



Mission and Goals of the First Unitarian Toward Justice Project

We Unitarian Universalists of First Unitarian Church of St. Louis feel it is our spiritual and moral obligation to work to end human suffering that is caused by privilege and racial injustice. Working to heal a culture of ongoing human and economic degradation is necessary for the mutual survival and benefit of all. As a religious people we are committed to compassion and justice. We will 'Side with Love' as a congregation and accept personal responsibility for racial injustice.

We promise to educate ourselves, the congregation and the community about systems of oppression, to recognize and make known oppression, and work to dismantle such systems through:

Education

Witnessing

Advocacy

Community Organizing

To be as effective as possible we will link with other community groups. While our primary focus is to act locally, we understand that all oppression is linked and, therefore, support such efforts nationally and globally as well.

We understand that this work can be uncomfortable. We encourage and invite all to join us as we endeavor to live out our religious lives (based on our current understanding) expressed in these words by Theodore Parker:

Be ours a religion which like sunshine; goes everywhere;

its temple, all space;

its shrine, the good heart;

its creed, all truth;

its ritual; works of love;

it profession of faith, divine living

Anti- Racist Religious Education & Solidarity Training

Week One (Discussion on Thursday, July 16th @ 7:00 PM):

The African Americans: Many Rivers To Cross Episodes 1 & 2 (AMAZON PRIME/KANOPY)

We begin with a PBS Series documentary presented by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. that spans 500 years of Black history, struggle, and achievement. It's accessible in full with a subscription on Amazon Prime, or free through your library card with Hoopla or Kanopy. You will need to register at the Hoopla or Kanopy websites if not already, at no cost.

Week Two (Discussion on Thursday, July 23rd @ 7:00 PM):

Exiled From History: America's Maroons (2 Parts) - https://youtu.be/ot_b2B18ekA
<https://youtu.be/eZ8-IkZCV-k>

We continue with this fascinating two part student thesis documentary on the rarely discussed communities of liberation formed in the American wilderness by Africans and Indigenous peoples who refused to be subjugated and enslaved by European Colonizers.

Week Three (Discussion on Thursday, July 30th @ 7:00 PM):

PBS American Experience - John Brown's Holy War - https://youtu.be/nWS_Jrjh11s

We spend time learning about one of the most influential, enigmatic, and under discussed figures in American history. John Brown's connections to Missouri, as well as his intimately intertwined legacy with Unitarian activism will be highlighted and discussed.

Week Four (Discussion on Thursday, August 6th @ 7:00 PM):

Ken Burns' The Civil War Episode 1 - <https://youtu.be/KlseQlnk3R8>

We conclude our first month by discussing this pilot episode of Burns' classic Grammy & Emmy Award winning series. We'll understand the cultural context surrounding the outbreak of the American Civil War, aspects of which we are, unfortunately, still waging today.

Week Five (Discussion on Thursday, August 13th @ 7:00 PM):

The African Americans: Many Rivers To Cross Episode 3 (AMAZON PRIME/KANOPY)
Slavery By Another Name - <https://youtu.be/UcCxsLDma2o>

We rejoin Henry Louis Gates, Jr. as he guides us through the Civil War, Emancipation, and Reconstruction. We also watch a PBS film that helps us understand that despite the abolishment of Institutional Slavery, the Jim Crow systems of exploitation, built in cooperation with American corporations, have paved the way to mass criminalization and incarceration of Black and Brown bodies that is only just now reaching it's apex.

Week Six (Discussion on Thursday, August 20th @ 7:00 PM):

The African Americans: Many Rivers To Cross Episodes 4 (AMAZON PRIME/KANOPY)

PBS: Living St. Louis: East St. Louis Massacre - <https://youtu.be/7lZPGL1u0XI>

Two Sermons by Rev. David C. Carter

On Egbert Ethelred Brown - <https://youtu.be/Or9BjU24sx8>

On John Haynes Holmes - <https://youtu.be/vfr450LjeY4>

We continue with a PBS documentary that balances the brutal realities of the Jim Crow era with the cultural revolution of the Harlem Renaissance. We also focus on our own local history of violent racial unrest by learning about the East St. Louis Massacre. We also place these realities in the context of our own theological tradition by watching two sermons by retired Rev. David Carter at the First Unitarian Church of Wichita about a Black Unitarian pioneer and the white ally who tried to support him.

Week Seven (Discussion on Thursday, August 27th @ 7:00 PM):

The African Americans: Many Rivers To Cross Episodes 5 (AMAZON PRIME/KANOPY)

Black America Since MLK: And Still I Rise Episode 1 (AMAZON PRIME)

We begin our examination of the 20th century Civil Rights Movement by seeing the various paths that led to the Edmund Pettus Bridge into Selma, Alabama. We'll also examine the paths that diverged from it and planted the seeds of the Movement for Black Lives nearly 60 years later.

Week Eight (Discussion on Thursday, September 3rd @ 7:00 PM):

Face to Face: Malcolm X & MLK, Jr. - <https://youtu.be/3ZrcTENIxo4>

A Call From Selma - <https://youtu.be/klNPO8X-q3Q>

Home of the Brave - The Story of Viola Liuzzo (AMAZON PRIME - RENTAL)

READ - Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Eulogy for James Reeb

We conclude our second month by comparing the legacies of two of America's most treasured intellectuals, Martin Luther King, Jr. & El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. We'll be introduced to the unique and vital perspectives of Dr. James H. Cone. We'll also understand the immeasurable legacy of white ally Unitarian Universalists who sacrificed their lives for the sake of Black Liberation.

Week Nine (Discussion on Thursday, September 10th @ 7:00 PM):

I Am Not Your Negro (AMAZON PRIME/KANOPY)

We begin our third month at the intersection of Black Liberation & Queer Liberation with this award winning film constructed around an unfinished manuscript from James Baldwin in his attempt to process the shattering loss of his brothers in the Civil Rights Movement.

Week Ten (Discussion on Thursday, September 17th @ 7:00 PM):

Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin (KANOPY)

We examine the life of a man whose religious convictions, skin color, and sexuality made him a perpetual outsider in the fight for intersectional liberation. Rustin's contributions and influence are inestimable, while his legacy remains complicated, due to his strict spiritual convictions of non-violence in an increasingly chaotic conflict between White Heteronormative Supremacy and the Black Power Movement.

Week Eleven (Discussion on Thursday, September 24th @ 7:00 PM):

Before Stonewall: The Making of Gay & Lesbian Community (AMAZON PRIME - RENTAL)

In The Life: Historical Blindness - <https://youtu.be/DQXEbohS8F8>

We face and try to transcend the tragic implications of Queer erasure and Structural Heterosexism in our shared history, by looking at the often hidden legacy of LGBTQ contributions to art, music, intellectualism, activism, and culture in America.

Week Twelve (Discussion on Thursday, October 1st @ 7:00 PM):

PBS American Experience- Stonewall Uprising- <https://youtu.be/MIbAVS-cDBs>

Three Interviews with Rev. Malcolm Boyd -

(1970's TV) <https://youtu.be/U9EqHE3oWVQ>

(Reflections on the poet James Broughton) <https://youtu.be/25Kd2bRVFko>

(Reflections on his Life) <https://youtu.be/k1LQbFDRTXM>

We conclude our third month with an examination of the inciting incident of the Queer Rights Movement and the impact it had on the dignity of generations of LGBTQ persons. We'll also watch interviews with a fascinating Episcopal Priest who was not only hugely influential on white allies in Black Liberation but also at the forefront of Queer Theological thought.

Week Thirteen (Discussion on Thursday, October 8th @ 7:00 PM):

The Death & Life of Marsha P. Johnson (NETFLIX)

Interview with Andrea Jenkins - <https://youtu.be/ZsRGnzWfo5I>

Andrea Jenkins TED Talk - <https://youtu.be/ZEC7JuImENg>

We learn about the fascinating life of a Black Trans Liberationist who was not only one of the first agitators at the Stonewall Uprising, but also at the forefront of advocacy for homeless Queer youth, a member of the Gay Liberation Front, and instrumental in the ACT UP movement to combat AIDS. We'll also watch interviews with Andrea Jenkins, the first Black Trans Woman elected to public office in the U.S., carrying on this tradition of activism and liberation to make Minneapolis a more just place to live and thrive in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

Week Fourteen (Discussion on Thursday, October 15th @ 7:00 PM):

Angela Davis & The Soledad Brothers - <https://youtu.be/WFGi3syBB-w>

Wilderness Journey: Black Empowerment & Racial Justice in UUA 1967-1970 -

<https://youtu.be/yDsD3mEtwjM>

We continue to examine the intersection between Black & Queer Liberation with a documentary from 1971 about Angela Davis and her career as a Prison Abolitionist, Socialist Revolutionary, and Black Power Intellectual. We will also see the impact that these movements had on racial cooperation and multi-cultural worship in Unitarian Universalism by learning more about The Empowerment Controversy.

Week Fifteen (Discussion on Thursday, October 22nd @ 7:00 PM):

How to Survive a Plague (AMAZON PRIME - RENTAL)

We watch a film that only becomes more terrifyingly relevant with every passing year. This documentary chronicles the ACT UP & TAG movements as they waged a multi-pronged struggle to affirm the worth and dignity of Queer peoples and to fight against a worldwide epidemic that has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

Week Sixteen (Discussion on Thursday, October 29th @ 7:00 PM):

Trembling Before G-d- <https://youtu.be/Ts7bhOau0Wc>

We conclude our fourth month with a film that highlights the theological struggle many Queer peoples have in maintaining their sense of self amidst religious traditions of repressive heteronormativity. This award winning film looks at this issue through the lens of Conservative Judaism, but could easily apply to struggles we still face in many of our UU congregations today.

Week Seventeen (Discussion on Thursday, November 5th @ 7:00 PM):

Ava DuVernay's 13th (NETFLIX)

We return to a recurring theme in the history of race in America, that of criminal justice, mass incarceration, and the corporate-prison industrial complex. The system of peonage, debt incarceration, and racially biased policing and prosecution that began in the aftermath of Reconstruction has only just now reached it's apex. What can we do to dismantle it?

Week Eighteen (Discussion on Thursday, November 12th @ 7:00 PM):

Ken Burn's Central Park Five (AMAZON PRIME/KANOPY)

We watch the real life story behind the award winning series When They See Us, about five teenagers whose lives have been irreparably shaped by racism and corruption in our criminal justice system. We also see that the White Supremacist voices who prosecuted and persecuted them, are now at the highest levels of power in American leadership today.

Week Nineteen (Discussion on Thursday, November 19th @ 7:00 PM):

White Like Me - https://youtu.be/uv_Y9ah049Y

You Can't Be Neutral On A Moving Train - <https://youtu.be/vwuJjWE-XrA>

We have a legacy of radical white straight cis allies in the struggle for Black & Queer Liberation that we can be proudly influenced by. We'll discuss the work of Tim Wise and Howard Zinn and what the responsibilities, theologies, and activities of a transformative white ally could be.

Week Twenty (Discussion on Thursday, December 3rd @ 7:00 PM):

Time-The Kalief Browder Story (NETFLIX)

We'll examine the tragic story and all too short life of Kalief Browder, often unmentioned and unnamed in the Black Lives Matter movement, because his was a police killing of a different sort. Browder was caught up in the labyrinthine absurdity of a racist criminal justice system which perpetuated such trauma against him that it led to his death by suicide. A story that shows that sometimes the system can kill you without even using a gun, a knee, or a club.

Week Twenty One (Discussion on Thursday, December 10th @ 7:00 PM):

Whose Streets (HULU/KANOPY)

Ferguson Activists & National LGBTQ Task Force - https://youtu.be/Ri_alcpT8g0

Of Black and Blue: The Journey of African American Police - <https://youtu.be/67gJv6JqEaM>

We conclude the documentary portion of our series with an award winning film in which the harrowing aftermath of the murder of Michael Brown is placed into the context of St. Louis' centuries long legacy of racism. We'll also watch an activist presentation that shows that from this tragedy a new civil rights movement, a new Black, Queer, and Poor People's Liberation movement was born on the streets of our own city. We'll also watch a revealing film about Black Lives in St. Louis law enforcement and the moral and mortal peril that involves.

Week Twenty Two (Discussion on Thursday, January 7th @ 7:00 PM):

The Cry of Black Blood: The Rise of Black Liberation Theology -

https://youtu.be/P_Q768HvabU

We begin a month of theological reflection, pairing our comprehensive historical knowledge with our Unitarian Universalist principles & sources, to establish just what Liberation Theology might look like for us in this time and place. We begin with the late, great Dr. James H. Cone, the father of Black Liberation Theology in a lecture that looks back at a lifetime of spiritual struggle.

Week Twenty Three (Discussion on Thursday, January 14th @ 7:00 PM):

Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed: The Sankofa Moment - https://youtu.be/AeXJhIMuA_c

We continue our theological reflection with Mark Morrison-Reed, who has done more to preserve and resurrect the rich and often frustrated history of Black Unitarian Universalist theology than almost anyone else. This lecture can help us to put in context our faith's own, often insidious and hidden, racism and how we might transcend it.

Week Twenty Four (Discussion on Thursday, January 21st @ 7:00 PM):

Cornel West: On Being a Chekovian Christian & Blues Man - <https://youtu.be/EwPCJ9WpH7E>

We dive deep into theological waters with the poetic "blues man" of contemporary philosophy, theology, and political discourse, Dr. Cornel West. West shows us what a deliberative and courageous mode of critical thinking can really do to our souls and our faith, should we be fearless enough to engage in it.

Week Twenty Five (Discussion on Thursday, January 28th @ 7:00 PM):

Whose Faith Is It Anyway? A Black UU Theology - https://youtu.be/yLCH1tl_fmE

We conclude our series with this rich & inspiring discourse on the multi-cultural future of our chosen faith with voices of Black Unitarian Universalists in the vanguard and a discussion of how we might join them.

A.R.R.E.S.T. COMPANION BOOK SERIES

Month One: *Stamped From The Beginning* - Ibram X. Kendi

Month Two: *The Fire Next Time* - James Baldwin

Month Three: *Women, Race, & Class/ Women, Culture, & Politics* - Angela Y. Davis

Month Four: *Black Pioneers In A White Denomination/ Darkening the Doorways* - Mark Morrison-Reed

Month Five: *We Were Eight Years In Power-* Ta Nehisi Coates

Month Six: *Soul Work: Anti-Racist Theologies in Dialogue* - Nancy P. Jones & Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley