



# THE DRUMM BEAT

DIVERSE & REVOLUTIONARY UU MULTICULTURAL MINISTRIES

MAY 2020

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 10

## WRITING FOR MY LIFE

I am writing for my life  
writing so that I can get free  
writing because the world currently feels like a  
prison

I am writing for the black and brown bodies  
in cages  
coughing and crying  
praying to god  
to their ancestors  
to their grandmothers  
to their beloveds

I am writing so that my siblings aren't forgotten  
writing for the elderly  
home afraid of technology  
in homes without visitors  
wondering if I will get it next  
writing for the children  
that don't know whats going on  
being told to leave the safety of classrooms  
hungry and homeless

I am writing for my life  
writing because black and brown bodies are up for  
debate  
writing so that trans bodies can have the voice  
writing so that liberation is now  
a part of the grand plan  
staying at home physical distancing  
listening advocating worshipping

I am writing so that my siblings aren't forgotten  
writing for the children undocumented not illegal  
identifying as lgbtq hiding but not hidden from view  
writing for the elderly making decisions making  
history and making it all up

- Mathew P. Taylor

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### #TBT



Dr. Janice Johnson and  
Rev. Dr. Hope Johnson

# LOVE FROM OUR CHAPLAINS



## Conversation on Death and Dying for UUs of Color with Chaplain Yuri Yamamoto

Tuesday, May 12th 5:30-7:00 pm Pacific  
(8:30 pm Eastern)

We invite you into an intentional space to check-in and share how you are experiencing the covid-19 pandemic. Our focus will be on death and dying. We will be creating space for each of us to share your experience, struggles, feelings, and what sustains or has sustained you when facing death and dying in your family and community. Prepare to be real and brave. This is a space to be vulnerable, supported, and build our community of care.

RSVP: [drobinson@uua.org](mailto:drobinson@uua.org) for online meeting information

## ...a word from your DRUUMM Co-Chaplains, May 2020

Your DRUUMM Co-Chaplain Team well recognizes the need for spiritual care when we move through experiences that require more processing and reflection than usual such as during this pandemic and beyond. Each of us will have different starting points as we find our way through this challenging season.

We have differing religious faiths and expressions of spirituality. We are a community of many ages and stages. We have diverse genders, sexual orientation, sexual expression, abilities—both seen and unseen—racial and ethnic backgrounds, and more....

Although we may think we know “the facts,” we are likely to each discover new truths. The hope is that we will be transformed and will gain new insight and perspectives. Yet, with transformation comes change. And change is usually uncomfortable. Sometimes you simply need to be assured that you are not alone. The DRUUMM Co-Chaplains are the Rev. Danielle Di Bona ([danielle7248@gmail.com](mailto:danielle7248@gmail.com)) and I, the Rev. Dr. Hope Johnson ([YoursHOPE@aol.com](mailto:YoursHOPE@aol.com)).

Know that we are a team and are here for each member of DRUUMM. We offer “listening ears, and loving hearts.”

Yours, HOPE  
The Rev. Dr. Hope Johnson  
The Rev. Daniele DiBona

# I HAVE FOUND THE SOUND

By Dzu Do

My mother passed away a week ago. The night before the nurse was kind enough to leave the phone on speaker so we could tell her not to be afraid. Not sure if she could hear us. She had been in her own world since my father's death 5 years ago. The nurse said she did smile at some point. Her children, her grandchildren and great grandchildren did their best to speak in Vietnamese and English to tell her how much we loved her and that we were there to make her feel safe. We told stories of past and present. We knew she could hear us from somewhere at a distance beyond the reach of the virus. Her journey had been long. In the picture she was this young mother in the middle walking with my father and my sister. Our nanny U Chi was walking in the back with my brother. It must have been a happy time somewhere in Hanoi after the French was allowed to return to VietNam after World War II.

They were walking toward the unknown as a few years later they left North VietNam as refugees to move to Saigon not wanting to live under Communist rule. Ten years later they had me in Saigon while VietNam was fighting for its future with America. My mother would take me to the Buddhist temple to hear Dharma teaching and it was there that I first heard the sound of the monk chanting for a peaceful place beyond war and suffering. When Saigon failed we were separated but later reunited in America to start a life in the land of new dream.

From North VietNam to South and to America, my mother had always face many unknown and uncertainties of having to take care of my father and her family. The sound of the Buddhist chant had always made her feel safe. But it was not enough to ensure a life in the new land. She could take care of my father but not her youngest son. I know that it broke her heart when she let me go to live with another woman.



My American mother could love me in practical ways that my mother could not. My mother was that practical. Sharing me with another woman was her way of ensuring a safer future for me in America.

I did feel more safe having 2 mothers. One mother gave me the sound of peace and salvation and one gave me the sound to navigate the new world. I embodied the vibrations of these 2 women in my heart as I learn to open my eyes, walk, slide and then swim. One maternal bond was natural and the other was thru learning and experiencing. In time I was able to find my own safety in the Artistic ideals and expressions of the new land. But this was strange to my VietNameese mother. The sound of safety given to me by my American mother was unrecognizable to her. She could not recognize her own in this new sound. She rejected the possibility that this sound could make me safe. The winter of my Junior year from Amherst College, I told her I could no longer stand at the thought of another boring and dry science class for pre-med and what I really wanted to do was to be a Figurative Sculptor. She spoke to me while washing the dishes with her back toward me that if I were to do that don't expect to see her again.

*Continued on page 4*

## I HAVE FOUND THE SOUND *continued*

Everything that she had feared from the unknown time of her walking with my father and brother and sister, everything that she had gone through as a war refugee from the Communist, the French, the American now embodied in the sound of her son asking her permission to be relieved of the pressure being on the perceived safer path in the new land. This new sound was foreign to her. She could not recognize her own anymore. She did not know how to give safety to her child and now another woman could.

If I did not meet my American mother I probably won't go to a Liberal Arts College to be exposed to how Arts can be a way of life. Since Buddha time the Buddhist chant has always been a way to create the sound of liberation from cycles of existential pain and suffering. Artistic expressions from Titian to Cezanne to Rodin to De Kooning have been to liberate the self from the confined expectation of formal society. The constraints of the flat pictorial plane and 360 degree of the human figurative form were problems that these Masters had learned to liberate so the aliveness of the human experience could be experienced. It was not just about a liberation from war and famine but the liberation of the constraint of the self. My mother only experienced the former and the latter did not have real practical meaning. The new sound that I discovered to navigate through my new world was not recognizable from my mother's experiences of her old world.

The parent Penguins travelled hundreds of miles to fill their belly with fishes so they could bring back to their waiting hungry chicks. Only through sounds could the parent Penguin find the chicks that they had left behind. It must be disheartening arriving back at the colony belly full and having to differentiate the hundred thousand sounds to find their young chicks. But nature found ways for them to always find each other. The picture of mother and father Penguins failing to find their chicks and their chicks failing to find their parents is one of sadness just like my mother not really understanding why her son would choose Arts over a guaranteed professional life that would bring safety and respect to a new immigrant life.

In Buddhist culture, we chant for 49 days after the passing of a life so the self could enter the cycle of rebirth. It is a longing sound for safety to liberate the old self beyond its physical existence. We offer food and comforts so my mother could have a safe passage to a new cycle. My painting accompanies her because its intention is the same. She didn't lose me in this new land but I have found the sound that I could find my way back to her.



*Dzu Do lives in New Jersey and is a long-time member of DRUUMM. He is a father, IT consultant and paints in his free time.*

# GROWING OUR LOCAL MINISTRIES

One of the wonderful outcomes of community organizing is following the energy and opportunity that comes from building relationships and visioning together. DRUUMM has been engaging in deeper, more intentional conversations with UU Religious Professionals, congregations and members over the last year as part of our Organizing Project.

As we listened and took note of where UU People of Color were at, we recognized a new wave of UU People of Color Groups forming. The oldest continuous UU POC Groups we've identified were founded in the 1990s when DRUUMM was forming, primarily by lay leaders who were seeking community, healing, and solidarity. Since then over 40 groups have started up, over half in the last few years. Many are independent, yet grounded in some of the same values and purpose. These groups share many common characteristics - a welcoming place for new UU People of Color, culturally responsive worship and faith formation, and healing from racism and oppression.

DRUUMM, through the DRUUMM Organizing Project, has been intentionally connecting with members and leaders and with their permission have created a new directory of groups to be shared more widely.

## Organizer drop-ins

4TH TUESDAYS 8PM ET



This Directory is our first effort to make more publicly accessible UU People of Color Groups in the hopes of connecting more UU People of Color together. These groups are independent of DRUUMM, as a more formal system of affiliation is still under consideration, and we believe there is value in knowing one another better. We are excited to be building with the facilitators and offering ways for leaders to share ideas, approaches and, support with one another.

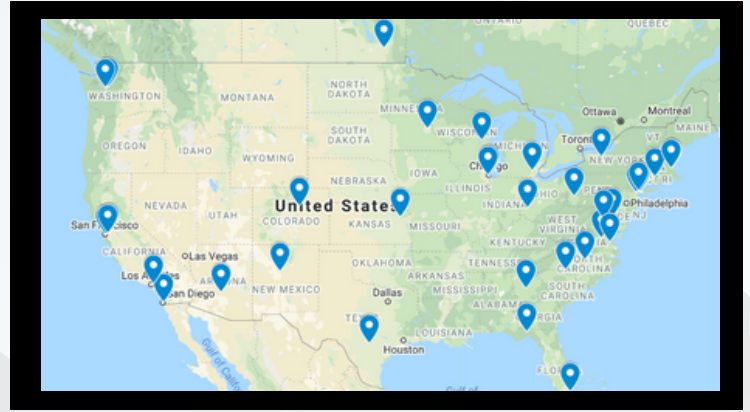
We hope you will share this with those who may be interested, and if you're aware of a group not listed, let us know. DRUUMM will also be hosting monthly drop-in calls for folks engaged in organizing and facilitating POC groups. Contact [jsantoslyons@uuma.org](mailto:jsantoslyons@uuma.org) for more information.

Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons  
Consulting Minister

Sana Saeed  
DRUUMM President

# UU PEOPLE OF COLOR GROUPS

Check out and get engaged with a local UU POC group in your region at [www.druumm.org](http://www.druumm.org). Please share additions and updates to Dawn Robison via [drobinson@uua.org](mailto:drobinson@uua.org).



## ARIZONA

UU Congregation of Phoenix

## CALIFORNIA

UU Church of Long Beach  
First Unitarian Church of Oakland  
Neighborhood UU Church of Pasadena  
First UU Church of San Diego  
First UU Church of San Francisco  
Mt Diablo UU Church

## FLORIDA

UU Church of Tallahassee  
UU Congregation of Miami

## GEORGIA

UU Church of Atlanta

## ILLINOIS

Unity Temple UU Congregation

## KANSAS

UU Fellowship of Topeka

## MARYLAND

Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda  
UU Church of Annapolis

## MASSACHUSETTS

First Parish UU in Cambridge

## MICHIGAN

UU Church of Ann Arbor

## MINNESOTA

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

## NEW JERSEY

UU Church of Montclair  
Beacon UU in Summit

## NEW MEXICO

First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque

## NORTH CAROLINA

Eno River UU Church

## OHIO

Miami Valley UU Fellowship

## OREGON

First Unitarian Church of Portland

## PENNSYLVANIA

First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh

## TEXAS

First UU Church of Houston  
First UU Church of San Antonio

## VIRGINIA

First UU Church of Richmond

## WASHINGTON

Westside UU Congregation

## WISCONSIN

Fox Valley UU Church

# Reconciling Ourselves And Our Country

by Cybele Garcia Kohel

I work in conflict transformation. I am not a diplomat. I do not work in war zones. I am not even a mediator. I work in my own community at my son's school, at church, with city government staff, and with other organizations. I am a writer and a mother. Sometimes I am paid, sometimes not.

When diverse people with diverse ideas come together for a common purpose, a sacred and beautiful space blossoms into human engagement and cooperation. To do this, as writer and reconciliation expert Paula Cole Jones asserts, participants have to understand their own motivation and shift their attention from the personal hurts and grievances they carry, to focus on the humanity presented to them by others.[1] Another name for this internal process is, a *paradigm shift*, where we expand our idea of humanity to include more people, extend compassion towards their realities and embrace them as truth.

Does it take special training to do this work? Well, in some cases, yes, however, I don't think of any conflict or problem as insurmountable. We just have to get people to the table to talk about a problem. Sometimes, I let them sit in silence, holding the space for them when they are grappling with a difficult reality.

In my view, most conflict is about people having differing realities. Let's take the issue of needing to deal with difficult histories, which can involve denial of an abusive relative, an organization whose founding donations came from the sales of enslaved peoples, or a country whose history includes the theft of land, genocide, and enslavement. Addressing these difficult histories is never easy. However, the more we ignore difficult histories, and the varying life realities that result from them, the more likely we will perpetuate their devastating legacies, be doomed to repeat them and the conflicts that plague us remain.

Knowing that the building you are standing in was built from the painful suffering of other humans, how do you feel about it? If it is not a good feeling, then you are a human who cares. You have this feeling and *now you know*. This feeling, some may call this guilt, but I call this humility. Humility is the first stage in conflict transformation. It starts with one human, one person.

**Humility** is also the first of the five stages in reconciliation, as outlined by Reverend Christina Shu; **humility, truth-telling, accountability, relationship, and transformation**.<sup>[2]</sup> These five stages also mirror the steps of conflict transformation. Let's examine each further.

You are a human who is now seeing the pain caused by actions that were not in your control, nor your fault. Perhaps you will take it a step further. You won't condone it with silence because when we remain silent in the face of great pain, we become party to it no matter how long ago the acts of cruelty causing pain were committed.

Maybe you'll forget this history for a day or two. Then, when you have to attend a class or walk into that building again, you'll remember. And then there is that feeling, again. So why not have a conversation about it? Perhaps take it a step further and Google it. That's right, look it up. When you do, when you have more knowledge, talk to others again. . . Keep asking questions. . . Find experts and talk to them. . . Make this topic a research paper. . . Or, if you are not a student or writer, perhaps you will keep a log about what you find.

# RECONCILING OURSELVES AND OUR COUNTRY

*Continued..*

**Truth Telling.** This is another step in conflict transformation. Your next step is to ask, 'what are we going to do about it?' If you are a student, then you could talk to a student or faculty group on campus. If you are not, you could get a journalist who has written about this sort of thing before to write about it. If you are a writer, write an essay or article. Solving the problems of our world always starts with one person, but never ends that way. There are a multitude of people out there who care and feel the same as you do. Your job is to find them. Ask questions, share information and push for public acknowledgement.

**Taking Responsibility.** Perhaps, in the beginning, you are the one spreading the word. But soon, your work will produce others who are aligned with the telling of this truth and you will all want to do something about it. Together, you write a petition for an official acknowledgement, write opinion articles, hold panel discussions, and start discussion groups. You are continuing the truth telling, taking responsibility and moving to the next step in conflict transformation or Creating Connections (relationship building).

**Creating Connections.** Soon a lot of work and care goes into this issue because you engage others as a result of asking questions and persistence. But if one person continues to ask questions, then truth, responsibility, and actions will be shared by many. Experts are talking about it, a local group is petitioning to have the name of the building changed and rededicated, and a college scholarship for descendants of the enslaved people who built this building is endowed. There is great power in acknowledgement because it creates a world that holds up the importance of everyone's humanity equally.

**Transformation.** But these actions are not the transformation. The transformation happens when you decide that ignoring this history was not in line with how you believe our society should function. Transformation happens when you remind others of the importance of acknowledging the humanity of the enslaved people, and they embrace this as a value. Transformation continues to happen every time someone stops and thinks about this particularly painful history, the reality of the how this place came to be. The actions serve to cement the value of acknowledging our past transgressions independent of fault.

This individual level of conflict transformation can happen to an individual on their own, or in a group, but, for a group to make a real difference with any problem, the paradigm shift must take place at the individual level. Changing culture requires a large scale of individuals engaging in transformation to create the paradigm shift.

Surprise! You, like me, can now work in conflict transformation. If we want our world to be a place that equality reigns, then we **MUST** put these values into action.

Cybele Garcia Kohel is a writer living and writing in Pasadena, California. Born in Puerto Rico, Ms. Kohel writes poetry and essays, in a loud voice from the margins. Ms. Kohel's most recent publications are in the Women Who Submit anthology, *Accolades* (2020), and the *Altadena Literary Review* (2020)



[1] <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/reconciliation-as-spiritual-discipline>

[2] <http://neighborhooduu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Rev.-Christina-sermon>

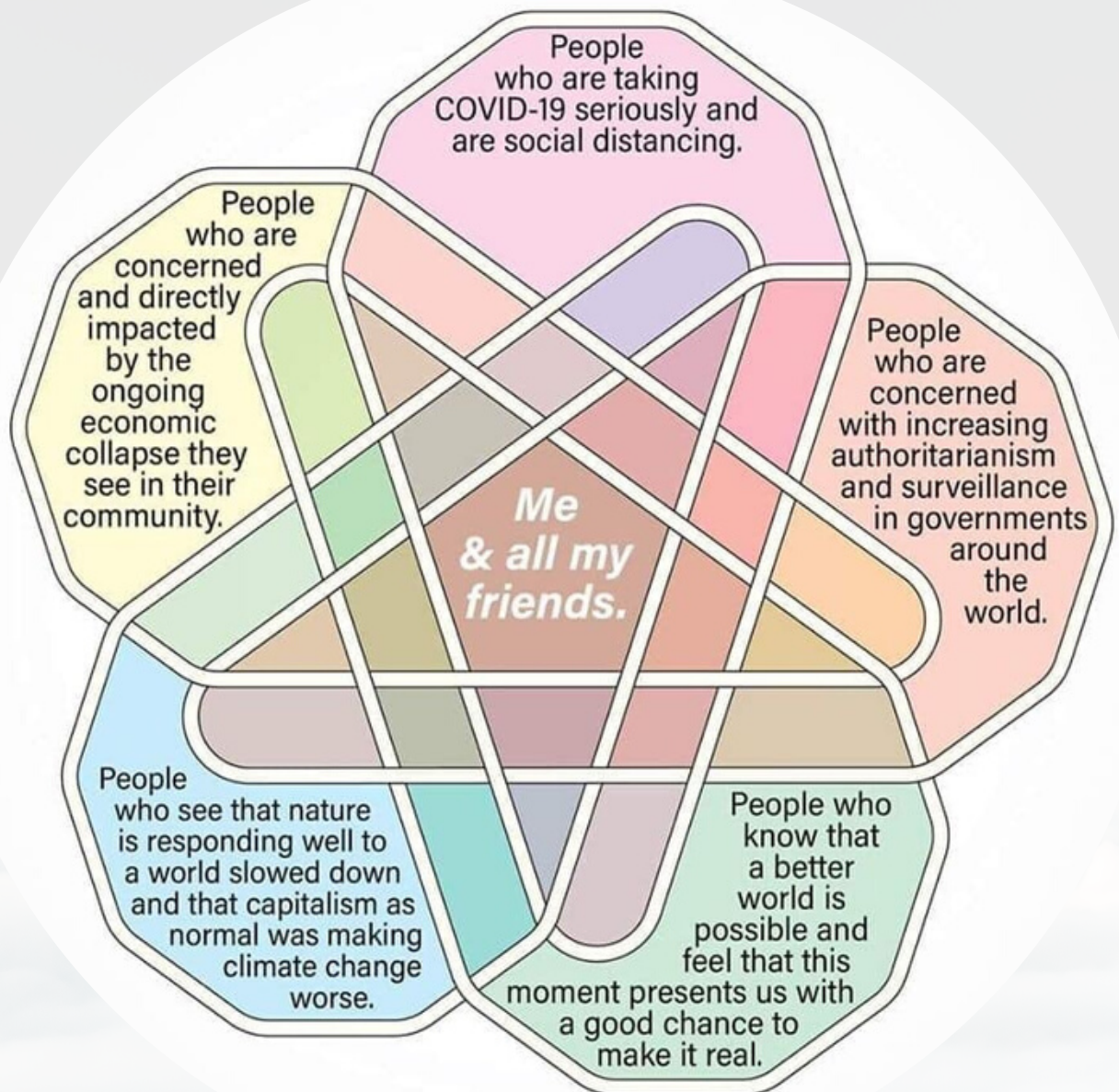


# DRUUMM CALENDAR

With the Covid-19 pandemic, in-person gatherings, conferences and meetings have shifted online. Please double check with any events previously announced to confirm. We welcome submissions of events specific to UU People of Color and will do our best to announce them.

May 12	Death & Dying with Chaplain Yuri
May 15-18	Thrive Youth of Color, Albany NY
May 19	Grounding Spiritual Practices
June 13	New York City POC Gathering
June 22-24	UUMA Ministry Days (all-virtual)
June 24-28	UUA General Assembly (all-virtual)

*Please send calendar items to [editor@druumm.org](mailto:editor@druumm.org)*



## NOTATIONS

- With hundreds of congregations and organizations shifting to online worship and programs, the Asian/Pacific Islander caucus is sharing a summary of preaching from Asian & Pacific Islander clergy.
- DRUUMM will be holding a virtual annual business meeting in June around the virtual UUA General Assembly in place of the regular face to face annual meeting. This will include electing new members of the DRUUMM Steering Committee.
- The Steering Committee hosted two Community Listening Circles on April 22 and May 2 virtually. 30 folks RSVP and look for a report out in our June edition.
- Yuri Yamamoto facilitated a virtual conversation on Death & Dying with 12 DRUUMM members and POC friends. Given the interest, another is being scheduled for May 12.

## COLOR/FULL



### NOEL BURKE

#### GOAL

I mainly come to reconnect with people and try to deepen my faith. I want to deepen my understanding and corral other people, youth and young adults on my journey.

#### GIFT

I bring enthusiasm. I bring a diverse background, from being catholic, Methodist, Christian, etc. my power of commitment. I jumped into all the roles. I want to serve my church, my community. I attended my first GA in 2009, now I want to serve the UUA. Being a UU since 1996 has given me a lot of time to cultivate myself and become a great UU person. I feel like I've arrived, but I have a lot to learn.



DIVERSE &  
REVOLUTIONARY  
UU MULTICULTURAL  
MINISTRIES

#### The DRUUMM Beat Issue 10, Volume 2

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