



## **SPECIAL FEATURE**

### **What is the history of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Durango and racial justice work?**

*(documented in February 2023)*

In 2014/2015 a team was formally organized to focus on anti-racism work in our congregation with the guidance and support of new minister Rev. Katie Kandarian-Morris. The purpose was to establish an explicit focus on work we need to do internally and with our community to raise consciousness about structural racism and practices, and to promote new practices that help to build a racially just world. The team took the name of "Healing Racism."

Numerous events, activities, communications, presentations and collaborations were initiated and/or supported by the Healing Racism Team, the Immigration Team, Faith Formation and the Worship Team in the following years. While there is no one record of all of these, listed below is a description of significant experiences that help to illustrate our ongoing commitment to racial justice work.

#### **2015**

*Healing Racism Workshop.* Twenty-five UUFD members participated in a workshop led by Rev. Katie to lay groundwork for future anti-racism conversations and opportunities.

*Circle of Conversation.* Rev. Katie led conversation circles for those interested in exploring and understanding issues of racism and oppression in our nation and its continued woundedness.

*Brewing Spirituality.* Religious Education leaders hosted a young adult group meeting monthly, with one topic being "It's Hard to Talk About Race."

#### **2016**

*Common Read.* UUFD members joined in reading and discussing the book "Just Mercy" by Bryan Stevenson, which was the Durango and Fort Lewis College common read choice for this year.

*Martin Luther King Day.* Ten UUFD members attended the MLK Day workshops hosted by Fort Lewis College.

*Diversity Dialogues.* Members of the Healing Racism Team and other UUFD members participated in the community workshop sponsored by FLC on Embracing Diversity.

*Indigenous People's Day.* UUFD members joined in activities at FLC to recognize indigenous peoples and honor their history.

*White Like Me.* The Healing Racism team sponsored the showing of the film "White Like Me" which was also open to the public.

*Indivisible Durango.* UUFD Immigration Team began ongoing partnership with Indivisible Durango to stay current and act on legislative initiatives related to immigrant justice.

## **2017**

*Our Compañeros.* UUFD hosted the Director of Compañeros Four Corners Immigrant Resource Center as the guest pulpit speaker in Sunday worship service to learn how we might partner with immigrants in our community.

*RESPOND.* UUFD joined other members of the community in a day-long event providing information and training in topics such as immigration in our community, white privilege, and transforming despair into action.

*Beyond Voting and Black Lives Still Matter.* UUFD hosted a pulpit guest who spoke to the importance of Black Lives Matter and how we can work toward racial justice and equity.

*Diversity Dialogues.* Members of the Healing Racism Team and other UUFD members participated in the community workshop sponsored by FLC.

*White Identity.* UUFD member led a workshop on white privilege, how racism persists, and ideas about what we can do.

*Born With a Box of Matches Inside.* Rev. Katie's sermon on Sunday worship explored white supremacy and our commitment to resist it, looking at our contributions to white supremacy culture and making a conscious shift.

*Real History of the Americas/Indigenous People's Day.* UUFD commemorated the day in our Sunday service with FLC student leaders of RHOA/IPD joining in the service. UUFD also co-planned with FLC the community event focused on dismantling racism and celebrating our diverse histories.

*Compañeros Fundraiser.* UUFD Immigration Team hosted a fundraiser for Compañeros to help with their work to support immigrants and their loved ones through advocacy, education and integrative programs.

## **2018**

*Diversity Dialogues.* Members of the Healing Racism Team and other UUFD members participated in the community workshop sponsored by FLC.

*Beloved Conversations.* Thirty UUFD members participated in a weekend retreat led by Julica Hermann DelaFuente and continued in eight follow-up seminars. The curriculum provided space to heal the spiritual and organizational wounds that racism causes in our faith community. Julica also delivered the sermon for the Sunday service during the weekend of the retreat.

*Common Read.* UUFD members participated in discussions of the book “Justice on Earth: People of Faith Working at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Environment.”

*Real History of the Americas/Indigenous People’s Day.* Rev. Katie, UUFD members, and FLC students hosted a multi-cultural event to increase awareness and appreciation of the cultures and histories of sometimes marginalized peoples.

*Compañeros Fundraiser.* UUFD Immigration Team hosted a fundraiser for Compañeros to help with their work to support immigrants and their loved ones through advocacy, education and integrative programs.

## **2019**

*Women of Resolution.* UUFD Immigration Team hosted a community showing of the documentary “Women of Resolution” highlighting the stories and justice issues of four immigrant women in sanctuary in Colorado churches and seeking support for a local woman in sanctuary in Mancos.

*Native Appropriations.* Rev. Katie and Native American pulpit guest led a Sunday worship focused on learning how we can build relationships based on respect rather than cultural borrowing.

## **2020**

*White Fragility.* The Healing Racism Team facilitated a discussion series of the book “White Fragility” by Robin DiAngelo. Gatherings were scheduled monthly with each session to be preceded by a potluck. Related articles were published each month in the UUFD newsletter to encourage reflection by the entire congregation. When Covid shut down all in-person gatherings, the team adjusted plans to permit monthly zoom book discussions.

*Making Space for the Mess.* Healing Racism Team leaders served as pulpit guests speaking about why healing racism is critical to our UUFD mission.

*Navajo Nation Supply Drive.* Working with the Navajo Nation, UUFD hosted a community-wide food drive to provide much needed food supplies to Navajo families hit hard by Covid and shutdowns.

*Lessons from Indigenous Peoples Day.* As zoom only worship continued, a Sunday worship sermon digitally featured art from FLC indigenous student graduates to help build connections.

*Peace and Justice.* UUFD members joined in community vigils led by the Southwest Movement for Black Lives each Friday night to bring attention to powder keg racial unrest and injustice.

*SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice).* The Healing Racism Team joined efforts to start a local chapter of SURJ.

*Asylee Family.* UUFD provided free temporary housing (Columbine House) to an asylee family from Cuba, with a UUFD member serving as the family sponsor and a team providing multiple levels of support, including financial, food and clothing, job seeking, learning English language, medical care, transportation, legal documents and applications, court appointments.

## **2021**

*Asylee Family.* UUFD provided free temporary housing (Columbine House) to an asylee family from Cuba, with a UUFD member serving as the family sponsor and a team providing multiple levels of support, including financial, food and clothing, job seeking, learning English language, medical care, transportation, legal documents and applications, court appointments.

*Widening the Circle of Concern.* Rev. Katie led a Sunday service inviting the congregation to ponder the joyful change work deeply rooted in our theology.

*Black Lives Matter: A Talk Show By Kids.* Elementary Faith Formation students explore how to be anti-racist and produce a zoom talk show demonstrating what they've learned and shared it with the whole congregation.

*Black Student Union.* UUFD provided financial support to the newly organizing Black Student Union/Alliance at Durango High School.

*Honoring Indigenous Peoples Day.* Two authors, one a UUFD member and one a Navajo writer, helped us celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day by paying attention to the literary and artistic world of Navajo writers in a Sunday worship service.

*Healing Racism Reflections.* The Healing Racism Team initiated a series of personal reflections on their anti-racism work, published in the UUFD monthly newsletter, and provided additional resources for information and support.

## **2022**

*What is Critical Race Theory?* New targeted minister Rev. Gary Kowalski conducted a Sunday service leading the congregation in understanding what CRT is and exploring if it can help us walk with greater clarity, intention, and purpose toward M.L. King's long deferred dream of justice and opportunity for all.

*Healing Racism Reflections.* The Healing Racism Team continued their series of personal reflections on their anti-racism work, published in the UUFD monthly newsletter, and provided additional resources for information and support.

*Free Little Libraries.* The Healing Racism Team worked with a local leader who supports immigrant families learning English to select and purchase a collection of children's books and books for adults written in Spanish to place in free Little Libraries in Durango locations where those families live.

*Celebration of Diversity.* UUFD members participated in the Durango High School Soul Food dinner event with presentations celebrating diversity in the school and our community.

## **2023**

*Centering the Margins: Moving Forward in Dismantling Racism.* Interim Minister Rev. Barbara Coeyman offered two sermons on potential revisions to UUA bylaws, Article II, to place love as the central core value and its potential impact on our anti-racism and anti-oppression work, the concepts in "Widening the Circle of Concern" on how we let more love in.

*Dig Deeper.* The Healing Racism Team changed its name to Anti-Racism Team to better reflect the purpose of its work. The team provided resources to the congregation to learn more about the history of Black Americans.

*Soul Food Dinner.* The Anti-Racism Team championed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Soul Food Dinner at Durango High School to support the DHS Black Student Alliance.

*1619, not 1776.* Rev. Barbara offered a sermon during worship on the perspective of 1619 (the year the first African slave ship arrived on the shores of Virginia) as the true founding date of our country, highlighting how slavery and racism has been central to the American story.

[www.durangouu.org](http://www.durangouu.org)

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