

Dear UUA Board,

Approximately a year after the revelation of discriminatory hiring practices in the UUA and the subsequent resignation of Peter Morales, the Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Board of Trustees writes to thank you for not covering up or excusing what was happening, and for your continuing strong leadership in confronting institutional racism within our denomination.

It would be nice to think that hearing the truth would be a blinding light, a sword that would cut through white supremacist thinking, and instantly set us free. But that would belie the power of the human mind to rationalize and avoid seeing what we have been socialized from birth to not see.

In April 2017, the Cedar Lane Board of Trustees asked our Mosaic Makers committee to draft a letter expressing our support for your brave work amidst the storm of criticism you were receiving and our specific hopes for ongoing support for multicultural work. At the next Board meeting we discussed the draft letter, with responses that very much centered on the use of the term "White Supremacy." Board members came into the conversation with varying degrees of understanding of institutional racism. We engaged in a very real and honest conversation, listening to all points of view. Many of us struggled to come to grips with that hard phrase and the hard concept behind it. We reminded ourselves that the job of the Board is to lead based on our Vision/Mission and not to represent the majority views of the congregation.

Following that meeting, Board members continued to edit the draft letter. Finally, at the May Board meeting, the letter was approved, along with an action item to determine how to share it with the congregation before sending it to the UUA Board. During the transition to a new church fiscal year that communication plan never materialized. The letter was not sent.

In November 2017, a Board member brought up this topic again, asking the Board to reflect on what had (not) happened -- our impact vs our intentions. Many members of the Board had recently participated in Cedar Lane's second White Supremacy Teach-In, where the congregation had reflected on the "White Supremacy Culture" paper by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun. Given that foundation, some Board members realized that our drive to perfectionism had doomed the project. If we had trusted the knowledge of our Mosaic Makers committee, not wordsmithed, and not delayed sending the letter without a congregation discussion, our input might have reached the UUA Board in time to have had some impact. After reflection, we came to see how unconscious White Supremacist ways of operating got in our way.

Cedar Lane's efforts to face our racial biases continued throughout the year. Looking beyond the Board, at that same Teach-In we saw congregational responses ranging along the Intercultural Competency continuum from denial through acceptance, with some expressing bewilderment that we would even need to discuss racism in our congregation, some feeling angry that we talk too much about multiculturalism and anti-racism, and some gaining insights into how White Supremacy works through our default organizational structures.

Our congregation culture has been slowly changing, based on work that has been ongoing for several years. Some church members today are expressing the feeling that Cedar Lane is no longer "their

church.” As part of the church leadership, we are working to find a path where we can provide caring understanding to those who feel alienated, while we continue to advance on the path to grow spiritually as individuals and as a religious community in confronting institutional and internalized white supremacy thinking.

We have seen some recent significant changes. Our Board of Trustees has expressed their desire to lead multicultural change by their example. We have altered the charters for all Board standing committees to provide explicit qualifications for committee membership, to plan for annual open recruitment invitations, and to express the committees’ intentions to strive for diverse membership. We welcome the emergence of a new Cedar Lane group led by people of color who will bring People of Color and Indigenous (POCI) centered topics into open programming. And the congregation has voted to become a physical sanctuary.

We thank you for leading by being vulnerable, and we thank you and Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU) for continuing to call us to transform ourselves and put our principles into action.