

I Learned about Racism

Reflections on UU General Assembly, 2017

To me, New Orleans is a city of Social Justice. The first time I was there was in 2008 celebrating the 10th anniversary of V-Day a global movement to end violence against women and girls. This year I was there to witness how my faith was going to take on Racism and White Supremacy, the most pressing social justice concerns of our time.

I arrived a couple days before GA started and attended “Undoing Racism” a two day workshop facilitated by The People’s Institute, a New Orleans-based, national, multiracial, anti-racist network dedicated to ending racism and other forms of institutional oppression.

I personally have struggled with wanting to do the right thing and not knowing exactly how, wanting to help make change, afraid I will do it wrong, or I will not be enough. For two days I sat in one of three rooms with people who felt the same way. We were mostly women, mostly white women willing to take a step from which there is no turning back. We were in a safe space. Not a comfortable space, but a safe space. We quickly learned those were two different things.

I learned that racism is the most profitable franchise in the world.

I learned that racism is systemic and institutionalize.

I learned that not only do people of color internalize oppression but that white people internalize superiority both resulting in maintaining the status quo of racism.

I learned that racism takes away from me a chance for beloved community.

I learned that racism is violence.

But most importantly I learned that we, as white people, as the primary benefactor of a racist society, have the power to change it if we want it. But we have to want it. We have to want it so badly that any fear we have of change no longer matters.

We have to want to understand that economics is a central issue of racism

We have to want POC to have equal access to resources without being afraid we are losing something

We have to want POC to serve as leaders for us and be willing to follow them

We have to want to understand that even religion can be a foot of oppression andtThat when we intellectualize and study and talk about the problem (which as UUs we are really good at) When we do that without action, without proximity, without accountability we are a boot on that foot.

We have to want beloved community where poverty, hunger, homelessness, unlawful police killings of black men, the incarceration of young black boys for minor offenses, the bombing of neighborhood mosques, the tearing apart of immigrant families, the rallying of NEO Nazi’s in Charlottesville will not be tolerated because standards of human decency will not allow it.

We have to want change, because without it we will not survive.

And when we mess up or get it wrong, and we will mess up, I know that the poc in my life that care about me will let me know. And then we have to want to try again and again and again until we get it right.