

HARNESSING COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION AND ACTION

*Building community with UU the Vote and DRUUMM
at the Fall Gathering
By: Nicole Pressley*

On November 8th 2016, I sat on the couch in my St. Paul, MN apartment thinking of all the ways the outcomes of the election would impact me, my loved ones, and those targeted by the white supremacist rhetoric that so many enthusiastically endorsed throughout the 2016 election season. I did not imagine that almost 4 years later, we'd be watching white supremacists march through our streets, the appointment of hundreds of conservative and often unqualified judges to our courts, or the complete rejection of science in the face of a deadly pandemic. I also didn't imagine months of sustained protests in cities across the country.

I didn't image cities listening to the demands of residents--BIPOC communities, voters, the undocumented, youth and more who demand divestment from the police and investment in community thriving. I did not imagine that I would find a faith-home in the middle of protests and actions. I didn't imagine that being welcomed in Unitarian Universalism would create an opportunity to help lead UU the Vote, which has provided me and so many others with a spiritual community and theological grounding to stay in this work in these difficult times.

Our faith is powerful. UU the Vote is an effort to activate and organize our faith to gain skills, build partnerships, to combat voter suppression, and work alongside the BIPOC community to build political power. UU the Vote is a community. It is a gathering of people from across our faith who are creating a spiritual and political home in Unitarian Universalism. We're building a home that attends to our spirits, pushing on our collective imaginations, and moving us towards just and bold actions to transform our society and ourselves.

UU the Vote began as an idea. Now it is a powerful campaign that has mobilized thousands of UUs, grown organizing teams across the country, resourced BIPOC-led frontline organizations and communities, and reached out to over 1.4 million voters through phone banks, text banks, postcards, letters, and voter registration drives! Today, we must harness our radical imaginations to guide our electoral work and guide our movement beyond 2020. As the National Organizer of UU the Vote and Communications Co-Chair of DRUUMM, I am excited to join you at the Fall Gathering to imagine and create together.

This gathering is an opportunity to build spiritual community and resilience for our BIPOC UUs and communities to heal, thrive, take action, and embody the radical and loving futures we seek to call into being. At the Fall Gathering, join us to learn spiritual practices, gain organizing skills, and take action to build community and organizing muscle to live our values and grow our community.

Join us on October 9-11 for the DRUUMM Fall Gathering.
Let's build together.

In This Issue

- LIVE, WORK, LOVE, CREATE DRUUMM Virtual Fall Gathering
- Building Power for Change
- Tributes to E
- Pastoral Note
- COIC Quick Takes
- Braided Voices in Perfect Harmony
- Ash Rain
- Notations



REMEMBERING E, 1979-2020

LIVE, WORK, LOVE, CREATE

We invite you to the 2020 Virtual DRUUMM Fall Gathering



This year we are asking you to Live, Work, Love, and Create. 2020 has been a year of pandemic, political mockery, and loss of life to injustice. We are motivated now more than ever to find more meaningful ways to engage with our communities.

Whether you want to learn how to organize or how to help heal people on the frontline, this event is the place for you.

The Fall Gathering is BIPOC only space. Learn more and register at www.druumm.org

BUILDING POWER FOR CHANGE

Notes from members and friends of DRUUMM on the upcoming US Presidential Election - these are reprinted with permission and do not necessarily reflect the views of DRUUMM.

I hope that, as COVID19 ravages, our infrastructure crumbles, the racial wealth gap widens, and the U.S. is increasingly isolated on the international stage while the extremism of the radical right flourishes everywhere in the world— we release the petty sectarianism I witnessed during the Democratic Primaries.

I hope that ideological righteousness does not outweigh practical strategy, and that the strategic approach we take is chess not checkers. I hope our own forms of nationalism don't feed the right wing narrative that Kamala isn't American, as they did with Obama.

We don't need to leap over each other, we just need to create favorable conditions to build power for deep change.

I hope the fear and depression endemic to the current moment doesn't open wide the door for accelerationists to assert nihilism as a reasonable strategy. When the house is full of children, elders, sick and disabled people, and so many more, just letting the whole house burn isn't acceptable. Yeah, it's hot in here but the degrees matter.

I don't have a picture of me and Kamala, and I haven't written a think piece about her (this isn't about her). I don't want either. I will neither trash nor exalt her. Cause it's not about her, and it's not about Biden. If a Black woman becomes VP of the United States, history is being made, even if her politics are wack AF at times. But, it's not even about that.

It's about averting the coming global disaster, brought on by the richest countries in the world. It's about creating the roadmap for a new world out of this place of uncertainty. I am voting against Trump, and I am encouraging everyone in my personal networks to do the same. Be critical, but whether you're an organizer or just a person who cares about the survival of the human species in general and of oppressed communities in specific, you'd better have a viable plan beyond critique.

My plan is to protect our voting rights while voting Trump out, then work with like minds to build a strategy to retake the Senate and the courts, to use local seats to take over the municipal politics needed to defund the police and reshape city budgets.

Take over DA's offices and gut them from the inside out while we press on through grassroots organizing from the outside in.

Demand a shift in foundation dollars away from the Sierra Club, the ACLU and other massive nonprofit entities to effective organizations building power for BIPOC communities making bold and visionary demands, creating new infrastructure and opportunities for collective self-governance.

There are so many changes that become impossible under a Trump Administration. Changes we need to build power to win.

A Biden-Harris Administration would be a double dose of elite White neoliberalism (no Kamala is not white, but the US Presidency is).

But I would rather fight that than the overt white nationalist authoritarianism we have now.

For us, the Presidential elections aren't about choosing your friends, they are about selecting who your enemy will be.

#STUDSENSE

CHOOSE WELL.

I remember during the 2016 US elections, 6 months after the Philippines had already voted in Duterte, I watched in horror and rage as some US activists called for an election boycott apparently not able to stomach voting for Hillary. I myself voted for Bernie in the primaries and voted for Hillary in Nov.

Others, sat the elections out because they couldn't take the stench off their vote. It was a fool thing to do and we have all had to face the consequences. 6000 miles away in the Philippines, I watch with envy and longing at the kind of electoral infrastructure and organizing that is POSSIBLE in the US. Yes the laws have been gutted, districts have been gerrymandered, disenfranchisement is at a systematic scale AND your organizing institutions are still holding.

I know because dear friends Khanh Pham JoAnn A Hardesty Jessica González-Rojas have won elected seats and hundreds of other women of color are doing the same. It is possible to have people's champions in the seats of power.

Come to the Philippines and sit where we sit and you may come away with a deeper appreciation for what you have. As Malkia Devich Cyril says wisely, "Choose our enemies well." I myself would say, "Don't be a fool".

- Aimee Santos-Lyons, Metro Manila

The left's central objective in the next six months is to defeat Donald Trump electorally (prevent a second term) and to halt the advance of the most dangerous forces of Trumpism.

The left can and should carry out this objective in a manner that not only stymies the right but advances the left, putting it in better position to undermine and defeat neoliberal hegemony, carrying out the next phases of the revolutionary struggle (as outlined in 'We Believe...'), and eventually win socialism for all our people and the planet.

- Leftroots in Defeating Trump in 2020 and Advancing Strategy for Liberation

Tributes to E Rest in Power



Elandria "E" C. Williams 1979-2020

On September 23, 2020, our beloved Elandria C. Williams, known as "E", passed away. E was a longtime DRUUMM leader and lifelong Unitarian Universalist. We are heartbroken, and sharing our sense of deep loss in their passing to all those E's life touched within our BIPOC Unitarian Universalist communities and beyond. E was a founding leader of the DRUUMM youth and young adults in the 1990s and 2000s. Later they became a member of the UUA Board of Trustees and then served as Co-Moderator, the highest lay leadership position in the association.

E's home congregation of Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church (TVUUC) is hosting a "Wake for Elandria: A Time of Remembrance and Celebration" on Thursday, October 8, at 7:00 p.m. EDT. After a brief ingathering, attendees will move to breakout rooms for informal remembering and storytelling.

This event is open to family and friends, new and old, far and near. Bring a memory to share. A public Memorial Service for Elandria Williams will be held on Saturday, October 10, at 2:00 p.m. EDT that will include remembrances from family, friends, co-workers for social change, and denominational leaders. Special music will be provided by cousins and comrades in the struggle for justice. You are invited to log in 20 minutes early for special musical selections. Watch the Service and learn more on the TVUUC Facebook page.

Tributes to E

“

What is lifting up my spirit is holding that I am unbound. What is lifting up my spirit is that I will break the chains. What is lifting up my spirit is that I am deserving of a 100% radical love, care and worthiness. And I will accept nothing less

ELANDRIA WILLIAMS

Unitarian Universalist
Organizer, Activist, and Leader



Tributes to E



"Elandria has taught me much by instruction, example and embodiment. Our faith community is strengthened and improved by the contributions of Black people, yet while acknowledging that Black people are Indispensable, it can treat us as though we are Disposable. This is a cornerstone of Anti-Blackness. Along with being treated as a problem, transgressor or issues to be dealt with just for existing.

Just like other Black leaders in our denomination, Elandria experienced this firsthand. While they were an incredible leader of our denomination for many years, they also knew their worth and took a long break to do what was needed in the world. May we all be as discerning & unrelenting in the struggle #ElandriaTaughtUs Black people are beautiful, valuable, brilliant and worthy Care for each other with tenderness and compassion. Deeply regard and uplift the lived experience of all people in the struggle for liberation.

Maintain spiritual practices & in times of strife return to the practices Love with all of your heart beyond the disappointments that are part of living Support and follow young people's leadership Respect our elders and traditions Imagination is critical to collective liberation."

-India

Tributes to E

"I just learned about Elandria Williams passing today. They were a dear friend, a co-conspirator, and an inspiration always, but especially in my learning days in my young adulthood in the UU church. We spoke truth to faith together, and built and taught and rabble roused together.

I have these two memories that keep surfacing, one in Nashville where they laughed at me for not knowing how to scratch my dandruff out and then did it for me in the middle of a meeting. In a way that was so irreverent and so awesome in our stoic young organizing days.

And the other when we ran into each other in downtown Chicago, much later on. We were both there for some reason, and just the overwhelming joy at seeing each other unexpectedly. I was just thinking, after watching this Facebook live a few days ago, when you were still on this plane, about all the folks I wanted to introduce to you E. I guess I'll introduce them this way, with your last live feed.

Thank you. so much. for making this a space that I'm sure was vulnerable and painful. You always did the hardest work. Your brilliance will always be remembered. I'm gutted to lose you. Your light, your strength, your humor, and your commitment.

I love you. Rest in Power my friend."



-Natalie Nguyen

Tributes to E

"Elandria Williams I need to testify, like so many others are doing, to how you changed my life. I'd known you for many years off and on through your DECADES of service to our faith but in the last few years we became close, our relationship forged in the fire of UUA leadership. We were both in so many conversations that were traumatic, heartbreaking, irreconcilable, we refused to turn away from the hurt of the past and the present, and still we found a way forward. Your greatest lesson for me was to put care for people at the center of all we do. Care for the individual people you're talking to, starting with how they matter to you and how you are helping them get what they need.

That's the foundation of our faith community. E, I fought for you, to make sure we could hold the space for your leadership. So much was thrown at you, came at you, demanded of you. Following you and Barb as co-moderators faithfully meant that we reshaped aspects of our entire faith around becoming a community that could truly let your light shine. It has been hard, and also joyful. We had to learn whole new ways of being together physically to keep you safe, to avoid allergens and make spaces accessible. At a moment of crisis this faith needed your profoundly deep grounding in governance and movement organizing, your vivid sense of possibility, your unshakeable faith in our own people and the love in your heart. Love you gave so freely. And you fought for me, fought for me as a young, Black person in leadership in Unitarian Universalism. You made sure I was ok.

You would tell me what you learned from me, but you taught me so much – how to hold complexity without apology, ("it's a combo-blend"), the way Truth sometimes needs to interrupt a conversation, how to actually physically embody the values you're talking about, how to just stop and do a different thing when that's what the spirit says to do, how to always honor the ancestors, how to create spaces that invite people into a different level of consciousness and connection whether online or in person, how to show up as your fullest full self in every situation, and that true liberation is always, only and ever collective liberation. After a hard meeting we would say to each other "I love you, I'm dedicated to you succeeding, whatever it takes, because our faith needs you to survive and to be here" "I'm gonna channel you for a second and say "I need to say a thing" – what would it be like if we really wanted our leaders, chosen for their radical prophetic leadership and holding impossible choices, to survive? Anyone who worked closely with you knew that mortality was always nearby.

I had often thought of your insatiable drive to keep going as being despite your health and ability challenges. But now, I think it was because you understood how fragile life is, how much oppression costs, that you could not, would not stop the push to transform our faith and our world at every level. Your loss hurts, coming in a season of so much grief and loss. I'll miss you so much, friend. My kids loved you and they'll miss you too, they often ask if you're on my Zoom calls.

There was still so much healing for our people you and I had planned to do together. Know we, the thousands of us who were touched by the brilliance of your light, will honor your life by continuing on the path to transformation you have helped pave for us. I love you."

-Carey McDonald

Tributes to E

"I remember the day I first met you. It changed my whole life. It was the 2006 UUA General Assembly in #StLouis. I had been going to my local Unitarian Universalist church in San Diego for a few years. I was brand new to the faith, still unsure about it, and I fundraised to get to my first GA. When I arrived however I was utterly SHOCKED about our faith. How could a religion with such a diversity of belief and opinion be so overwhelmingly white? I went to my first UU Young Adult space and when I entered the room there wasn't a single person of color in a room of hundreds.

Right before the meeting starts, you Elandria Williams tap me on my shoulder. In a gentle, loving and welcoming voice you said: "Hi I'm Elandria. I just wanted to let you know that the young adults of color are meeting in the room next door. You are welcome to join us if you would like!"



That day I met The Gathering Place - DRUUMM Diverse Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries and my life was never again the same. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. For helping the next generation remember to breathe, to heal, and to fight hard for every breath we have.

Thank you for introducing me to this faith that has time and time again saved my life from meaninglessness. I grieve and cry for you today but I know your legacy burns through the thousands of lives you touched in your far too short life.

I love you and I miss you."

-Kevin Mann

Tributes to E

"I've been going back and forth over the last couple of days about whether or not to write this post. And now that I'm barely starting to take in that Elandria Williams is really gone I've decided that I needed to do it. Last Saturday I fractured my foot, and then in the early morning of the following day, I fell backwards and ended up cracking a rib.

Dealing with the pain was (and still is) challenging, and not being able to go to the gym has made me keep a closer eye on the status of my mental health especially because of my diagnosis. When I was told about E.'s passing on Wednesday night, my initial reaction to the question about how I was doing upon hearing that news, was very, very cerebral (even though I could feel in my gut that my response wasn't exactly true).

And, then on Thursday evening, I slowly began to realize that I hadn't taken in the murders of George Floyd and especially not the murder of Breonna Taylor, when I read the news that the officer who killed her wouldn't be charged with her Murder. But having a couple of broken bones doesn't feel too significant to me right now. E. left such a legacy and their wisdom touched so many lives around the world.

#Elandriataughtme by experience how to remember that you don't know a person's entire story until they tell you. #Elandriataughtme by experience that what you might think a person will say in response to a negative comment made about them, (as in preparing for the person who was harmed to automatically be defensive) might actually be a genuine question about what they did wrong; even though in reality they never did. And that latter lesson was a learning experience that I had never, ever imagined or considered to be possible.

And I also learned and experienced with that lesson how powerful being wrong, inconsiderate, and judgmental to someone who sees and responds to everyone with love can feel - which made that lesson even harder to bear. Another one of the many other lessons that #Elandriataughtme was how a person can forgive you long before you recognize that you need to take the responsibility of, and make amends. E. showed me love and compassion and friendship that I didn't know was possible for someone to give. And E. loved me so unconditionally that it softened my heart to try and do the same.

Give thanks to those of you who were able to read this entire and rather long post. And, also please know that I am not looking or asking (directly or indirectly) for sympathy, pity, or words that will try to make me feel a little better now that I've written this post. I can already tell that I've done the right thing that I needed to do in order to assist me with maintaining my mental health. Rest in Power E. and I hope to become a little bit better at showing love and compassion to others just a fraction of what you so perfectly did."

-Ndidichebe

Tributes to E

"Dear E, I realize after agonizing a bit in my grief, that it doesn't really matter where I start. My heart is in pieces on the ground, and I cannot imagine a world without you. I know I know, we will be okay, but hell I don't want to be okay. And damn Facebook for reminding me with every post all week when a part of me wanted to just live in denial until I would be ready. I'm never gonna be ready. In the wake of your joining the ancestors dear friend, memories are flooding in. How you are so gentle, and yet give firm hugs that remind me of our steely bond. How you will critique 24/7 and fully live your Universalist theology that all are loved.

I loved organizing side-by-side with you for so many years in our DRUUMM collectives, especially with youth and young adults, and through Groundwork antiracism trainings. You gave me space as an insider on the Unitarian Universalist national staff 20 years ago to move more freely in the face of institutional racism and politics. You have such a liberating quality and that is something I vow to practice as a way to honor you. You are part of a constellation of UUs who are painted on my sky, who have been through the fire again and again and who have returned to the stars.

Unitarian Universalists who would just call to check in, who would make plans to visit, who would go out to each, who would celebrate our milestones, who would be there for our joys and sorrows. I am really devastated by this reality. Ruth Alatore. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley. Danielle Gladd. Alyce Gowdy-Wright. Elandria "E" Williams.

Oh E we could laugh so hard we would cry tears of happiness, and also be so goddamn serious that we moved mountains. You had the full range of emotion, of tenor and timbre, of arm motions and facial expressions. I have to admit, when some time passed and we reconnected, as we have been doing since 1995, it was both easy, full of nostalgia, meaningful, as our journeys as UUs and organizers have intersected so beautifully, and scary, as I know you called me to account and to stay engaged.

I have tried to lose my faith from time to time, and let myself sink into doubt, and yet how could I when you were all in? You have been the synapse in our movements, bringing your authentic whole self and moving us forward. I will really miss our friendship E. Our lives shared so much context that we rarely missed a beat. And of course you taught me a zillion things.

These last few years especially around living fully and living with pain. You have rekindled my faith and reminded me of my faithfulness. Again and again you have expanded my consciousness of what is possible. You have given me so many gifts. One I love the most is an appreciation for the unexpected. For the sacred serendipity that binds us together into a larger family. There are no strangers, only friends we have yet to meet. You would appear in the most surprising ways. I would visit a place, and a few hours later, get a text from you about meeting up.

Tributes to E

Just this year I was in New York City for a couple of days, and lo and behold, you found me, brought me to an incredible public performance on East 125th in Harlem intertwining the history of freed slaves arriving in Manhattan and gentrification of today. You rolled deep E, and I'm so glad that we visited your Tennessee home most recently.

Sitting on the porch, trying to order food and trying to eat food, and enjoying the fireflies. Even though I'm older than you, you became a big sister for me. Someone who I could turn to, someone who knew what to say, who asked the right questions at the right time, who did the little things,



those thoughtful actions that remind us of our humanity. I know it hasn't been easy, especially these last few years. Talking with you through the battery of tests.

Commiserating on how to best support blood family, chosen family, UU family and movement family. I wish we could brought one more of our impossible ideas into reality together.

Teaching that seminary class on social justice ministry. Writing that essay on international solidarity. Co-teaching that seminar here in Southeast Asia with young folks. I promise to do what I can to pick myself up off the floor and keep moving forward. Oh E, we need you now. These times need your vision, your energy, your wit.

Your ability to humble, and be humbled. You were always so good about honoring your ancestors, your mentors, your community. You taught me to be brave and compassionate, fierce and kind. Yes we can be all these things. Your unbreakable spirit lived a full forty-wonderful years, and you went 110%. I will trade my sorrys and regrets around your death for a deeper investment of time and treasure into the people and places you have loved. I will balance my anger with commitment and my fears with faith. I know you will live on in spirit and through the good works of so many who you have inspired, struggled with, and loved."

-Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons

PASTORAL NOTE

It is with deep sadness that we share heartbreaking news from the Rev. Dr. Kristen Harper, Minister of the Unitarian Church of Barnstable. Her beloved husband James "Jay" Harper, Jr. (53) died on Wednesday, September 9, 2020.

He was that rare person who helped everyone he met feel as if the sun had just come out and that they were welcomed and appreciated. Jay and Kristen met four days after she moved to Chicago for seminary and he went through every class, every discovery, every sermon with her. An extrovert with the incredible gift of putting people at ease, Jay helped Kristen get over her shyness at meeting new people. He was incredibly intelligent, infinitely compassionate, and funny, funny, funny.

For 25 years they co-ministered and companioned each other through life. Rev. Dr. Kristen Harper has served as Minister in Barnstable, for over 18 years. Fellowshiped in 1999, she is the longest continually serving clergy woman of color in the Parish setting. She has been a member of AAUUM, DRUUMM, and LUNA and has been active in community organizing around youth and young adult LGBTQI issues, multiculturalism, racial justice, and climate change initiatives.

Aside from Rev. Dr. Kristen, Jay leaves his parents, Jim, and Ina, his sisters Jeanine and Joan and many cousins and dear friends.

Please feel free to contact Rev. Dr. Kristen at 34 Emerald Lane, Marstons Mills, MA 02648.

The Rev. Dr. HOPE Johnson
DRUUMM Co-Chaplain

COIC REPORT QUICK TAKES

At the New Orleans General Assembly in 2017, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Commission on Institutional Change was established and charged by the UUA Board of Trustees to conduct an audit of white privilege and the structure of power within Unitarian Universalism, and analyze structural racism and white supremacy culture within the UUA.

The Commission was in place for three years through the Virtual General Assembly in June of 2020. The Commission presented their final report in a comprehensive book entitled *Widening the Circle of Concern: Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change*, presented to the Board of Trustees and General Assembly in June 2020. A copy was provided to every congregation and is now available online for reflection and action.

Some key recommendations in response to the deep study and dialogue for Unitarian Universalism:

- Re-engaging with our theological legacy and its use today will both ground our efforts to welcome all who are drawn to our faith and provide resources for resilience for Unitarian Universalists in these difficult times.
- Reinterpretation of our theological legacies in these times should be liberatory and articulate our commitment to affirming and welcoming those who have been marginalized in our larger society and within our communities and organizations.
- Acknowledgment of anti-oppression work as a theological mandate is essential. We need to resurrect, research, document, and teach the words of Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, women, and others who have been largely lost though their presence has been with us throughout history. These constitute a valuable tool for our times.
- Education about the covenantal nature of our faith will allow communities to support and nurture one another as the overall US climate becomes more hostile to and disinterested in a life of faith.

BRAIDED VOICES IN PERFECT HARMONY

By Om Prakash Gilmore

The first time I came to a UU Church it was because of a strange dream I had and a strange character who had spoken to me about the Unitarian Society of Germantown years before. I started having dreams about Goddesses, which I didn't know anything about, or even if any such thing existed. In most churches in my neighborhood, such things would have been understood as demons, or dreams from the devil, so I knew I wouldn't get answers from them.

Luckily, I went to the Unitarian Society of Germantown where the Minister and Associate Ministers were both mystical naturalists, as they called themselves, and pagan. They led me to the right books to read that allowed me to more deeply explore my experiences. At the time CUUPS was around, but there weren't chapters everywhere so they weren't that visible. They were very different then they are now.

As a black person, to be truthful, whether with good reason or not, I didn't trust that I could confide in them. I wasn't going to search for them to do so. I don't know where I would have learned more had it not been for the coincidence of meeting those two ministers and landing in a UU Church with at least some powerful African American lay-leadership. This was way before the internet was available to the public.

Now that the internet is available and CUUPS more open and visible, we are working to create an accepting environment for anyone who is a seeker, and wants to find support for their search for truth on a path of Earth Based Traditions or Paganism with many of its offshoots. There is so much information out there on the internet today that you could run into anything, fact or fiction. As a result of this, at present, we are working to produce curriculum, pamphlets, books, papers,

BRAIDED VOICES IN PERFECT HARMONY

all kinds of information to not only make our denomination welcoming to those who practice Neo-paganism or Paganism in general, but all forms of Earth Based Spirituality. We want to help provide a safe space for deep exploration of your belief system.

I invite any of you with the inclination toward more traditional religions of your fore-parents, to become involved. We have no desire to pass on information that is incorrect, or just sounds off the wall or crazy. For the sake of accountability, we would like to have people who are willing to be available to look over our curriculum, add what is necessary, or even become involved as volunteers in order to help CUUPS become a place of welcome for all BIPOC individuals, which in turn can help our congregations do so.

I was a wreck before I came to the UU Church. Just imagine a former Pentecostal dreaming about Goddesses. At the time I was lucky to run into a church where most of the leadership was Pagan. It was a real life changer for me. In fact, I became a UU after being there. I would like more BIPOC who have been involved in some of the more fundamentalist religions who have a breakthrough, to be able to find a place without having to go on a wild dangerous search to do so.

If we all work together as Unitarian Universalists, we can create a safe place for people with such experiences, and promote growth in a safe environment. We can become more welcoming. We can guide people into networks where they can be nurtured and allowed to grow, share their hopes, dreams, gifts and talents. If this idea and vision touches you and you would like to be part of it, please contact me at rightrelations@cuups.org. Remember, your voice is important. All of our voices working together in harmony can change the world.

BRAIDED VOICES IN PERFECT HARMONY

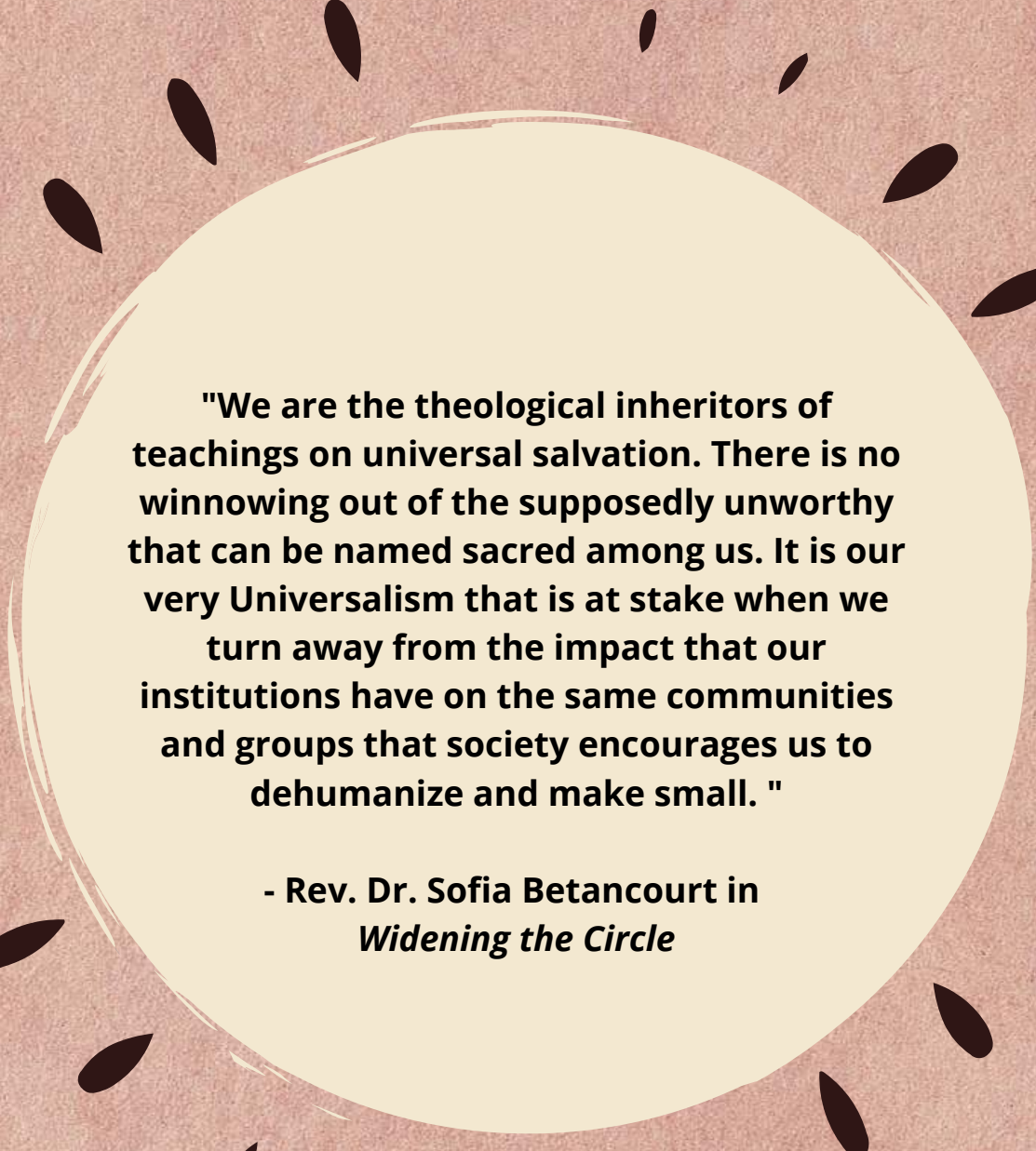
all kinds of information to not only make our denomination welcoming to those who practice Neo-paganism or Paganism in general, but all forms of Earth Based Spirituality. We want to help provide a safe space for deep exploration of your belief system.

I invite any of you with the inclination toward more traditional religions of your fore-parents, to become involved. We have no desire to pass on information that is incorrect, or just sounds off the wall or crazy. For the sake of accountability, we would like to have people who are willing to be available to look over our curriculum, add what is necessary, or even become involved as volunteers in order to help CUUPS become a place of welcome for all BIPOC individuals, which in turn can help our congregations do so.

I was a wreck before I came to the UU Church. Just imagine a former Pentecostal dreaming about Goddesses. At the time I was lucky to run into a church where most of the leadership was Pagan. It was a real life changer for me. In fact, I became a UU after being there. I would like more BIPOC who have been involved in some of the more fundamentalist religions who have a breakthrough, to be able to find a place without having to go on a wild dangerous search to do so.

If we all work together as Unitarian Universalists, we can create a safe place for people with such experiences, and promote growth in a safe environment. We can become more welcoming. We can guide people into networks where they can be nurtured and allowed to grow, share their hopes, dreams, gifts and talents. If this idea and vision touches you and you would like to be part of it, please contact me at rightrelations@cuups.org. Remember, your voice is important. All of our voices working together in harmony can change the world.

By Om Prakash Gilmore



"We are the theological inheritors of teachings on universal salvation. There is no winnowing out of the supposedly unworthy that can be named sacred among us. It is our very Universalism that is at stake when we turn away from the impact that our institutions have on the same communities and groups that society encourages us to dehumanize and make small. "

**- Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt in
*Widening the Circle***

DRUUMM ORGANIZER DROP-IN

**DRUUMM Monthly Drop-In for
Local Facilitators of BIPOC UU
Groups**

**3rd Tuesdays at 8:00 PM ET/5:00
PM PT**

**Upcoming: October 20th and
November 17th
90 minutes via Zoom**

RSVP: jsantoslyons@uuma.org

ASH RAIN

*Skies bleed orange like an autumn willow tree
and the shadows remain grey for they no longer
know where they come from.*

*Clouds are milky like the puss from a flowers'
stem
as ash coats the leaves on the farms in
Bakersfield.*

*Ash mixes with sand as black snow falls from the
sky
and the fish smoke cigars for the first time.*

*Grandma says protect your lungs, I say "what
from"
as a phoenix lights the trees like torches.*

*Cockroaches lay on their backs looking so dreary
eyed
and a small long tailed lizard hides from the red
sun.*

*Hawks no longer rise above so proud and realized
as blackened doves take to the summer skies.*

*Orphans vomit in the street as priests still preach
and fantasize about a time when God really
mattered.*

*And I think to myself "is this what hell looks like"
as walls of fire project demons prancing in the
starless night.*

-Devin A.C. Dadah

This poem is a commentary on California's 2020 wildfires. The poem follows a group of ashes as forests burn from Northern to Southern California, and what they experience along the way.



Devin A.C. Dadah is an Iraqi, Arab-American UU Muslim, young adult, poet, podcaster and orator. Growing up, Devin would awaken to the sounds of his grandfather, the legendary Iraqi musician, Saadoun Al-Bayati, playing an Arabic instrument called the oud.

He was very much around the culture of Sufi-Islamic ritual, dance and song. Eventually he would go on to graduate as team captain of his high school's soccer team and Valedictorian at the age of seventeen. Devin is now the host of the podcast, The Bayat Beat, and runs it with his two lovely co-hosts Barbara and Rev. Summer Al-Bayati.

In his free time he plays a fantasy story-telling game called Dungeons and Dragons, writes, reads, gardens and spends time with his two wonderful one year-old kittens. And when not at home he likes lifting weights at the local gym, martial arts, hiking and learning how to be closer to the natural world.

“WE MUST BE A
PEOPLE
WHO ARE
TRANSFORMING
INTO
LOVE
WARRIORS.”

--*Elandria C. Williams*
Executive Director, PeoplesHub
and Popular Educator



Remembering E

A Leader.

An Educator.

An Inspiration.

DRUUMM STEERING COMMITTEE 2020-2021

The DRUUMM Steering Committee is made up of members elected to three year terms at our annual meeting.

For more information you can reach them at info@druumm.org.

- President **Ayanna Kafi Stringer**, Georgia
- Vice President/President Elect **Cassie Montenegro**, Florida
- Vice President **Mathew Taylor**, California
- Secretary **Janell Hill**, Minnesota
- Treasurer **Eric Huang**, Texas
- Communications Co-Coordinator **Rhiannon Smith**, California

- Communications Co-Coordinator **Nicole Pressley**, Georgia
- GA Co-Coordinator **Imari S. Nuyen-Kariotis**, California
- Outreach Co-Coordinator **Noel Burke**, Missouri
- Outreach Co-Coordinator **Kaitlin Dey**, California
- UUA Liaison **Michael J Crumpler**, New York

NOTATIONS

- Over 250 BIPOC UU's participated in the DRUUMM regional caucuses in September. California/Hawai'i caucus had the largest number of registrations with 79.
- We hold in prayer our DRUUMM members who are in seminary and met with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee recently. This is the final step before ordination.
- The Colorado UU's for Racial Justice is hosting an innovative BIPOC Front Range Speaker series through November via zoom featuring a number of DRUUMM member-leaders.
- Dozens of former DRUUMM Youth & Young Adults met virtually in the wake of E's passing, reconnecting from around the world.
- The DRUUMM Asian/Pacific Islander caucus has resumed their monthly virtual coffee chat. Check them out on Facebook.
- The UU of Color Story Project <https://uuofcolorstoryproject.com/> is donating proceeds of sales to the family of E Williams.
- BLUU is resuming their Saturday BLUUberry Jam (ages 6-12) and BLUUberrYOUTH (12-18) sessions for Black children and youth.

COLOR/FULL: UU KANSAS CITY 2018



MARK MORRISON-REED
POINTE AU BARIL, ONTARIO

GOAL

Being accessible, being vulnerable, being a truth teller. Carrying some projection of hope, that we can do this. That we can recover the story. That change is possible. So I, for me, it's real clear. It's a celebration — a witness to all that.

GIFT

The quality of my presence— allows people to tell me the stories, to give me access to the stories. That I was honest enough that they gave me vulnerability of stories. It's the quality of presence that I brought. And people trusted me that I was a reliable narrator. That's not inconsequential.

The DRUUMM Beat Issue 15, Volume 2

Editor Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons Newsletter Team: Rochelle Fortier
Editorial Board: Rhiannon Smith, Nicole Pressley
For inquiries please email editor@druumm.org

The DRUUMM Beat is published under the direction of the DRUUMM Steering Committee and the Communications Portfolio. Join in the conversation with DRUUMM on Twitter and follow us on Facebook for the latest news.

Read online at www.druumm.org

