

Black Lives Matter Soul Matters Reflection Packet



Something Feels Different This Time

Carey McDonald, UUA Director of Outreach

Something feels different this time. I mourned for Mike and Freddie, I couldn't breathe when Eric died, I said Sandra's name, I was so angry about Tamir, and I just wept after Charleston. And yet this week has been a whole other experience, the sadness and also the trauma, the bleakness, the cortisol, the G-force of American racism leaving me reeling. My gut in knots, my vision blurry, a dull ringing in my ears.

Maybe it's the wake of #Orlando, which drained us in heartbreak and wrung out our tears. The one-two punch of #Alton and #Philando, the nauseating videos I willed myself to bear witness to for a split second before turning away. Their deaths left us no time to brace for the visceral impact of #Dallas. I stayed up till 1 am on Twitter, struggling to understand what it would mean if the shooter claimed the mantle of black liberation for his assassinations. Which of course he did, thereby getting it exactly backwards. The tragic threads of mass shooting and racialized violence have merged into a single epic American sickness. #HeartbreakWeek.

I don't know what to say, what to do, or what to feel. I realized I am grateful for feeling anything at all, it would be so easy to be numb. And I take some comfort that so many Americans of all races and backgrounds are sharing the pain. Maybe there is hope. I pray for the families of the victims, wondering who will be next. I see a fellow man of color crossing the street and I think "I'm glad you're still here, brother. Please take care." In my life I have personally been profiled, arrested, stopped, hassled and had the bomb squad called on me, and it's been much worse for so many black and brown people I know. I'm a cisgender American citizen. I'm pretty light-skinned. But you never know when the specter of race will arise to suck the wind out of you, figuratively or literally, and that waiting and fearing takes its toll.

But something is different this time. I don't want to mourn, I don't want to attend a vigil, I don't want to tweet about #blacklivesmatter, even though I do all those things. I don't want to encourage white folks to educate other white folks about their privileged positions, as though this is an information problem and not a heart problem. I don't want to act as if the revolution is around the corner, waiting for this world to be swept away and replaced by the beloved community, if only we believe. And, with apologies

to the NAACP email list, I definitely don't want to call my member of Congress and tell her to support the Law Enforcement Trust and Integrity Act, a well-intentioned bill that is grotesquely out of proportion to the scale of violence, hatred and fear afflicting my community.

What I want is to see some light up above. I want to know a different reality is possible, I want my hope to be more than an article of faith. We might not be able to eliminate racism, but we can end the cradle-to-prison pipeline. We might not be able to purge poverty from America, but we can stop it from being criminalized and keep governments and corporations from lining their pockets by preying on the disenfranchised. We might not be able to bring about peace on earth, but we can stop our people from being killed in the streets. We're not trying to save the world, we're just trying to live.

We need an end to policing as we know it so that we can focus on helping people in crisis. We have to do away with the prison industrial complex to invest in restorative justice and rehabilitation. We must make it possible for everyone to have a family, get an education, find a job and grow old. If you do not believe these things are possible in your lifetime, you better expand your imagination. I cannot be trapped any longer between the utopian and the mundane. I have to believe actual, tangible, live-saving changes are possible.

This country is blessed with a new generation of courageous and creative organizers. A big shout out to my friends who are making the Movement for Black Lives happen, and to the ancestors who made it possible. And as progressives we have strong networks of dollars and volunteers across the country. The future has a lot going for it.

But right now I'm talking about some next level shit. We're all going to have to work a whole lot harder. We're going to take risks, and we're going to be ruthless about our strategy because we do not have time to waste. We have a duty to fight, and a duty to win. I'm not interested in going down swinging, and that's keeping it 100. If you want what I want, come find me. I'll be here, straining towards the light up above.

I'm starting with this book - <https://www.amazon.com/This-Uprising-Nonviolent-Shaping-Twenty-First/dp/1568587333> - required reading for the Organizing on the Side of Love online course from Standing on the Side of Love. The struggle continues, and is only beginning.

Many Things Are True At The Same Time

Karen Hatch, Rochester, NY

Many things are true at the same time. We cannot pick one truth and decide that it tells the whole story.

1a) Police officers willingly put their lives on the line every day in the service of their communities.

1b) Black men are more likely than white men to be killed by police officers.

<http://mobile.nytimes.com/blogs/takingnote/2015/09/04/the-real-story-of-race-and-police-killings/?referer=>)

2a) Police officers interact with their communities in positive ways - buying basketball hoops, sitting on a stoop with kids, providing groceries.

2b) Black and brown communities are policed differently than white communities.

<http://m.motherjones.com/politics/2015/07/police-shootings-traffic-stops-excessive-fines>)

3a) Many gun owners are responsible and never violent.

3b) We have too many guns in our country and it leads to a different kind of violence.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-34996604>)

4a) Most white people believe that they are "color blind."

4b) The institution of racism makes it possible for even the strongest white allies to participate in it. (<http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/at-the-edge/2015/05/06/institutional-racism-is-our-way-of-life>)

5a) I believe that because I can see the institution of racism somewhat clearly that I am not racist.

5b) I am. So are you. (And sexist. And classist. And...) That's what makes the institution of discrimination insidious.

6a) Our constitution guarantees freedom and opportunity to all.

6b) Our justice system and our education system are designed primarily for the success of white, straight, middle- and upper-class people. (<http://theconversation.com/how-american-schools-are-making-inequality-worse-49270>)

7a) "Love is love is love is love is love."

7b) Love is not enough. We need people in our country capable of thinking critically about difficult issues that make us feel uncomfortable.

8a) All lives matter. Duh.

8b) The concept behind #blacklivesmatter is necessary and important and relevant.

(<http://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/7922482.html> AND

https://m.reddit.com/r/explainlikeimfive/comments/3du1qm/eli5_why_is_it_so_controversial_when_someone_says/ct8pei1 AND <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/all-lives-matter-and-willful-ignorance>)

9a) Violence and crime in our inner cities is an issue in our country.

9b) Our willingness to be silent and complicit in efforts to continue the scourge of segregation is a primary building block in the institution of racism. Hundreds of years of both de jure and de facto segregation enforces substandard conditions of employment opportunities, housing, and schooling. Segregation yields poverty; poverty yields hopelessness. Certainly the intersection of race, segregation, and poverty yields unequal policy making. The confluence yields violence.

(<https://tcf.org/content/report/architecture-of-segregation/> AND

<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/10/inner-city-violence-in-the-age-of-mass-incarceration/382154/> AND <http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/06/12/magazine/choosing-a-school-for-my-daughter-in-a-segregated-city.html?referer=>)

10a) I love you guys. Seriously. You are good people doing hard work in your communities.

10b) While I try to use my economic privilege to change the system, I stay largely silent in an attempt not to offend you. It makes me complicit. Elie Wiesel would note that my silence makes me a tool for injustice. He would be right. (<http://www.eliewiesel.org/nobelprizespeech.aspx>)

Stats wiz Nate Silver: For black Americans, US is about as dangerous as Rwanda

<http://www.rawstory.com/2015/07/stats-guru-nate-silver-for-black-americans-us-is-about-as-dangerous-as-rwanda/>

"The murder rate for white Americans is similar to the murder rate for people living in Finland, Chile or Israel. The murder rate for black Americans, on the other hand, is similar to the rate found "in developing countries that are war zones even, like Myanmar, or Rwanda, Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, places that have vast disorder."

Something more is required of us now. What?

Michelle Alexander

<https://medium.com/embrace-race/something-more-is-required-of-us-now-what-58e8ec2885b8#.doop32krq>

"I think we all know, deep down, that something more is required of us now...more is required than purely reactive protest and politics...This nation was founded on the idea that some lives don't matter. Freedom and justice for

some, not all. That's the foundation. Yes, progress has been made in some respects, but it hasn't come easy. There's an unfinished revolution waiting to be won."

Rev. William Barber Speech at UUA General Assembly 2016

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=aLDkYPGqOSq>

10 Reasons I Don't Want to Be Your White Ally

by Colleen, blessedarethefeet.com

<http://www.blessedarethefeet.com/10-reasons-i-dont-want-to-be-your-white-ally/>

"If I am what they have for an ally, well then, they don't have very much at all. But mostly, if I look honestly at myself, what I am saying to them is, "I value my fear more than I value your pain. I would rather sit in my own mild discomfort than embrace your lament."

Race, Truth and Our Two Realities

From The New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/11/opinion/race-truth-and-our-two-realities.html?mwrs=Email>

"The facts tell me that black lives don't matter. How is it we can disagree?"

Study Supports Suspicion That Police Are More Likely to Use Force on Blacks

by TIMOTHY WILLIAMS, nytimes.com

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/08/us/study-supports-suspicion-that-police-use-of-force-is-more-likely-for-blacks.html>

"The study of thousands of use-of-force episodes from police departments across the nation has concluded what many people have long thought, but which could not be proved because of a lack of data: African-Americans are far more likely than whites and other groups to be the victims of use of force by the police, even when racial disparities in crime are taken into account."

I, Racist

<https://thsppl.com/i-racist-538512462265#.jj9s06jt6>

"But here is the irony, here's the thing that all the angry Black people know, and no calmly debating White people want to admit: The entire discussion of race in America centers around the protection of White feelings... White people and Black people are not having a discussion about race. Black people, thinking as a group, are talking about living in a racist system. White people, thinking as individuals, refuse to talk about "I, racist" and instead protect their own individual and personal goodness. In doing so, they reject the existence of racism."

Black Privilege (CUPSI 2015 Finals) – YouTube - Crystal Valentine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rYL83kHQ8Y>

Darkest Truth - Mia Wright - poetry at All Souls Tulsa, Okla. - you tube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQySlgRmmXI>

Why Are We Still Talking About Racism? - video

<https://www.facebook.com/ajplusenglish/videos/595352760606235/>

"I don't think it's gotten better; i think it's gotten more PC..."

Reverse Racism - Aamer Rahman (Fear of a Brown Planet) -
https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=dw_mRaIHb-M&feature=youtu.be

Books for Adults:

- Between The World And Me, by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- The Third Reconstruction: Moral Mondays, Fusion Politics, and the Rise of a New Justice Movement, by William J. Barber II (Beacon Press)
- The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander
- Bailey's Cafe by Gloria Naylor
- The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson
- The Half Has Never Been Told by Edward Baptist
- Bailey's Cafe by Gloria Naylor

Books for Younger Children

- Please, Baby Please
- Shades of Black
- Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman
- Black is Brown is Tan
- Tar Beach

Books for Older Children

- Brown Girl Dreaming
- One Crazy Summer
- Ruby and the Booker Boys series

Take Action!

Action Items From Our UUA: Enough! Time for a Revolution of Values
http://org.salsalabs.com/o/1272/t/0/blastContent.jsp?email_blast_KEY=1348148

15 Things Your City Can Do Right Now to End Police Brutality
<https://mic.com/articles/121572/15-things-your-city-can-do-right-now-to-end-police-brutality#.YnWryEzK0>

Black Lives Matter Just Delivered Their 10 Point Manifesto, and This Is What They Want
<http://politicsbreaking.com/black-lives-matter-just-delivered-10-point-manifesto-want/>