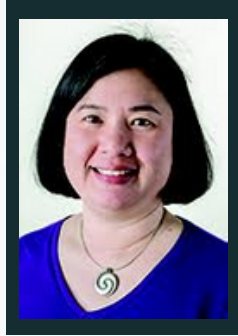


ON MISTAKES & MIRACLES WITH KARIN LIN



Karin Lin is a member of First Parish in Cambridge, MA and former Steering Committee member of the DRUUMM Asian and Pacific Islander Caucus. Karin and Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones are the authors of a new book entitled Mistakes and Miracles: Congregations on the Road to Multiculturalism, published by Skinner House.. This book shares how five diverse congregations encounter frustrations and disappointments, as well as hope and wonder, on the journey to create an anti-racist, multicultural Beloved Community.

How did you first get involved in DRUUMM?

As I describe in Mistakes and Miracles, I was a member of a UU congregation in California where I experienced racism and anti-Asian sentiment. I was looking for support and I had heard about DRUUMM before, so when they held a gathering at the Starr King School for the Ministry, I decided to go. I met Rev. Danielle Di Bona, who told me, “Everyone in this room has had an experience like yours. And what I say is that I’m not going to let anyone else define my faith for me.” Those were really powerful words for me and I still come back to them over ten years later.

What story is Mistakes and Miracles trying to tell?

We interviewed dozens of people in five different congregations that are pursuing an intentionally anti-racist, multicultural path. We explore the common threads in their congregation’s stories, and share the stories of what it looks and feels like for the real people who are involved. There have been stories about multicultural congregations in the Christian tradition, but this is the first centering Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Why did you want to be a part of telling it?

Since my experiences in that first congregation, working to move our faith toward an antiracist, multicultural future has been a big part of my journey. I knew that there were stories like mine that needed to be heard. I was also eager to explore the question of what calls us to do this work in a non-creedal faith.

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#Remembrance



Alyce Gowdy-Wright co-organized the first UU Young Adults of Color Caucus gatherings. She served in the UUA Washington Office. She passed away in 2018 and is deeply missed.

ON MISTAKES AND MIRACLES CONT...

I felt the story of my own faith development was deeply connected, and Mistakes and Miracles filled a void I experienced in my own life. The literature on multicultural churches is very Christian, and I was curious about what it looks like in our non-creedal faith.

Recognizing that even our most racially diverse UU congregations are still majority White, what did you learn about UU People of Color in these five congregations?

A lot of us feel like we have to leave a piece of ourselves at the door. There are common experiences in our lives as People of Color that don't often get addressed in the pulpit and in congregational life. Because of the racial demographics in most of our congregations, there's sometimes a certain eagerness to put People of Color into leadership, sometimes before they're fully committed or ready. I'm excited to see that there are more and more People of Color entering religious leadership in our denomination bringing a greater diversity of stories and resources into the practice of our UU faith and worship.

For the congregations you studied, what language do the congregations use to describe their own racial/cultural demographics?

All Souls Tulsa uses the term "intercultural", a subtle difference that emphasizes the relational piece. At the time we were doing our research a few years ago, most of the people we spoke to used the term "multicultural" and sometimes "antiracist." In recent years, the language has shifted and we talk more about decentering whiteness and dismantling white supremacy.

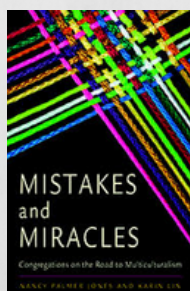
You write about the thread of intentionality among the five congregations you study, where they express a "common purpose that supersedes racial equity". How powerful is this?

It is essential. Because we have congregational polity, because we're non-creedal, we don't have any doctrine or dogma we can point to that directs our path. This means that individual congregations have to co-create a mission with intention and collective agreement. Without such a mission, people are easily swayed by what individual people want and the influence of powerful people in the congregation. Having a mission and a covenant, is something you can point to again and again. It reminds us of who we say we are and why we are called to do this work.

How has the research and writing of Mistakes and Miracles changed you?

I don't feel as alone, either as a person of color or as someone trying to do this work in my own congregation. Hearing about the mistakes and miracles that other congregations have experienced has allowed me to see the scope of our work more clearly. Having started out in a very wounded place, I used to feel a sort of panicky urgency to wanting to see things change. Now I wouldn't say my commitment is any less, but I understand the process of change and better recognize it can be a slow process and have a long way to go.

I also have developed a very close relationship with my collaborator Rev. Nancy, and experiencing how that kind of trust can be created between two people across differences of race, age, occupation, and personality has been really special. Throughout the book we say that the key to doing this work is "relationships, relationships, relationships" and I feel like our own connection really illustrates that.



Mistakes and Miracles is available through the UUA Bookstore - learn more at www.uuabookstore.org, 800-215-9076 or email bookstore@uua.org

From Bangkok to Brooklyn

By Marissa Gutierrez-Vicario

As the most recent chapter of my life comes to a close, I feel it is necessary to be more honest about something. As social media allows us to create whatever identities or perceptions we want about ourselves, I feel that much of the three months have not been accurately portrayed, so I want to be transparent about that. These last three months abroad in Bangkok have been intense, challenging, busy, confusing, and often times, very uncomfortable. I spent much time with people from across the globe learning about conflict resolution and the pursuit of peace. I spent much time alone wrestling with the idea of peace itself and why it would be something worth fighting for. While I have learned so much, I would be dishonest if I didn't think that I only scratched the surface. In efforts to synthesize many thoughts and emotions, here are some recurring themes that came, and continue to come to mind:

1. Pain / healing / trauma: All of us have so much pain, many times latent, and I have been learning to figure out ways to be more compassionate with both myself and with others as we wrestle with our pain. While it does not excuse bad behavior, it certainly helps me understand when this pain manifests itself.

2. Community: So many people across the globe have done so much for me in my life and continue to do so. I have been touched by their support of the work I do back home. I cannot stress this enough, as at home in the United States, our government continues to separate and dehumanize people across our communities. This must be stopped.



3. Future: When I think of what I want the most, I think it is to know the future and to know that everything will turn out for the best, both on a personal and global level. This is also very ironic, as that is the one thing I cannot have and perhaps if I am lucky, it will one day reveal itself to me. While I cannot hide the fact that I fear for our collective future, it does propel me to continue to work towards a better one. I am grateful for the chance I had to think more deeply about the work I do back home and why I do it.

Lastly, as many of you know, I do like to thank people. But for once, I'll just say thank you to those who helped make this experience what it needed to be, at this moment in time. You know who you are and I am so grateful to you. I hope that I did my best to be compassionate, but also stay true to my own values. However, I recognize I still have a lot to go. As the great Stevie Wonder once said, "change your words into truths and then change that truth into love." May all of you always be able to live your truth that brings you love.

#bktobkk

Artwork by: ALEX FACE

Marissa is Founder and Executive Director of Arte based in Brooklyn New York. She is a former member of the DRUUMM Youth & Young Adult Steering Committee.

The Blindfold (beyond whiteness)

By Taj James

You are strong

not fragile

You are not

your whiteness

it is just a blindfold

take it off.

you are already a part

of the human family

take it off

and stand with us

eyes open

don't hesitate

or delay

you may be driving the car

unable to see your child

just stepped into the street

you may be holding the gun

unable to see

you sister

looking up the barrel

you may be clutching the purse

unable to see

a bag full of coin

dug by other hands

so heavy on your chest

you are unable to breathe

a piece of fabric

can not die

but it can strangle

humanity's last breath

you may not have noticed

but the blindfold

has slipped down

around the necks

of your children

a noose

of blinding, lies, comfort, and

entitlement that disconnects you

from your true power

the power to

connect, breathe, repair,

to do your part to mend

the sacred hoop

take it off treason to learned

blindness is loyalty to the survival

of humanity "treason to whiteness is
loyalty

to humanity" take it off

*Read more of Taj James at
<https://medium.com/@tajjames>*

The Gathering Place - DRUUMM's People of Color Facebook

The spiritual practice that I engage in, which cultivate my spiritual growth as a Unitarian Universalist is the Buddhist practice of loving kindness or metta, which is sending love and compassion to those that harm me willfully or in ignorance. However, in order to be able to discern how and when to send metta, I have to engage practicing mindfulness and following the Buddhist precepts that regulate my thought and behavior to be in control of my reactions and responses. As a person of color in this faith tradition it has been vital to cultivate a solid spiritual practice in order to remain spiritually anchored to do the work I have been called to do.

Beyssa Buil

Meadville Lombard Seminarian
Miami, FL

My faith formation began after I left Mormonism. I was a very big atheist for about two years. Until I started rediscovering my indigenous ancestorstral heragtie and spirituality. I attended ceremony and sweat lodge and found the community centred cleansing very peaceful and mediative. I adopted smudging with sage as well. As I went deeper into my UU faith I discovered a love for pagan wheel of the year rituals and circle casting . I also found great comfort in science throughout it all I have found that I am a sciencific pantheist and indigenous spirtaunist finding peace in nature and ancient spirituality and a symbolic metephorical understanding of God and goddess. It has truly allowed me to live an authentic life and deep my sense of belonging and love for Unintarian Universalism.

Aspen Isaiah Basaldua
Weslaco, TX

"What spiritual practice do you engage in regularly that cultivates your spiritual growth as a Unitarian Universalist?"

I believe we must nurture ourselves. So one of my daily practices is steeped in self-care. At several points during the day I pause, breathe and intentionally remind myself, that I hold the things I need for this journey: Clarity, Strength, Compassion and Joy.

I have focus.

I am capable.

I choose love and kindness.

I carry delight.

It's simple...but really helpful.

Rev. Carol Thomas Cissel

Minister - UU Fellowship of Centre County
State College, PA

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.

When I speak of change, I do not mean a simple switch of positions or a temporary lessening of tensions, nor the ability to smile or feel good. I am speaking of a basic and radical alteration in all those assumptions underlining our lives.

Audre Lorde
1934-1992

VALENTIN APPOINTED UUA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR



Of this new position, Rev. Valentín shares, “I am so excited to be returning full circle in gratitude to where it all began for me, and to be able to share my accumulated wisdom from my various positions with a cadre of ministers venturing into many forms of ministry.”

See the full announcement at www.uua.org

Rev. Valentín is a Nuyorican (Puerto Rican New Yorker), and her poems and prayers have appeared in many Skinner House anthologies.



Rev. Cheng Imm Tan and Rev. Dr. Michelle Bentley at the first Finding Our Way Home gathering for UU Religious Professionals of Color

COLOR/FULL: A DRUUMM GLOBAL MAJORITIES PROJECT



**LEON SPENCER
STATESBORO, GA**

GOAL

To connect. Build a sustained community. And to keep on the journey of becoming a multicultural, anti-oppressive community. Beloved community, that’s why I’m here.

GIFT

I don’t know... Well, I do know. I offer myself: my skills, my services, my spirit, my body, my time, my energy, my community. But the gift is what I give back.



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