

## **Displaying a Black Lives Matter Banner**

### **Granite Peak UU Congregation**

Hanne Stone, Justice Ministry Facilitator

After the members of our congregation went to GA and were involved in the Action of Immediate Witness process for support of Black Lives Matter and after the shootings at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston many in our congregation started to talk about displaying a Black Lives Matter banner on our building. Our Social Justice Ministry Council decided to discuss the idea and plan a timeline in which there would be opportunities for full congregational involvement in the process. As we began to research both supportive and non-supportive materials to present to the congregation, we found information in a variety of places and have included a listing of resources that aided our effort – see addendum G. As we were researching and planning our forums we found that what we needed that was the most informative and helpful was scattered all over the web so this outline is an effort to bring much of what we found together in one place.

Also included in this outline is what we call Sunday forums – 2 before the Sunday Service at 9:00 am and 1 after the service at 11:30. Our forums are, as the name implies open discussions for members of the congregation to learn and discuss questions at hand. Thus, part of the time in the forums is informational and part of the time is dedicated to talking about how we understand the topic individually. We did this for the displaying of the Black Lives Matter banner. The second forum we had was dedicated to having an open time just to share our feelings and thoughts regarding the BLM movement without discussion. We realized after we displayed the banner that this forum was necessary to create a sacred time to listen to the voices of the congregation.

Included are all of the processes and procedures and handouts -even the press release that we sent out. These are for reference and aides for any congregation in AZ to use if they are thinking about displaying a banner at their church. Being located in Prescott, our paper chose not to run our press release but we have had discussions with members of the broader community regarding our banner. This issue of ‘Don’t All Lives Matter?’ has come up frequently both within the congregation and from the broader community. We found Opal Tometi’s video and other readings in the resource section very helpful in being ready to answer this question.

**Black Lives Matter Banner Process:**

- 1) GA Sunday Service: (8-2)  
People shared about the Black Lives Matter – Action of Immediate Witness
- 2) Internal conversations among members about events in the news -Charleston shootings and 1 year anniversary of Ferguson- including during our monthly Social Justice Reflective Service
- 3) Social Justice Ministry Council discusses displaying the banner addressing the following questions:
  - What does it mean to display the banner?
  - Why should we display the banner in our town?
  - How do we inform and consider the congregation?
  - How do we respond to members who have questions?
- 4) SJMC approves and sends a proposal to the BOT for their approval
- 5) Included in that proposal was the following timeline:

**Black Life’s Matter Banner: Action of Public Witness Timeline:**

Display Banner in Davis Hall for this Sunday:	Sat (8-22)
Rev Karla’s Sermon: Black History in UU	Sun (8-23)
Report to the Board:	Mon (8-24)
Board Approval: (regular monthly meeting)	Mon (8-24)
Article in Monthly and Weekly view: (newsletters)	Tues (8-25)
Press Release	Wed (8-26)
Sunday 9:00 am Open Forum:	Sun (8-30)
What does BLM mean and Why Would We Display a Banner?	
Action of Public Witness: Install Banner after Sunday Service	Sun (8-30)
Sunday After-Service Forum: Open Discussion	Sun (9-13)
Open Sharing and Reflection (*)	
Handout: (to everyone at the Service)	
‘How to talk about the Banner with members of the broader community’	
Sunday 9:00 am Follow Up Forum:	Sun (9-26)
How Can We Be Allies?	

(\* added when we realized it was necessary to talk about our feelings in an open manner about BLM and racism)

- 6) During this process Rev Karla with the support of the Faith Development committee and the Social Justice Ministry Council decided to lead the 24week course “Building the World We Dream About”. (UUA curriculum on Racism - <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/btwwda> ) Starting 10-8

**Resources and Aides**

Included are copies and outlines of the following:

- A. Proposal to the BOT
- B. Press Release
- C. Forum Outlines (3)
- D. Banner Display Ceremony
- E. Handout: 'How talk About the BLM Banner'
- F. Black Lives Matter Statement: Action of Public Witness from UUA GA
- G. List of resources that aided in this process and were used in the forums

## **Addendum A: Proposal to the BOT**

### Displaying Black Live's Matter Banner at GPUUC

“To display the sign, Black Lives Matter, is an act of cultural resistance, of public witness. This action is a symbol of something larger, and a spiritual practice as well—focus, attention, and steadiness. The aim and desire is to keep the spotlight on the complex set of issues affecting Black people in this country, dating from slavery through to 2015. Not since the Civil Rights Era has there been such a sustained commitment to make broad change. Black Lives Matter is a statement about that renewed commitment, a vow to keep looking, watching, and struggling.” -  
- Rev. Louise Green, Minister for Congregational Life, River Road UU Church, Bethesda MD

We on the GP SJMC support the above statement and recommend as an Action of Public witness that Granite Peak display the Black Live's Matter on the outside of our church to show that we stand publicly in solidarity with the Black Live's Matter Movement and as a public witness of our faith, living out our First Principle that we believe in the worth and dignity of all people.

We have mapped out a timeline for this action, culminating in displaying the banner next Sunday after the service. Included in that time line are newsletter and weekly view articles, a GP Adult Faith forum at 9:00 am Sunday morning Aug 30th and Sept 26<sup>th</sup> and a press release. (Timeline was attached here).

**Addendum B: Press Release**

Press Release for Immediate Release

8/29/2015

Contact: Hanne Stone – 928-710-4899

**Granite Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
To Display Black Lives Matters Banner**

After their August 30 Sunday Service, the Granite Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation installed a Black Lives Matter banner on the outside wall of their sanctuary. Granite Peak's Social Justice Ministry Facilitator, Hanne Stone, called it "an action of public witness to proclaim that we stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement." Stone added, "Our congregation, believes it is an act of our faith to stand on the side of the oppressed and marginalized members of our community and to work for social justice for all. In our faith, we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of EVERY person."

Social justice is a foundation of the Unitarian Universalist faith. The denomination, which often refers to itself as "UUs", prioritizes taking action and living out their values in a visible and public way.

"A defining social justice cause is the fight against systemic racial discrimination. Displaying a Black Lives Matter banner proclaims that we won't sit quietly and hope the racial discrimination and injustice will go away," Stone noted. She acknowledged that displaying the banner won't bring about change by itself, but "it does proclaim to all who pass by, it makes the statement loud and clear, that we believe that all black lives matter," she added.

The Granite Peak Congregation has 135 members and was formed in 1999. It is one of thirteen UU Congregations throughout Arizona totaling more than 2,300 members. Granite Peak recently called a new, full-time minister, the Rev. Karla Brockie. Their Sunday service begins at 10:00am and a full children's religious education program is available. They are located at 882 Sunset Ave. in Prescott.

### 30 ###

## Addendum C: Forum Outlines (3)

### Covenant for all Forums:

- Share from life experiences – use I statements
- Listen deeply and assume good intentions
- Participate and insure others participation (“step up if you tend to be quiet/step back if you tend to share a lot)
- Sharing our stories, feelings and thoughts are important and actively listening to each other is equally as important.
- All questions are welcome

### Forum 1: Why display the Banner? (45min)

#### Opening Quote:

“To display the sign, Black Lives Matter, is an act of cultural resistance, of public witness. This action is a symbol of something larger, and a spiritual practice as well—focus, attention, and steadiness. The aim and desire is to keep the spotlight on the complex set of issues affecting Black people in this country, dating from slavery through to 2015. Not since the Civil Rights Era has there been such a sustained commitment to make broad change. Black Lives Matter is a statement about that renewed commitment, a vow to keep looking, watching, and struggling.” -- Rev. Louise Green, Minister for Congregational Life, River Road UU Church, Bethesda MD

We then addressed/discussed these three questions:

- 1) What is the Black Lives Matter Movement?

Video of Opal Tometi, one of the founders of the Black Lives Matter Movement, when she addressed the Selma 2015 Living Legacy Project.

<http://smallscreen.uua.org/videos/opal-tometti-addresses-the-2105-selma-llp-conference>

#### Group Discussion

- 2) Why would we display this Banner?

Personal sharing from congregation member

Group Discussion

- 3) What does it mean as an act of our faith to display a BLM Banner?

Group Discussion

#### Closing:

Recognize that these are hard conversations to have. I want to encourage everyone to continue these open discussions about Black Lives Matter and racism in our culture in one on one conversation and in small groups. We will be continuing these discussions and this journey together through Faith Development Sunday morning forums and classes.

Closing prayer from Joseph M Cherry :

If we have any hope of transforming the world and changing ourselves,  
we must be:

bold enough to step into our discomfort, brave enough to be clumsy there,  
loving enough to forgive ourselves and others.

May we, as a people of faith, be granted the strength to be: so bold, so brave, and so loving.

## **Forum 2: Open Discussion**

**(1hr)**

(Added because we realized we need to have an open discussion about the feelings that the BLM Banner was stirring up with in the congregation.)

We held this forum in the Sanctuary to have the feeling of sacred and safe space for sharing.

1-Chalice Lighting

2- Talk about holding a safe and sacred space for sharing from our hearts and deeply listening to each other. This is a time to share and listen not to discuss our feelings about the lack Lives Matter Movement. We are not here to change opinions we are here just to listen to each other's personal thoughts and feelings. So when you come up to share please come from your own experience and do not respond to someone else's share.

3- Open mic sharing- *(facilitator mindful and watchful of time and tone)*

4- Watch the Video (of Opal Tometi, one of the founders of the Black Lives Matter Movement, when she addressed the Selma 2015 Living Legacy Project.)

<http://smallscreen.uua.org/videos/opal-tometti-addresses-the-2105-selma-llp-conference>

5- Closing: Reflect on emotions that were shared. *(i.e. pain, honesty fear etc.)* Thank everyone. And emphasize continuing discussions. *(Many people ended up staying for another 45min talking in small groups and thanking each other for sharing from their hearts)*

6-Chalice extinguishing:

Lilla Watson: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

### **Forum 3: How Can We be Allies? What can we as UU's Do?**

**(45min)**

Opening words:

Your Life Matters -By Kenny Wiley

Most of us Unitarian Universalists are here because we felt welcome here — at last. Some of us were too agnostic somewhere else. Some of us weren't vindictive enough somewhere else. We were too working-class somewhere else. We were too lesbian somewhere else. We were too nerdy somewhere else, too introverted somewhere else, too gay-married somewhere else.

Many of us are here because this faith and the people in it affirmed: you may not be perfect, but your life matters just the same.

That's what's on the line now. Through racism and posthumous victim-blaming, through silence and bullets and indifference and vilification, black people are being told that our lives do not matter—or that they matter only conditionally. Black lives matter if: If we are educated. If we are respectful. If. And sometimes, not even then do our lives matter.

Right now we as Unitarian Universalists are being called to act. We are being called by our ancestors—those who demanded that we help end slavery, that we fight for suffrage, that we join the struggle to end Jim Crow, that we listen to and honor Black Power.

Lydia Maria Child and William Lloyd Garrison are calling us.

Lucy Stone is calling us.

Fannie B. Williams and Frances Ellen Harper are calling us.

James Reeb is calling us.

Viola Liuzzo is calling us.

Guided by that enduring, unfulfilled promise of the belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person, ours is a faith that has said, or worked to say to those who have been marginalized:

You are a woman, and your life matters.

You are gay or lesbian, and your life matters.

You are transgender, and your life matters.

You are bisexual, and your life matters.

You have a disability, and your life matters.

You were not loved as a child, and your life matters.

You struggle with depression, and your life matters.

Right now we are being called—

by our ancestors, by our principles, by young black activists across the country—to promote and affirm:

You are young and black, and your life matters.

You stole something, and your life matters.

I have been taught to fear you, and your life matters.

The police are releasing your criminal record, and your life matters.

They are calling you a thug, and your life matters.

Our ancestors, principles, and fellow humans are calling on us to promote affirm, with deeds and words: Black lives matter.

When then addressed/discussed these two questions:

1. After reflecting for this past month on Black Lives Matter and the banner display, does anyone have anything they would like to share?
2. How can we be allies in this movement? What can we as UU do?

We then listed the answers we shared on a white board and then discussed them.

Closing words:

Chalice extinguishing:

“Let’s be clear, We said Black Lives Matter. We never said that *only* black lives matter. That was the media, not us. In truth we know that all lives matter. We supported your lives throughout history. Now we need your help with Black lives Matter; For black lives are in danger.” -BLM Movement

## **Addendum D: Banner Display Ceremony**

### **DISPLAYING the Banner Ceremony:**

We would like to share a quote from Rev. Louise Green, Minister for Congregational Life, River Road UU Church, Bethesda MD

She says “To display the sign, Black Lives Matter, is an act of cultural resistance, of public witness. This action is a symbol of something larger, and a spiritual practice as well—focus, attention, and steadiness. The aim and desire is to keep the spotlight on the complex set of issues affecting Black people in this country, dating from slavery through to 2015. Not since the Civil Rights Era has there been such a sustained commitment to make broad change. Black Lives Matter is a statement about that renewed commitment, a vow to keep looking, watching, and struggling.”

“In Our congregation, we believe it is an act of our faith to stand on the side of the oppressed and marginalized members of our community and to work for social justice for all. In our faith, we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of EVERY person. A defining social justice cause is the fight against systemic racial discrimination. Displaying a Black Lives Matter banner proclaims that we won’t sit quietly and hope the racial discrimination and injustice will go away. We acknowledged that displaying the banner won’t bring about change by itself, but it does proclaim to all who pass by, it makes the statement loud and clear, that we believe that black lives matter.

In the words of Ella Baker a strong black community organizer during the civil rights movement “ When the killing of black men black mother’s sons is as important as the killing of white men white mothers sons “

“We who believe in freedom cannot rest” (repeat and chant while sign is installed on building)

**Addendum E: Handout 'How to talk about BLM Banner' (*handed out on Sunday with OOSS*)**

**Until the killing of Black men, Black mothers' sons  
Is as important as the killing of White men, White mothers' sons  
We who believe in freedom cannot rest**

**Bernice Johnson Reagon**

As a denomination and as a congregation we have publicly stated our support of the Black Lives Matter movement. This is a corollary of our first UU principle regarding the inherent worth and dignity of every living person. All lives matter, of course. Yet at this moment in history we choose to lift up the continued unequal treatment of Black people. Not only is the quality of their lives diminished, but their very survival is threatened.

Here are some of the ideas and facts shared in our first Black Lives Matter forum held on August 30. They may be helpful if you find yourself discussing our banner with friends and neighbors and may entice you to join in the continuing conversation at the upcoming Forum on September 27.

There is general denial that Racism remains widespread. Despite undeniable evidence of serious discrepancies between the races in income, housing, medical care and employment, more than half of white Americans believe that black and white living conditions are "about the same." Both Black and white respondents believe that discrimination against Blacks has reduced somewhat since the 1950's but a sizable number of white people perceive that "reverse racism" or discrimination against their race has become a more serious problem.

Racism is not primarily an individual trait, but is deeply embedded culture and institutions. One reason for resisting the reality of racism is the tendency to think that our own conscious motives are being challenged. The current movement invites us to shift away from looking at personal intentions and to explore the forms of implicit, unconscious racism that come from our social institutions and from unnoticed white privilege.

Kali Holloway writes in Salon Online that "fruitful conversations about race require acknowledging that racism sits at the very core of our thinking. By something akin to osmosis, culturally held notions around race mold and shape the prejudices of everyone within the dominant culture."

These beliefs are almost inescapable unless we are able to take a deep look at how pervasive they are in our language, media and social structures. Holloway's article reveals surprising evidence of how implicit racism is still present in dominant culture groups who often have no awareness of the assumptions they are making. We've taken some time to check out her citations and a few of the seminal studies they are based on. The work cited below is recent,

peer reviewed and written by reputable scholars.

#### Research Findings on Anti-Black Racism

- Correlations were found between white police officers' responses to certain tests that revealed a disrespectful or dehumanizing attitudes toward Black people and those same officers' record of using force against Black children who were being detained.
- Prison sentences for black men are nearly 20% longer than for white men who commit the same crimes. This gap has actually widened in the last ten years, according to data provided by the US Sentencing Commission.
- The more “stereotypically black” the appearance of a defendant in a murder case, defined as broad noses, thick lips and darker skin, the higher the likelihood he will be sentenced to death. This is true after holding constant all previously identified aggravating and mitigating conditions such as previous convictions.
- White people asked to rate photographs found that lighter-skinned Black and Latino people were rated as more intelligent, more competent, more reliable and more trustworthy than people with darker skin.
- Black children are more likely to be tried as adults and are given harsher sentences than white children
- Black students—even preschoolers—are far more likely to be suspended from school than white students. (That relationship is even stronger for dark-skinned black students.)
- White people, including white children, show less empathy toward instances of black people in pain than they do toward white people experiencing the same pain and distress. Black children who come to emergency rooms are less likely to be given pain medication than white kids with similar symptoms and wait longer for test results and treatment.
- When asked to rate the innocence or guilt of youth from infancy to age 25, respondents judged children up to 9 years old as equally innocent regardless of race, but considered Black children significantly less innocent than other children in every age group beginning at age 10, the researchers found. Also, police officers asked to identify the ages of kids in photographs, overestimated the age of Black children by 4 ½ years. This may indicate a perception of the race as more dangerous and aggressive than white youth.
- The same products, when displayed by black hands on Internet advertisement, are less likely to sell than when they are held by white hands.

## Addendum F: Black Lives Matter Statement: Action of Public Witness from UUA GA

### UUA GA -2015 Action of Immediate Witness

**WHEREAS**, Unitarian Universalists strive for justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

**WHEREAS**, Unitarian Universalists have a goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

**WHEREAS**, allowing injustice to go unchallenged violates our principles;

**WHEREAS**, the Black Lives Matter movement has gained powerful traction in conjunction with recent tragic events involving, in particular, police brutality and institutionalized racism that target the black community;

**WHEREAS**, Tanisha Anderson, Rekia Boyd, Michael Brown, Miriam Carey, Michelle Cusseaux, Shelly Frey, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Trayvon Martin, Kayla Moore, Tamir Rice, and Tony Robinson are just a few names of people who were recently killed by the racism that exists in the United States today;

**WHEREAS**, people of all ages and races are killed by law enforcement, yet black people ages 20-24 are seven times more likely to be killed by law enforcement;

**WHEREAS**, mass incarceration fueled by for-profit prisons and racially biased police practices drive the disproportionate imprisonment of black and brown Americans;

**WHEREAS**, the school-to-prison pipeline is an urgent concern because 40% of black students are expelled from U.S. public schools and one out of three black men is incarcerated during his lifetime; and

**WHEREAS**, we must continue to support the Black Lives Matter movement and Black-led racial justice organizations;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the 2015 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls member congregations to action, to become closer to a just world community, and to prevent future incidents of this nature;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the 2015 General Assembly urges member congregations to engage in intentional learning spaces to organize for racial justice with recognition of the interconnected nature of racism coupled with systems of oppression that impact people based on class, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability and language;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the 2015 General Assembly encourages member congregations and all Unitarian Universalists to work toward police reform and prison abolition (which seeks to replace the current prison system with a system that is more just and equitable); and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the 2015 General Assembly recognizes that the fight for civil rights and equality is as real today as it was decades ago and urges member congregations to take initiative in collaboration with local and national organizations fighting for racial justice against the harsh racist practices to which many black people are exposed.

No matter who you are, black lives matter, and a system of fair, transformative, and restorative justice that is accountable to communities is something to which each of us has a right. Unitarian Universalists and our greater society have the power to make this happen. Let's do it!

## Addendum G: Links

<http://smallscreen.uua.org/videos/opal-tometti-addresses-the-2105-selma-llp-conference>

Video of Opal Tometi, one of the founders of the Black Lives Matter Movement, when she addressed the Selma 2015 Living Legacy Project. (We found this to be great for the forums and it was requested several times.)

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/change-black-to-all>

UUA – Readings and prayers used in forums.

<http://www.uua.org/statements/support-black-lives-matter-movement>

SUPPORT THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT -2015 Action of Immediate Witness ( printed hand -out at forums)

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/5-ways-support-black-lives-matter>

Five ways to support Black Lives Matter

<http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/the-power-of-the-black-lives-matter-banner>

Standing on the Side of Love

<https://www.facebook.com/BlackLivesUU?pnref=story>

Black Lives of UU

<http://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/courage-for-blacklivesmatter-hesaid/>

Courage For Black Lives Matter: Love Letter to White Unitarian Universalists (and other white folks too)

<https://serenityhome.wordpress.com/2015/08/14/comfortability-2/>

A Unitarian Universalist Minister in the South: Comfortability

<http://thehumanist.com/commentary/humanism-and-the-blacklivesmatter-movement>

Humanism and the #BlackLivesMatter Movement

<http://kennywiley.com/2015/03/26/a-unitarian-universalist-black-lives-matter-theology/>

A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST 'BLACK LIVES MATTER' THEOLOGY - Kenny Wiley

<https://spirituwellness.wordpress.com/2015/08/26/where-is-your-faith/>

Where is Your Faith? -Rev Adam Dyer

<http://blueboat.blogs.uua.org/2015/08/17/spiritual-practices-for-white-discomfort/>

Spiritual Practices for White Discomfort -Annie Gonzalez Milliken

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/blm-banner-%E2%80%98brings-out-conversation%E2%80%99>

Black Lives Matter banner 'brings out conversation'