

# PAINT BRANCH UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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September 11, 2007

Dear Paint Branch Member/Friend:

At our June 2007 annual meeting, members of Paint Branch Unitarian Universalist Church (PBUUC) signaled the congregation's readiness to undertake a journey toward greater diversity, inclusiveness and understanding by voting overwhelmingly to make Anti-Racism the congregation's principal social action initiative.

The Board of Trustees of PBUUC is excited to formally endorse and support the congregation's Anti-Racism Initiative and invites you to enter, rejoice, and come on the journey.

The path toward this initiative began 10 years ago with the passage of a resolution to move the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) toward becoming an anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural association of congregations. That resolution, passed virtually unanimously at the 1997 General Assembly (GA), the denomination's Annual Meeting. As shown through the following excerpts, that resolution calls for us to recognize and strive to overcome racism in our thinking, lives, and community:

- *"... Unitarian Universalist principles call us to affirm and promote "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations" and "the goal of world community"...*
- *...our history as Unitarian Universalists includes evidence of both great commitment and individual achievement in the struggle for racial justice as well as the failure of our Unitarian Universalist institutions to respond fully to the call for justice...*
- *...racism and its effects, including economic injustice, are embedded in all social institutions as well as in ourselves and will not be eradicated without deliberate engagement in analysis and action...*
- *...we realize we need to make an institutional commitment to end racism...*
- *...we are called yet again by our commitment to faith in action to pursue this anti-racist, multi-cultural initiative in the spirit of justice, compassion, and community...*
- *... Unitarian Universalists [are urged] to examine carefully their own conscious and unconscious racism as participants in a racist society, and the effect that racism has on all our lives...*
- *... [the UUA], its congregations, and community organizations [are urged] to develop an ongoing process for the comprehensive institutionalization of anti-racism and multi-culturalism, understanding that whether or not a group becomes multi-racial, there is always the opportunity to become anti-racist."*

With its creation of the Anti-Oppression-Anti-Racism Transformation Task Force, the UUA began what they named a Journey Toward Wholeness (JTW). This ten-year journey resulted in JTW reports at each GA, workshops on various facets of the initiative, periodic regional diversity conferences, and other activities sponsored by UUA Districts, affiliate organizations, and congregations. The Anti-Racism Initiative has produced some institutional and personal changes, but there is still more work to do.

At the Opening Ceremony of the 2007 GA, UUA President Reverend William Sinkford said, "There are opportunities as well as challenges ahead for [our] faith. It is time for our congregations to re-commit to the vision cast by the 1997 Journey toward Wholeness resolution."

Paint Branchers are already involved or committed to becoming involved in developing and implementing this initiative in our congregation. At planning meetings in August and early September, the newly-formed PBUUC Diversity/Anti-Racism Transformation Team (DARTT) began its work. Long time Paint Branch member and leader **Leo Jones** will guide DARTT.

Three activities are already planned to launch PBUUC's initiative. They are:

**Book Discussion: "Who's Afraid of a Large Black Man?"** Led by **Mike Stark**, (301-441-2473/[mstark@pbuuc.org](mailto:mstark@pbuuc.org)). Will meet on Sundays, September 23, October 14, November 4 and 18, December 2 and 16, January 6 and 20 during Enrichment Hour, 11:45 am to 12:45 pm. Basketball player and TV analyst Charles Barkley has a well-deserved reputation as an honest and outspoken man. In this book, as an interviewer, he turns his attention to race issues by interviewing prominent figures such as Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, Tiger Woods, George Lopez and Marian Wright Edelman. This book is both easy to read and informative, as the ideas are primarily the interviewees' perspectives with Barkley occasionally commenting. Copies of the book will be available for purchase on Sunday, September 16.

**Small Group Dialogue On Race and Ethnicity:** Led by **Tricia Most** (301-445-2821/[Patricia\\_most@msn.com](mailto:Patricia_most@msn.com)) and **Evangeline Wells** (301-422-3614/[evange408@yahoo.com](mailto:evange408@yahoo.com)). This group will begin at a potluck on Thursday, October 4 at 7:30 pm and decide on its meeting schedule. The group's purpose will be to share and listen to each others' personal stories and experiences; develop understanding about racism, exclusion, privilege and power; learn about, respect, and appreciate differences; and to live our UU Principles more meaningfully. Members of this group will be asked to commit to an ongoing group relationship, meeting on Thursday nights. The group will customize a sample format and covenant.

**Film and Discussion "Race: The Power of An Illusion":** Led by **Leo Jones** (240-296-3042/[rainbooseeker@netzero.com](mailto:rainbooseeker@netzero.com)). Will meet on three Sundays October 7, 21, and 28 during extended Enrichment Hour sessions, 11:45 am and extending to 1:15 pm. Hearty snacks will be served. A \$10 donation will be used to cover the cost of materials. Watch this powerful PBS series that challenges our assumptions about racial identity. Part One, "The Difference Between Us," follows a group of high school students who make some surprising discoveries about their racial histories. Part Two, "The Story We Tell," explores the origins of racial classifications. Part Three, "The House We Live In," tells of official policies that served to cement racial discrimination. The workshops will provide time for participants to view the DVD and engage in guided discussions.

The Board of Trustees is fully committed to the success of this initiative and urges members and friends of PBUUC to join in with your ideas and energy for both planned and new projects. Our congregation is located in a minority-majority community in an increasingly diverse major metropolitan area. We need to reach out to and embrace those members of our community who are waiting to hear the good news of Unitarian Universalism. This is our calling. If not us, who? If not now, when?

If you have questions, comments or want to get more involved, please contact Leo at (240) 296-3042, (301) 346-1377, or at [rainbooseeker@netzero.com](mailto:rainbooseeker@netzero.com).

Sincerely,

Paul Wester  
Chair, Board of Trustees