



THE DRUUMM BEAT

DIVERSE & REVOLUTIONARY UU MULTICULTURAL MINISTRIES

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DRUUMM STEERING COMMITTEE TO MEET IN NEW ORLEANS

As autumn begins, the DRUUMM Steering Committee is embracing an intentional and focused pace. We continue to push back against white supremacist notions that lead to the burn out of our black, indigenous and POC leaders and which prioritizes a fast-paced rate of productivity from organizations over deepening community relationships.

Adrienne Marie Brown wrote a year ago, “what we give attention to grows. what we pay attention to grows.” Embracing this wisdom, we’re pausing the Annual Gathering this fall, so that we as leaders can have more time to grow together and give to DRUUMM with deliberate intention.

We will be gathering for a Steering Committee retreat in New Orleans in November where we will have an opportunity for team building led by Michael Crumpler from the UUA, connecting with local poc lay leaders, and we’ll focus on creating nourishing programming for the year ahead. We hope to host a gathering in the Spring and will release more information about this dream soon.

As you reflect on the year ahead and the summer, this is a gentle reminder that the GA call for programs proposals is out and the deadline to submit a proposal is Friday, November 15th. If you would like to host POC programing in the DRUUMM space, please make a note of that in your proposal.

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Check it out! Meadville Lombard Theological School Sankofa Special Collection



WHY FAT GIRLS DON'T WEAR RED LIPSTICK

by Cassie Montenegro

I used to think I couldn't wear red lipstick.

A series of shades only worthy of a svelt face, like yours.

I let you talk me out of it.

But, it wasn't really your fault.

I had already arrived at that conclusion and you only confirmed it.

So I stuck to nudes and Ample Pink.

Until—

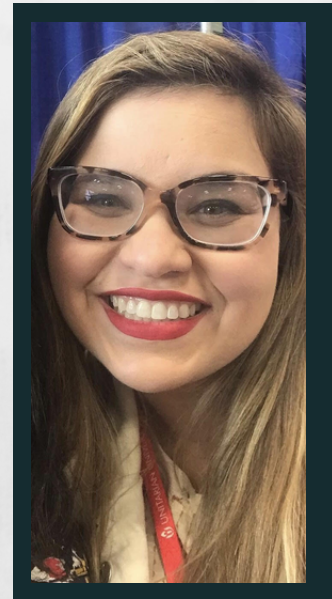
I met someone who looked like me, a curvy latina who wasn't afraid of red. Embraced it, even.

Suedeberry. Red Velvet. Wicked.

If she could wear it boldly, unabashedly, why couldn't, why shouldn't, I?

So when another you told me I couldn't wear such a dark shade of red, that it didn't suit my complexion, without pause I looked you right in the eyes, teeth particularly replendant, smiling, and replied: "Well, I LOVE it!"

As if I had been waiting for that challenge
my whole life.



Cassie Montenegro is a Worship Associate and Officiant at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Miami. She identifies as a cis gender, largely white passing Cuban American Latina with a great deal of privilege. "While savoring this past year's Latinx poetry-infused General Assembly in Spokane, an instance of racially charged misogyny awakened a moment—and later a poem—that asked me to look inward, and push back."

Talking Ministry with Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti



The Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti is in an incredibly unique position as Senior Minister of a large Unitarian Universalist congregation. He is one of only a handful in history to serve alongside another Minister of Color - The Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich. In fact, out of a staff of twelve, there are four staff of color: in addition to the two clergy, Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout, Director of Worship and Music, and Quiana Perkins, Coordinator of Pastoral Care and Social Justice. The significance is not lost on Rev. Manish. "Having any one of us on staff carries immense symbolism as well as the serious possibility of reactivity."

Rev. Manish is a former DRUUMM President, and long-time leader who currently serves on the UUA Board of Trustees. A former diplomat before entering seminary, he is incredibly thoughtful about the legacy he is carrying on at the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor.

"Ann Arbor is further ahead of what I have experienced in the average UU congregation. Although it is hard to compare, I want to

name the ministry of The Rev. Gail Geisenhainer that really moved the conversation farther along here in Ann Arbor, alongside that of my colleague Dr. Glen Rideout. They did a lot of work in helping the congregation clarify its values, particularly in light of inclusionary commitments."

Throughout his ministry, he has stayed grounded in his commitment to anti-racism and anti-oppression, striving to understand the range of experiences in his congregation. "Years ago, I would hear a lot of confusion and incredulity when we would engage on issues of race and racism. Now, I have noticed a shift toward expressions of pain. That is the hard part. For folks who hold majority identities with privilege, White, upper middle class, living comfortably with all your basic needs being met, I am learning how to hold pain and working through the language of marginalization and feelings of exclusion that sometimes accompanies that pain. I am ministering to some folks who say 'this has been my religious community for much of my life, and now I don't recognize it anymore, I wonder if there is still space for me.'"

Rev. Mishra-Marzetti

A guiding concept grounding his ministry is the principle of 'sharing the center' of Unitarian Universalism. Rev. Manish is clear that after generations of an exclusive domination of what the center has looked and felt like, there can now be an intense reaction towards efforts to create shared space at the center. For some UUs, shared centering feels like loss of exclusive or dominant centering, and it is. That sense of loss can engender reactivity that requires careful navigation.

"Underneath such reactivity is pain. It is an emotional thing, not a logical thing. We can demonstrate logically how we still honor a variety of diverse and traditional sources, all UU in flavor. We can measure and count how much we still use White culture, songs, readings, space, and history. But that doesn't address the pain - the intense feeling of loss that some are holding. It isn't everybody, not even the majority, but there are slivers, there are subsets of the community that we have to work with, as we try to both hold the community together and unequivocally keep moving forward"

The stakes are high for those who dedicate their ministry to serving predominantly White communities. "It is always professionally and spiritually dangerous for a UU Religious Professional of Color to lead on topics of race and racism in our congregations. That is never not true. When your salary is coming from a predominantly White UU community, there is a high degree of risk if you cross what that community is able to understand, absorb, and work with. Even if one is not particularly pushing on issues of racial justice, staff of color come to symbolically embody the possibility and the hope of that justice commitment, and that is complicated, to say the least."

We need to teach different ways of being together, he argues, and to focus on building a culture where people genuinely gather in service to both spiritual nourishment and growth. "We don't want to drag horses to the well, but rather be the place where people have a different experience than earlier generations have had, one that feels healthier, genuinely inclusive, and engaged. Many positive things flow from that, but it begins with shaping and shifting the culture. Culture shift is the hardest work we can be engaged in. We can die in the desert when we spend our time trying to drag horses to water. How many careers, have metaphorically died in the desert as we have tried to do this work?"

Rev. Manish believes culture shifting is the work that can truly endure. "My predecessor in Ann Arbor, Gail (Rev. Gail Geisenhainer) did the work of values clarification, she helped the community be clear about the values that we, in Ann Arbor, are living into and bringing alive. As a congregation, our aim is to honor the spiritual gifts of every human being. That is a basic core value." In making this a reality among their diverse staff team, Rev. Manish redefines the role of hierarchy. "We have hierarchy for the purposes of lanes and accountability. We have lanes of responsibility, and within those lanes we make promises to one another. If those promises are not fulfilled, there needs to be a conversation that is convened in some time and manner in support of accountability. Our primary value is horizontal/lateral (everyone has insight, wisdom, and gifts to share) and the vertical structures are a tool, they are scaffolding, which help us live into our primary value.."



Rev. Manish with his son Jacen

Rev. Mishra-Marzetti continued

When he was called in 2018, there were UU People of Color and Black UU ministries already nascent in Ann Arbor. “I want to keep creating space for people who self-identify as People of Color. I think about First UU Church of San Diego that has been doing this work for so much longer. They’ve had a DRUUMM chapter for decades. We, in Ann Arbor, are still in the process of pulling people together with different analyses and experiences, sharing our stories, and developing a shared vision for where we want to go. When People of Color do not have a shared analysis, we see that some folks try to leverage that in ways that can be divisive and challenging, pitting us against one another instead of being focused together on the work that is needed. Building community together helps bridge that.”

“One powerful tool that we are building and deepening, in response to the many challenges of our time, is that of peer to peer conversations, getting lay leaders talking with other lay leaders, instead of looking to a small staff team, relative to the size of the community, as the holder of all conversations, information, and possibilities. This is one effective starting point for direct and collaborative lay engagement, with one another, especially in a university town like Ann Arbor, where our members are particularly interested in big ideas, personal and social transformation, and living into our very best selves.”



*Quiana Perkins &
Manish Mishra-Marzetti*

Rev. Manish credits his experience with DRUUMM as a core part of his leadership and faith formation, as well as the foundation for what has been a decades long support system with other visionary leaders of color, of all ages and backgrounds. “DRUUMM kept me in Unitarian Universalism. I had a lot of doubts and questions about how and where I would fit into Unitarian Universalism as I stepped beyond the walls of All Souls Church, Unitarian, in Washington D.C., one of our historically racially diverse congregations. I felt surprise and shock when I first engaged in the broader UUA, genuine surprise at how racially and culturally homogenous the broader UU movement can be, and it was DRUUMM that kept me engaged and helped me develop an analysis of what I was encountering and what it meant for me. It was DRUUMM that gave me opportunities to develop relationships that have evolved in to being relationships of family-of-choice: uncles, aunties, siblings-in-faith, geographically far apart at times, yet working side-by-side in spirit, in mutual support, and in love. Important people are in my life and in my ministry because of the intentionality of DRUUMM programs, retreats, workshops, and leadership development opportunities, all of which were geared towards creating technical skills and for me, just as importantly, long term relationships of mutual care and support.”

“My deep prayer is that we reclaim the ways in which we know DRUUMM has been a source of health, vitality, and sustenance for many. I don’t feel there is a massive need to recreate. We have a lot of tools that have worked well for our community. Food and worship. We get together, we have a meal, we sing, we talk with our kids nearby. The cultures many of us come from have done this for millenia. We can draw on that wisdom in finding the structures, formats, and ultimately the strength that we need to stay engaged in the work that is needed.”

The Gathering Place - DRUUMM's People of Color Facebook

Rev Elizabeth Nguyen! She is fierce and compassionate and knows how to combine those two things into incredible, deep ministry. And she taught me that no is a complete sentence.

- **Rev Aisha Ansano, Cambridge MA**

Rev. Danielle Di Bona - who ministers with integrity, mentors with love, leads with an eye toward justice, and has stayed in the struggle for the long haul despite the cost. She is also one of the finest pastors I know.

- **Rev. Sofia Betancourt, Oakland CA**

Christina Rivera - who sees the world from a decolonized lens (and shares that view lovingly) and has more patience and grace than 10 people smushed together.

- **Julica Hermann de la Fuente, Williamston, MI**

Rev. Connie Simon who builds bridges and clears debris with grace.

- **Antonia Bell- Delgado, Wilmington, DE**

Rev. Sofia Betancourt, who is an utterly brilliant writer, thinker, teacher, pastoral presence, and witness to both the world as it is and the world as it could be. She is a transformative force within Unitarian Universalism.

-**Rev. Lindasusan V. Ulrich, Ypsilanti, MI**

I look up to **Rev. Christina Shu**. She is powerful and she also has a lot of patience for a person like me.

- **Tim Hanami, Pasadena CA**

Who is a UU of Color you look up to and why?

E.N. Hill who is a caring and wise individual and acts as a mentor and elder sibling to all they come in contact with.

- **Mathew P. Taylor, Seminarian**

Rev. Marisol Caballero whos a badass all-around wonderful human! She cares and loves deeply. And if it weren't for her, I would still be blinded to POC struggles.

- **Tania Blythe, Colorado Springs CO**

Paula Cole Jones - as a visionary foremother who has endured backlash and persevered to dismantle WSC.

- **Carla Gates, Columbia MD**

Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich. First and foremost, the voices she does when reading kids book are phenomenal. Her sermonating is masterful. She weaves so many things. And don't get her in a collaborative worship team. Her attention to detail and ability to calm are powerful.

- **Quiana Perkins, Ann Arbor MI**

Marcus Fogliano who HOLDS IT DOWN for all of us who are unique. So inspirational and magnificent.

- **Nina Lytton, Boston MA**

Periodically we will share selected responses to discussion happening in DRUUMM's People of Color Facebook Group (search for DRUUMM The Gathering Place). These are posted with permission.

DRUUMM Gatherings 2019

NYC, Boston, Oakland, Hartford, Oakland, Nashville, Chicago, Pasadena



This year as part of the DRUUMM Organizing Project, we partnered with local DRUUMM members and our UU Religious Professionals of Color to host a series of seven local gatherings engaging over 150 folks. Through our process we connected more deeply with our communities and built stronger relationships among folks from area congregations or who were unaffiliated. We co-created worship, held potlucks, experienced deep check-ins, and learned and shared stories of DRUUMM's story and the chronicles of UU People of Color.

Unpopular Opinion of a former Youth Organizer on #ClimateStrike

While today's climate change march is important to engaging a growing base of youth and the general population, the framing of the Climate Change problem as a Generational Divide is a false one. We're not in a crisis because old people aren't taking climate change seriously, we're at a crisis because the rich have made decisions and continue to hoard wealth at the expense of everything and everyone else's future. A generational framing also dismisses/ignores the central role of elders in indigenous communities all throughout the Global South, have always played protecting ecosystems for generations and have raised future generations to do the same. They have always been amongst the first to raise the same alarms that scientists have based their research on and have long been experts on solutions being touted around now.

- Roksana Mun
of Desi's Rising Up & Moving (DRUM)

NOTATIONS

- The 2019 Convocation for UU Studies Oct 17-20 in Baltimore MD will feature Christopher Cameron and a panel on the Black UU Living History Project. UUConvo.org
- The Virginia Tidewater Cluster will be hosting a People of Color workshop on Oct 12th. coldeborah@gmail.com
- The Inauguration of Dr. Elias Ortega as President of Meadville Lombard will be October 26th at Unity Temple, IL
- The Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley Scholarship Program financially supports seminarians, music and religious education professionals in their credentialing process. Applications due Nov 1 and May 1. UUWF.org
- BLUU announced a \$15 LiveStream registration for The Harper-Jordan Memorial Symposium Oct 30-Nov 2. BlackLivesUU.org
- Planning is underway for DRUUMM and People of Color programs at the UUA General Assembly 2020 in Providence RI.

COLOR/FULL: A DRUUMM GLOBAL MAJORITIES PROJECT



AMANDA THOMAS
CHICAGO, IL

GOAL

I haven't been able to have any goals except to do music every single day. I did the Ministry Days as music director. I directed the Service of the Living Tradition. I've also sung at the Ware Lecture. I haven't been to any workshops. No DRUUMM. No BLUU. No time.

I love it. Music is what I do, I love it.

GIFT

Music. I grew up in the Black tradition, but I'm classically trained, so I'm really rounded musically. My music isn't one note, literally.

I know, I'm a dork.



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