

Resist and Rejoice! - UUGA New Orleans - June 2017

Living in the Tension: Faith and Racial Justice

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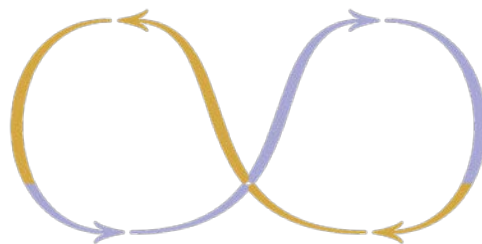
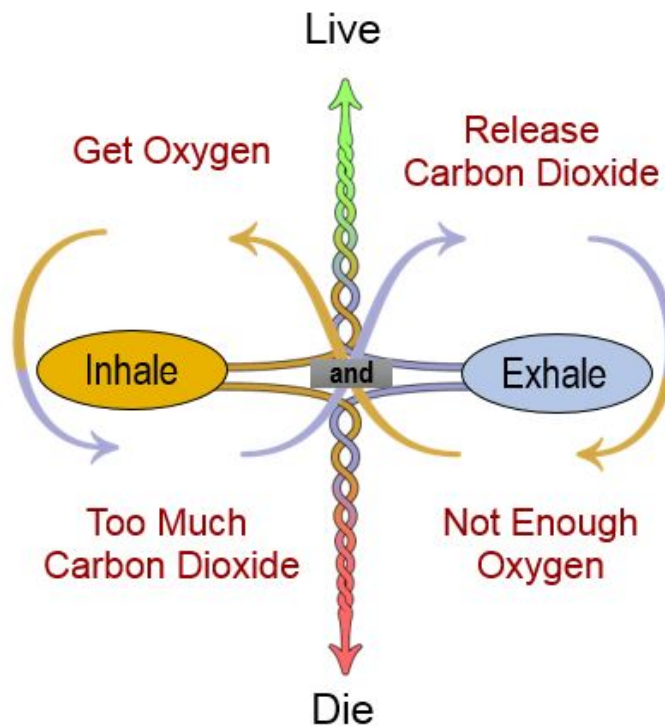
<p>Principle 1: The inherent worth and dignity of every person</p> <p>“We celebrate the gifts of being human: our intelligence and capacity for observation and reason, our senses and ability to appreciate beauty, our creativity, our feelings and emotions.”</p>	<p>and</p>	<p>Principle 7: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence</p> <p>This statement “is our response to the great dangers of both individualism and oppression. It is our solution to the seeming conflict between the individual and the group.”</p>
<p>Racial Transcendence</p> <p>Focused attention on the transcendent supports the ability to see beyond categories.</p>	<p>and</p>	<p>Racial Consciousness</p> <p>Being race conscious allows us to recognize that although race is not real, it has real impacts.</p>
<p>Self-Acceptance</p> <p>We are whole, complete being as we are. The idea that we have to “fix” ourselves brings negativity.</p>	<p>and</p>	<p>Self-Development</p> <p>Investigating how privilege and oppression operate in our thoughts and actions is life-long work. We are never done.</p>
<p>Consciousness-Raising</p> <p>Since we are all interconnected, personal growth efforts work toward the collective good.</p>	<p>and</p>	<p>Political Action</p> <p>Working against unjust policies is essential. It requires more than personal consciousness-raising. We must act.</p>
<p>Common Humanity</p> <p>Focusing on our common humanity and similarities helps people relate to one another and look toward the future with hope.</p>	<p>and</p>	<p>Group Differences</p> <p>Attending to the histories of our different racial groups reveals that each group needs a specific healing process.</p>
<p>Inner Truth</p> <p>Being liberated from confining social structures means listening to what emerges from our deepest core, our authentic voice.</p>	<p>and</p>	<p>Accountability</p> <p>Listening to oppressed people helps each of us understand our privileged selves, even if the message doesn’t resonate.</p>

Both/And Thinking From a Polarity Management Perspective

Based on the work of Barry Johnson, PhD and Polarity Management Associates and modified from a presentation by Beth Applegate.

Polarities are energy systems that are:

1. Unavoidable
2. Unsolvable
3. Indestructible
4. Unstoppable



Scenario 1

The social justice committee at a UU church is meeting to discuss a decision about making a public statement in support of Black Lives Matter, believing the movement has been sidetracked since the 2016 election. The committee chair has been talking to some of the Black congregants and is proposing that the congregation place a BLM flag up in front of the church, an action that had not yet been taken. The minister has been preaching for weeks about the importance of standing up for those who are being targeted in the U.S. One committee member is really uncomfortable with the preaching, believing the BLM base group uses a racially separate model, not a multi-racial model. Another member expresses concern that there have been complaints from some congregants that they don't want to come to church anymore until the overt attention toward politics stops. Another member mentions concern about how divisive this conversation appears to be. The committee chair tries to convince those who are skeptical that this action would be an enactment of their faith.

Scenario 2

A group of white friends are having lunch together after church. A couple of the friends begin to talk about how the social justice committee has been so successful in making changes that they don't recognize the service anymore. They complain about the new musical director, how they don't know the songs, and that the sermons seem to be more story-telling than informative. One person says things are changing too much, and that it's only trying to cater to the folks of color. The person then suggests that the 10AM service should stay traditional, and the new contemporary service should occur at 8AM. Another couple of the friends try to argue that the new music has helped them experience the church in a new way, and they appreciate that change might be necessary if they want a truly multi-racial congregation.

Scenario 3

A group of community members feel called to use the term white supremacy more explicitly when talking about racism and racial justice efforts in the church. Some members have voiced their discomfort with the language to the minister. They believe the language is too extreme (conjuring horrible images of the KKK). They also believe it implies a sense of judgment and makes the white congregants feel bad about being white. They said they support racial equity initiatives, but they feel really uncomfortable. They question if there is room for their perspective in the dialogue.

- Where do you locate yourself in the scenario? What resonates?
- What tension(s) are playing out in the scenario?
- In an effort to build bridges, what elements of each person's position can be validated?
- How can language and ideas derived from "both/and" thinking support this situation?

Scenario 4

An Allies for Racial Equity group recently sponsored a speaker to deliver a presentation to their predominantly white congregation that included a strong message against colorblindness within a discussion of racial identity development. The majority of participants readily acknowledged the problems associated with the colorblindness stance after the presentation, but did not agree that replacing it with race consciousness was a good alternative. A set of attendees spoke up, one after the other, and offered comments suggesting that 1) culture is a much bigger issue than race, 2) we're really all just human and need to begin focusing on our similarities to work against injustice, and 3) race is socially constructed and needs to be deconstructed, not strengthened by people identifying as white. Several members of the hosting group were dismayed, interpreting the participants' responses as distancing themselves from taking their racial position seriously.

Scenario 5

A group of white UU church members have been inspired by the last two years of protests, are aligned with SURJ, and want to take action for racial justice. They live in a predominantly white area, their church has very few congregants of color, and they don't have a relationship with the few people of color-led advocacy organizations that exist in their area. The members of the group are in conflict over their next steps. Given recent events, published articles, and calls from leadership, one subset of the group believes they should approach a people of color-led organization in their area and ask them for direction. Another subset recognizes how much each of them need to learn in order to do this work well, as they're all relatively new to the issues. This subgroup would like to start with consciousness-raising activities focused on educating themselves. Adding to their confusion is that each subgroup includes at least one individual who has a long-term relationship with a person of color who affirms their position.

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Note: If you'd like to discuss any of these issues further, I will be at the UU Bookstore at booth #204 at 3PM and 6:30PM Thursday for book signings. After that, I will be at the All Souls Church (Tulsa, OK) booth for the rest of GA. Also, I would also be happy to stay in touch after this event. Please feel free to email me and/or subscribe to my monthly newsletter at shellytochluk.com. Each month I send out links of useful resources. Finally, AWARE-LA has developed a set of free resources to support groups who want to create white affinity groups, but are struggling with issues of accountability, logistics, foundational structures, etc. Please see <https://www.awarela.org/toolkit/> for more info.