

Recommendation

The ARLT has been tasked to measure Unity's progress towards becoming an anti-racist institution, and embedding anti-racism into the ongoing work of the church. Regarding our past year's efforts in executing this mission, you may read more below. However, the most important insight we have gained is that our attempts at measurement — worthy and worthwhile as they may be — recall the old parable about the five blind men trying to describe an elephant. We can speak to some of the details, but the larger picture of Unity's embrace and embedding of the work of anti-racism is something of a mystery. What is the sum of these parts? What does the elephant look like?

The need to answer this question has never been more urgent. The ideology of white supremacy is being pressed upon the country in a more overt and threatening manner than any time in the past forty years. At the same time, awareness of this ideology's insidious and pervasive role in our society is also growing. In its more insidious guise, white supremacy provoked a major leadership crisis in American Unitarian-Universalism.

Closer to home, Unity's Congregational Survey has revealed a significant and continuing gap between how our white families and families of color view Unity's progress in fulfilling its ends. At every level, both the peril of white supremacy and the opportunity to confront it have never been more pressing. Add to this the fact that Unity is on the verge of a transition in leadership, and the imperative to decisively, and steadily, continue to build an anti-racist community is clearer still.

Our primary recommendation is that the Board of Trustees ensure that the church has a clearly-articulated vision of what it means to be an anti-racist institution, and a documented, integrated strategic plan designed to fulfill that vision.

We believe a documented strategic plan should include the following:

- A fact-based assessment of the current situation including congregational attitudes
- Identification of elements required for success
- Clear priorities, with clear choices about where and how the church will move forward
- Planned, integrated actions that are consistent with the situation, objectives and resources
- An execution timeline that reflects appropriate urgency, with clear and credible milestones
- Clearly assigned accountabilities

The strategic plan should also address the issue of the upcoming leadership transition and document the strategies that the church leadership will use to ensure the viability and maintenance of Unity as an anti-racist organization through and beyond the transition period.

ARLT Annual Report, 2016-2017

Area Reports

The ARLT devised a set of questions, and assigned individual members to interview representatives from these three areas: Executive Director, Adult Education and Community Outreach Teams, and Ministerial/Worship Team. (The fourth area, Religious Education, will be part of next year's reporting.) Summaries of these interviews follow, below. We found each area to be fully cognizant of, and deeply engaged in, the challenges of incorporating and extending Unity's commitment to anti-racism. However, though these interviews very informative and useful in establishing baselines for each area's future efforts, they highlighted the need to develop a more coherent, overarching strategy.

Executive Director

The Executive Director's role in moving Unity Church toward achieving its vision of becoming an anti-racist organization is primarily in the areas of:

- Control of the financial and physical resources of the organization;
- Administration and support, including education and training, for the human resources of the organization;
- Documentation of the policies and processes of the organization.

A significant way that the ED supports the vision is by being deliberate and thoughtful in how Unity shares its physical space with other groups. The ED works to ensure that Unity is responsive, transparent and welcoming to communities of color who inquire about using our space. This is also an important way that Unity builds partnerships with communities of color. Unity has become an important resource to the community, with that role growing since 2012. Because of our intimate and trusting relationship with BLM, Unity has been a source of refuge and renewal for activists and organizers in the movement. Unity Church is home to The Circle of Peace movement, Church of the Larger Fellowship, Black Lives UU, and Above Every Name. Unity's proximity to the Governor's Mansion is, in itself, an asset to community groups. (For example, we provided space for Leon Wang's activist group for pre-march activities before they went to protest at the mansion.) If a group cannot afford our standard fees we work with them to figure something out, and have discounted fees, or even provided space for free (as in the case of Black Lives Matter). Unity is on a list of churches committed to housing individual(s) seeking sanctuary and has created a comfortable space, including a shower, for this purpose.

The ED also supports Unity's anti-racist vision by being deliberate in how and with whom we spend our money. Policy J is perhaps the most prominent example of how anti-racism is embedded in the church's policies. If Unity spends more than \$2,500 annually with a vendor, or if Unity is hiring a new vendor, management is required to ask the Policy J questions. There are 5 criteria, including minority hiring, sustainability practices, local engagement, worker's equity in fair compensation, and competitive fees for goods and services. Policy J was applied this year in the refinancing of the church's \$1.95M long-term note, and the processes for hiring a consultant to help us work through the upcoming transitions in church leadership. Policy J also requires an annual internal assessment of POC on staff and POC salaries, which is reported to the Board of Trustees.

ARLT Annual Report, 2016-2017

Moving into next year, the ARLT will continue to build on its understanding of this area by considering the ways in which the budget does or does not reflect an anti-racism vision, how well the church has documented anti-racist policies and expectations, and how the anti-racist vision and aspiration are incorporated into the leadership transition work.

Adult Education and Community Outreach

The Adult Education and Community Outreach area includes:

- Ongoing adult education efforts, such as Wellspring Wednesdays;
- Special educational programs, such as Beloved Conversations;
- Community Outreach teams, including the Restorative Justice Ministry Team, Affordable Housing Team, etc.

In 2016-2017, Wellspring Wednesday continued to devote 25% of its programming to anti-racism/racial justice issues. Examples from the past year include the three-part “Reading, Writing, and Talking About Race” series. The “Old, Strong Stories” series has provided an opportunity to reach out and explore beyond theological borders.

The Congregational Book Read has provided another opportunity to present anti-racist perspectives to adult congregants; the last two selections have been *Between the World and Me*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates (2016), and “*All the Real Indians Died Off*” and *20 Other Myths About Native Americans*, by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Dina Gilio-Whitaker. Indigenous communities’ issues have been the focus of other recent efforts, including a tour of Dakota sacred sites, and Unity’s support for (and members’ participation in) the Standing Rock protests.

The Outreach Teams are becoming “increasingly aware of the intersectionality of their work.” The Evergreen Quilters have raised money for the Jeremiah Project and Obama Elementary, and the Affordable Housing Ministry Team continues its longstanding partnerships with organizations like the Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative and Project Home. The Generosity Ministry Team has been asked to contribute to the Executive Team’s reporting on Policy J.

Looking ahead, the Executive Team’s Anti-Racism/Beloved Community committee is considering IDI training for Outreach Teams. The Outreach Teams themselves are, in some sense, Unity’s “best-kept secrets,” and though they have been incorporated into the “Finding Yourself at Unity” curriculum, the congregation might be made more aware of the work they do. Finally, a “life-span faith development” program is being developed in collaboration with KP Hong. The guiding question is, “What would Religious Education look like if it didn’t stop at 18?” The aim is to build a bridge between RE and adult education, including aligning calendars.

Ministerial / Worship Team

The Ministerial / Worship Team includes:

- Unity’s ministers
- Director of Music Ministry
- Ministerial interns

ARLT Annual Report, 2016-2017

The following actions have been taken in the last year to embed anti-racism actions, teachings, and messages in the work of the Worship Team.

Consistent with the mission of the church to become an anti-racist community, the Worship Team coordinates all aspects of ministry, including readings, music, sermons, offerings, etc. to embed anti-racist themes into all church programming. An anti-racist focus is also encouraged in the contributions of Worship Associates. Unitarian-Universalist theology provides a basis for holding the ministers accountable to this work, and to educate and hold accountable the congregation to contribute to Unity's goal of being an anti-racist institution.

The introduction of the evening group that combined the ministry of Unity with the ministry of Above Every Name is an example of a church program that combined theology, opportunity, and relationship in a vehicle for congregants to deepen and broaden their understanding of the theology and religious traditions of an African American church. The Worship Team has also created year-long programming that incorporates an anti-racist message into each week's church activities. In addition to weekly services, examples include films and guest speakers

Unity's music ministry supports worship themes and works to broaden the scope of anti-racism by introducing choirs and musicians who take part in services, as well as congregants, to other cultures' and peoples' music and musical expression. These efforts expand the choirs' repertoire and appreciation of different types of music, and bring to the congregants a deeper and richer understanding of diverse cultures. At the same time, care is taken to respect these traditions, and to avoid cultural appropriation. The music ministry has also embarked on a creating a filing system of all music offered in the church, and has suggested that cultural annotations could be included in this filing system.

There is a tension between nourishing anti-racist activism and remaining cognizant of congregants' fears and discomfort with the work. The Worship Team is aware that balance is necessary to continue the progress of individual members, the congregation as a whole, and the church as an institution in embracing Unity's anti-racism efforts. It is necessary to step into some level of discomfort in order to grow, but creating too much discomfort will cause some congregants (and choir members) to back away.

Because anti-racism work requires a steadfast commitment, the Worship Team carries on this effort on a number of fronts, including:

- Setting a tone through the integration of readings reflecting the global majority into worship services
- Choosing anti-racist books for the bookstall / Offering programs on anti-racist themes / Encouraging congregants to speak and act for social justice, and for restorative justice
- Centering some of the sermons on race based disparities
- Creating smaller, more intimate worship venues for congregants to explore and build a genuine anti-racist movement among congregants (for example, with Above Every Name).