find that holding what we share in loving tension with our differences is essential. Each one of us is harmed by white supremacy. Yet as a person who has benefited from whiteness throughout my life, I must recognize the ways in which I am situated differently from someone who is black. To the extent to which I recognize both truths, what we share along with how differently we are impacted, I enhance my ability to accompany. And in this



moment, with white nationalism on the rise, as a Jew I draw strength from the ways I need both to accompany and to be accompanied.

My friend Rabbi Melissa Weintraub, a teacher and inspiration of mine in building relationships between Jewish leaders and Palestinians, was asked early on in her work why she did what she was doing with prospects for peace so grim. Her response was along the lines of, “If the Middle East goes up in flames tomorrow, we will need these relationships more than ever.” I think about

that every time I develop trust with someone whose history or experience is very different from mine. I also believe that we just built, or reinforced, a bridge that will make each of us, and each of our communities, safer one day.

This is how interfaith partnerships can sustain us. God willing, our situation in this country will improve. But regardless of outcomes, in the face of hatred and amidst the ongoing entrenchment of cruel and unjust systems, these relationships make us safer and stronger.

# WHY DO WE HAVE "SPECIAL" GROUPS?

Words:

Lia Nagase

**Y**ou're sitting down with your best friend. You've been friends since you were 13. You're talking about your miscarriage. Your best friend is compassionately nodding along, having had a miscarriage just two years ago. They know just when to ask a question, when to touch your arm, and when to sit in silence with you. You're working out your feelings, your next steps, and how you're going to make it through. You feel supported. You feel seen.

Suddenly, your coworker appears and sits down with you. "What are we talking about here?"

Let's be clear: You like this coworker. They're nice, and you have a good working relationship with them. But you're in an intimate place and talking about something that your best friend inherently just gets. You were comfortable at this table; now you're uncomfortable and feel stuck because you didn't invite your coworker. Do you explain your whole fertility journey to your coworker in the hopes they will understand? It feels tender. And raw. You need support right now from your best friend—the one who understands it through shared experience.

In this story, "you" are a stand-in for any number of groups that gather around something they have in common through experience and/or identity (whether called an affinity group, a caucus, or an identity circle). BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), LGBTQIA+ folks, or people with disabilities could be "you" in this story. Any minoritized and/or marginalized group is "you" in this story, and your best friend is someone else also in the minoritized/marginalized group.

All of us deserve to have times and places where we can just be accepted, without having to explain the backstory. When groups form at First Unitarian Portland, whether around a shared interest or a shared experience (often of marginalization or minoritization), we can know that the people in these groups are trying to move toward that sense of freedom that comes with just being. This sense of just being comes from the space created for authentic, brave, and vulnerable sharing. This benefits us all. Those in the groups get to connect, heal, and grow. Then, in the greater community, we feel more whole. When the larger community supports us, our connection to our faith home deepens, and we are able to reinvest our energy in that home again and again.

We have had "special" groups of one kind or another for as long as our church home has existed. Look no further than the meetings of the Ladies Sewing Society, whose fundraising founded First Unitarian. As I look at our UU 7 Principles, I see how they support the existence of these groups. ***Understanding the inherent dignity and worth of every person*** means supporting each of us as we participate in anything that increases our own dignity. ***Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations*** means knowing that folks might need something different from us and actively supporting that. ***Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations*** means that we listen and accept it as truth when someone says, "This helps me be where I want and need to be spiritually and otherwise."

May we all ***pursue truth and meaning*** with the love and support of our church community.

# *EMBODYING HUMAN RIGHTS IN OUR INVESTMENT DECISIONS*

Words:

Curtis Bell, *UUs for Justice in the Middle East (UUJME)*

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A Business Resolution with the above title will be on the agenda for discussion and possible adoption at the UUA General Assembly that will be held this Summer in Providence, RI. The proposed Business Resolution aims to enhance the work of Unitarian Universalists for social justice by strengthening the use of corporate investment/divestment and shareholder advocacy in support of human rights.

The fundamental human rights of people here in the United States and in many countries of the world, as defined, for example, by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, continue to be systematically and egregiously violated. Private corporations build the infrastructure and supply the equipment that is needed and used by those responsible for human rights violations. This resolution calls on Unitarian Universalists to support human rights by making more effective use of their relationships as investors in order to end corporate complicity with human rights abuses.

The proposed resolution would enhance effective use of corporate investment/divestment and shareholder advocacy by UUs in the achievement of their social justice goals in two main ways:

a) by calling on the UUA to cease the purchasing by the UU Common Endowment Fund (UUCEF) of securities of corporations that are directly complicit in human rights violations and violations of international law, to divest from such companies, and to maintain explicit guidelines for incorporating human rights considerations in their investment decisions and shareholder advocacy; and

b) by developing formal mechanisms for communication between the UUA Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) and Investment Committees and UU social justice groups, congregations, and individual UUs concerned

about social justice so that the knowledge of these issues within the larger UU community can impact the UUA's investment decisions.

It is expected that these actions will result in greater and more effective use of corporate investment/divestment and shareholder advocacy by UU associated organizations, UU congregations, and UU individuals.

The resolution is sponsored by Black Lives of UU (BLUU), UUs for Justice in the Middle East (UUJME), UU Refugee and Immigrant Services and Education (UURISE), UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE), and UU Peace Ministry Network (UUPMN). This resolution is therefore an intersectional effort that brings together the aspirations of different UU social justice groups. We not only share the goal of more effective use of investment/divestment in the pursuit of social justice, but we also recognize that human rights are universal, that our work in different areas of social justice has extensive overlap, and that we are stronger if we work together in the pursuit of human rights.

In addition and most importantly, the SRI and Investment Committees of the UUA were closely involved in the writing of this resolution and are in full support of it. Members of the UUA investment committees recognize that investment decisions are moral decisions, that investments are an important way of acting in accord with UU values, and that consideration of human rights in making their investment decisions is fully compatible with their fiduciary responsibilities.

[\*Read the proposed Business Resolution here.\*](#)

# ANSWERING THE CALL OF LOVE

Excerpts: [A Sermon by Reverend Bill Sinkford on February 11, 2018](#)

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“Stick to the paths of Love and Justice.  
Your restless hearts will find me there.”  
(Excerpt from “Psalm 2” in Psalms for a New  
World, posted by Christine Robinson)

Any image of Beloved Community worth  
pursuing invites us to bring all of our selves, all  
of our identities to the table, to be known for  
who we fully are.

Intersectionality helps us not lose the truth  
of experience lived in multiple identities by  
focusing on just one.

Intersectionality helps prevent the erasure of  
human experience that is lived in more than  
one identity...which is every human experience  
in this sanctuary. None of us are adequately  
described by only one of our identities...because

Not all queer folks are white  
Not all people of color are straight  
Not all homeless folks are mentally ill  
Not all immigrants are uneducated

Am I being clear?

Not all white women are able bodied  
Not all African Americans are Christian

That is why it is critical that as we think about  
the culture of white supremacy, we understand  
that culture to be not just about race...

The culture of white supremacy is about race,  
clearly, but it is also about patriarchy and  
heterosexism, it is about ability and education,  
it is about all of the unspoken assumptions  
about who is truly and fully seen as human...and  
therefore who is truly and fully welcome to take  
part in the American dream.

Intersectionality calls on us to expand our vision,  
to stop erasing human experience because it does  
not fit our preconceptions or our analysis.

Using intersectional lenses helps us see more  
clearly the human experience that we want to  
welcome in the community we claim as beloved.

At the UUA, Standing on the Side of Love,  
the song and those yellow shirts, became  
synonymous with our commitment to justice as  
a faith. It is why we came to be called the “love  
people” by our interfaith partners.

The phrase, and the song, Standing on the Side  
of Love, came out of our faith’s commitment  
to Marriage Equality, though it rapidly was  
expanded to include all of our justice work.

I know how the song came to be. Jason Shelton,  
one of our finest UU musicians, was sitting in my  
office on Beacon Hill in 2004. It was during the  
very aggressively contested legislative response  
to the Massachusetts court decision to legalize  
same-sex marriage. A reporter from a major  
news outlet called and I told Jason just to sit  
while I took the call.



The reporter asked how UUism would respond to the marriage controversy, and I answered that UUism would “stand on the side of love.”

Jason stood up, signaling that he would be back in a few moments. When he returned, the interview now over, he had the melody and the first verse of Standing on the Side of Love written on a sheet of notebook paper.

The phrase, the song, and those yellow shirts have served us well. But before too long, members of the UU disability community began asking why we had to “stand,” or only “stand,” when many of them rolled. That word “stand” made them feel invisible.

And so, finally, Jason decided to change the lyric and the name of the song from Standing on the Side of Love to Answering the Call of Love.

Why do we have to give up a phrase that we have come to love, a phrase that has become an important part of our identity? Can't we just interpret that word “stand” as a metaphor? Why can't those disability advocates allow us to keep using a phrase that has become part of our vocabulary?

Opinions will be divided...among differently abled folks as well as among the temporarily able bodied.

Here is what I know. When the suffrage movement decided not to include the vote for black women in their advocacy...they left so much work for us to do.

And when Marriage Equality was presented as salvation for every queer individual, it left transgender folks with a different battle to fight.

What I know is that a partial promise will always remain only part of a promise. Half a loaf may be better than none, but it always remains half a loaf, and somebody is going to go hungry.

And I also know that Answering the Call of Love is great religious language that I am happy to claim. Because we are called as liberal religious people, called by love, and called to answer by praying with our lives.

May there be more love to liberate us all, and may we keep on, today and every day, until we find it, and share it, inch by precious inch, with one another and the world.



# Upcoming Events

## **March 8 – Restorative Justice: A Personal Story**

### **Daisy Bingham, 1–3 pm**

Stephen Fowler is a performing artist, activist, justice advocate, and community educator from Portland. Convicted as a teenager and sentenced to 7.5 years in the Oregon Youth Authority, Stephen used his time to educate and expand his understanding of self-worth, potential, and purpose. Stephen now educates community members, teachers, parents, and students about restorative justice for community rehabilitation and also showing teens the power of their own voice and story.

*Sponsored by Ending Mass Incarceration/Advancing Racial Justice (EMI/ARJ)*

## **March 10 – Pop-Up Pantry**

### **A108, \*4–5 pm**

First Unitarian Portland is piloting a new Pop-Up Pantry program with Clay Street Table every second Tuesday of the month. \*Please [contact Donna](#) for more information and how to get involved.

*Sponsored by Committee On Hunger & Homelessness (COHHO)*

## **March 14 – Multnomah DA Candidate Forum**

### **Eliot Chapel, 12–3 pm**

Please join Oregon DA for the People, Advancing Collective Equity, and ACLU–Oregon for this important candidate forum for Multnomah County District Attorney. The ACLU has called the District Attorney "the most powerful person you've never heard of." On November 3, 2020, Multnomah County will elect a new DA. This forum will be an excellent opportunity to learn about the critical role of DAs and how they affect the crisis of mass incarceration. Come with your questions.

*Sponsored by Ending Mass Incarceration/Advancing Racial Justice (EMI/ARJ)*

## **March 15 – Social Justice Sunday – Youth and Climate Justice**

### **Buchan Reception Hall, 1–2:30 pm**

Join us to hear from local high school youth, from YRUU and the community, who view climate change as a defining challenge for their generation. After their talk, we'll have round table discussions to explore our personal connections to climate justice and to ways our congregation can support ongoing efforts. Taking time to share and reflect as a faith community helps us to build a more resilient and equitable future.

*Sponsored by Community for Earth (CFE)*

## **March 16 - Building an Interfaith Community to Counter White Nationalism**

First Unitarian Portland is forming a cohort as part of the Spring 2020 pilot project [Building an Interfaith Community to Counter White Nationalism](#), a collaboration with the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMiJ) and the Western States Center. From March 19–May 21, we will bring together members of diverse faith communities across the state for shared learning, relationship-building, and action. To learn more about the Spring 2020 Cohort **and to register go to this link by March 16**. To join the First Unitarian cohort, [please email Community Minister, Rev. Abigail Clauhs](#).

## **March 20 - Why Single Payer Health Care is Needed NOW!**

### **Eliot Chapel, 7–9 pm**

Join this talk with Adam Gaffney, MD, MPH, President for the National Health Program.

*Sponsored by Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG)*

## **March 22 - The Condor and the Eagle**

### **Eliot Chapel, 7–9 pm**

In honor of U.N. World Water Day, come to a screening of the award-winning documentary *The Condor and the Eagle*. In this film, four indigenous environmental leaders embark on an extraordinary transcontinental adventure from the Canadian plains to the heart of the Amazon jungle to unite peoples of North and South America and to deepen the meaning of climate justice.

*Sponsored by Community For Earth (CFE)*

## **March 31 - Reclaiming Stolen Black Lands in the “Whitest City”**

### **Eliot Chapel (Buchan Reception, Overflow Room), Doors Open 6:30, 7–8:30pm**

Survivors and descendants present their lived experiences with the Emanuel Hospital expansion and forced removal from what was Central Albina. This thought-provoking lecture tells the history and provides compelling advocacy for the survivors and descendants of an unresolved and painful era in Portland’s history. [Only a few tickets left!](#) Please [email Nikki](#) to RSVP for childcare by March 20.

*Sponsored by Ending Mass Incarceration/Advancing Racial Justice (EMI/ARJ)*

## **May 9 - Step By Step: Ruby Bridges Suite**

### **Main Sanctuary, Doors Open 6:30, 7–9pm**

The 2020 Marilyn Sewell Social Justice Lecture at First Unitarian Church will present, for the first time in Portland since its premiere in 2012, Darrell Grant’s *Step by Step: The Ruby Bridges Suite*. A multi-movement composition for instrumentalists, choir, vocal soloists, and narrator that draws on jazz, gospel and spiritual traditions, *Step by Step* weaves together music, historical speeches from W.E.B. DuBois and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., poems, newspaper articles, Supreme Court rulings, iconic images from the civil rights era, and the words of Ruby Bridges herself to paint an emotional portrait of a dramatic time in U.S. history.

[To stay updated and register for events click here.](#)



# ***SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTION GROUPS***

## ***AT FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PORTLAND***

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### ***AFRICA CONNECTIONS***

Contact: Anne Pickar  
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### ***COMMITTEE ON HUNGER & HOMELESSNESS (COHHO)***

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