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# MAC **A r r o w**

Unitarian Universalist  
Multiracial Unity Action Council  
(UUMUAC)

“For the Unity of the  
light and dark skinned  
people of the world.”

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### **The Mission Statement**

It is the mission of the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus to carry out and foster anti-racist and multiracial unity activities both within and outside the Unitarian Universalist Association through education, bearing witness and other actions, and expansion of our membership both within and outside the walls of our congregations.

### **The Vision Statement**

We envision our congregations, denomination, and society as not being color blind but color appreciative; as judging and treating members of the world’s rank and file by the content of their character, not the color of their skin or their cultural heritage; and as treasuring diversity in the context of the “Beloved Community.” We call this vision Multiracial Unitarian Universalism.

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## **Why the Unitarian Universalist Multi-Racial Unity Action Council is Crucial: Based on My Readings in Anti-racist Theory by Brian Hedges, UUMUAC member, Oberlin UU Fellowship**

As an adolescent, I spent four years in a Catholic boarding school, an experience I thought I had left far in the past. Then for the last several years and especially the last several months, I've had the growing feeling that there's an original sin in Unitarian Universalism, similar to that in Catholicism, except that instead of being something all people are born with, it's something only white people are born with. I'd tried to address this in a few small meetings within my UU Fellowship, drawing on several sources and books, in particular the book, *How-To Hegemony: A Roadmap for Radicals* and a draft of Dr. Finley Campbell's *The Nature of Neo-Racism: An Expository Analysis*, [an earlier edition].

Finally, I saw a notice for a service in the Fellowship titled "Teaching about Racism and Classism: Experiencing Community." Okay, with "class," in the title we were at last going to hear something that framed the issue of "White Supremacy" a little differently, right? More in line with the aforementioned book and Dr. Finley Campbell's thesis that the elite have been stoking race and class divisions to divide the middle and working class and run away with the goods? Instead I heard more of the same old framing, which I believe is toxic because it unwittingly advances an agenda that only benefits those who are exploiting the rest of us.

In fact, during the Joys and Concerns part of this service, a member got up and lit a candle saying "There isn't a day that goes by that I don't grieve the fact that I'm a white heterosexual male and the only thing I can do to make up for that is to be as kind as I can." For me, this was an epiphany that suddenly brought everything I'd been thinking about the approach at my Fellowship for the past year to bright light and sharp focus.

Think about that statement. Here's someone who has so well absorbed what they've been hearing in Unitarian Universalism that they're no longer a person with inherent worth and dignity: they're a white person and ashamed of it. That was one possible reaction. Another possible reaction is the kind of backlash that leads some whites to believe that they are the aggrieved party under attack. Why is this important? Because this is exactly what the power structure wants. Keep the Caucasians and African Americans and Hispanics and Asian Americans and Native Americans at each other's throats so that they are unable to challenge the power structure, and then it gets to do whatever it wants.

This is very well explained in the two sources referenced above. Dr. Campbell in particular shows that racism has been purposely fostered by the power elite to create the divisions that allow that elite to exploit everyone to its benefit (think about the growth of income disparity in the United States or the 2016 election). Chapter five of the other book, "No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age," describes how Smithfield management "had almost perfected the science of fomenting racial hatred inside the plant" in an unsuccessful attempt to defeat unionization (the union organizers understood what management was trying to do and were able to counter it). *How-To Hegemony* further develops several points around this topic. A salient one is the importance of how issues are framed. The following is my example, not the book's, but does show an important point: consider an attempt to get a white family which had to flee its home due to toxic waste from mountain-top removal coal mining to understand their plight. Are you going to be more effective talking to them about white supremacy or wouldn't it be better to talk about the need for all of us to band together to counter the unbridled power

of an elite that is trampling everyone in their quest for wealth?

As the Rev. William Barber II has said: “If you’re poor, whether you’re white, black or brown and you can’t pay your light bill, we’re all black in the dark, so we need to stand together in the light.” And that is why UUMUAC is important in the struggle to turn on the light of knowledge about the real nature of racism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

## **The Mid America Regional Assembly 2019: A Polemical Analysis**

**by Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell, spokesperson, the Unitarian Universalist  
Multiracial Unity Action Council**

On Friday April 5, 2019 Comrade Allan Lindrup and I set out for St. Louis, Missouri, going to the 2019 Mid - America UUA Regional Assembly. We were going there under the shadow of an antagonistic contradiction with the Assembly leadership. Brother Ian Evison had informed us that we could not have an exhibit space at the Assembly because of our disagreement with the doctrine of whitem supremacyology which he asserted, and I paraphrase, was the law of the land for UUA members. Clearly this doctrine is poisoning the life of the UU movement.

Since we could not get exhibit space, we decided to rent hotel space for our MAC programs. I had negotiated with a Ms Amy Bradley, and I had clearly indicated that we were not an official part of the Mid-America Region. However, UUMUAC had been classified as a part of the Mid American Region Assembly by the person in charge of running facilities. I knew that if that had gotten out, the powers which control the UUA would have hit Ian and his crew hard, especially since they were already on the defensive for using the theme intersectionality without arranging for a black woman to be the keynote speaker. When I pointed the hotel’s error out to Ian and declined to sign the hotel’s space use contract until that was corrected, the regional leadership became more cordial toward UUMUAC’s participation in the assembly. So we moved from an antagonistic contradiction to a non-antagonistic contradiction.

The intersectionality theme crisis had occurred when four neo-racists in the UUA leadership attacked the Regional Conference for having the temerity to have a discussion of intersectionality without their permission. They argued that since the concept of intersectionality was a black female thing, they had to be the ones to decide on how it should be presented. What made it so bad was the fact that they waited until ten days before the Conference was to begin to demand that the planning committee cancel the theme and that they should abjectly apologize for even coming up with the idea – abject and humiliating, in my opinion. This, unfortunately, they did, even though in publicizing the Assembly they had given full credit to the creator of the concept. I had already shared my opinions about this pseudo-crisis with Ian before we left for the gathering, so that also contributed to my reconnecting with him. We had agreed to have lunch at the Regional gathering. Also, Allan and I were blessed to have a major article on intersectionality by an old friend of mine, who is a scholar, Dr. Barbara Foley, who allowed us to use her article in the pamphlet we had developed for the conference.

When Allan and I got to the registration area, there was more of a convivial atmosphere than in the past, even though we still were not allowed to have an exhibit space. Still we were allowed to pass out our literature outlining the MAC program without interference, provided that we were not too close to the registration table. This we did, passing out scores of flyers advertising our program, which were warmly received by many of the delegates.

That evening we attended the opening program, which in the past would have started with an exciting banner parade from around the region. Instead, there was apathetic video version. We sang the inspiring hymn, the Fires of Commitment, which made me feel the closeness with UU brothers and Sisters. But then UUA President Susan Frederick- Gray spoke, and her reference to white supremacy culture spoiled it for me. Allan argues that he did not hear her make the reference, but I have it on my recorder.

After the program, during the apology session by the planning committee, I spoke up about my rejection of their apology since there was nothing to apologize for. How can four people at the last minute interfere in a program which had been planned a year in advance? I had wanted to say that this was an example of the neo-racist power which had been given to these four African American women, but I had been cautioned not to use this term too freely since we were trying to connect with the good folks entangled in this power. Some people said they agreed with me, including a former member of the Allies of For Racial Equity.

Evidently this conciliatory approach worked because one of the top leaders in the UU whitesupremacyology movement, Rev. Leslie Takahashi, later invited me to attend a sort of assessment mass meeting to ask a question about how this approach to building anti-racism in the Region was going. When my time came, I begin by saying that I was unashamedly UU and unapologetically multiracialist and then I asked Rev. Leslie why had the UUA dropped the goal of being both multiracial and multicultural and was only focused on being multicultural? She answered that becoming multiracial was premature because the need now was for racial identity caucusing to prepare the way for some form of multiracial unity in the far distant future. Of course, I disagree.

As usual the anti-white racism (which is just a slicker form of anti-black racism) was present with the false theories of micro-aggression by whites and implicit biases by whites being articulated by the Right Relations Committee. And of course there was a space available for people of color, since being around white folks all the time was detrimental to their well-being. Because of contradictions within the leadership of the Mid-America Region itself, our ideological rejection of these neo-racist ideologies, symbolized by our little workshops, were tolerated. This was symbolized by the fact that we were not harassed by the Right Relations Authority.

We had three new members join UUMUAC at the Mid America Regional meeting. And they have joined us at a time when we are no longer accepted by the neo-racist leadership of the UU Movement: now, that takes courage.

## **UUMUAC Organizational Matters**

### **by Allan Lindrup, UUMUAC Treasurer**

After gathering of input on UUMUAC's draft By-Laws from the UUMUAC Board of Directors, followed by sharing the document with our membership nationwide via email and receiving additional input, the final draft was adopted by a UUMUAC membership gathering held in Chicago on March 9, 2019..

With taxes and a crush of other things completed, in mid-April I took up the task of investigating the current process for filing to acquire Section 501(c)(3) status under the Internal Revenue Code. I found that IRS had instituted a new, less cumbersome process for small non-profits that could be utilized if the non-profit could complete 30 questions in the negative. UUMUAC could answer those 30 questions in the negative, so I was able to complete and electronically file Form 1023-EZ to apply for UUMUAC being approved as having Sec. 501(c)(3) status.. UUMUAC is now in the audit period, where IRS can check our information, ask for additional documentation, ask additional questions, etc. I am hopeful of UUMUAC

**Page 4** having its application approved before this summer is over..

# Is White Guilt Really a Good Source of Moral Authority for Blacks?

By Dr. Kenneth Christiansen

*Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity, and Power in Ministry*, edited by Mitra Rahnema, was one of two UUA Common Reads for 2017-18. *Centering* presents nine short essays, each paired with a responding essay, all written by persons of color who are pastors of UUA congregations or in other leadership positions in the UUA.

Many issues are lifted up including: how persons of color can best establish their authority as ministers or religious educators in congregations that are primarily Caucasian; integrating diverse cultural backgrounds, e.g. Humanist and Christian, in the worship life of the congregation; dealing with assumptions by some Caucasians that persons of color are where they are only because of Affirmative Action; working out how to be addressed with respect by congregation members; and coping with the loss of elements of one's own culture when ministering to people with a different culture. Most of the information is very practical and down-to-earth, very real.

The issue I want to address in this writing was raised by just one of the authors, namely Rev. Bill Sinkford. On page 36 Rev. Sinkford expresses an approach to authority based on guilt. He writes:

As an African American, I know that the well-educated, liberal White congregants to whom I minister share a basic orientation to me and the racial identity I represent. This orientation dances around a guilt, or at least sense of responsibility, about slavery and the oppression of African Americans in this country. Even if they reject personal guilt or responsibility, these congregants have a knowing that oppression was visited on "my people" by "their people," and that knowing operates in the background and grants me some strange and unearned kind of moral authority.

Looking at past anti-racism programs of the UUA, stressing the collective guilt of the white race has been front and center. The assumption is made that recognizing white supremacy, white collective guilt, will motivate good behavior on the part of Caucasians. With this assumption firmly in place, conferences of the Diverse & Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM), all people of color, and UU Allies for Racial Equity (ARE), all white, and more recently BLUUOC have consistently been kept separate. People of color are introduced to the positive values of their heritage while Caucasians learn the intricate evils of racism. Programing tracks at GA covering multicultural and race sensitive issues have also been kept separate. Based on the assumption that guilt is a positive motivation, this has been a necessary approach.

I have personally argued that Asset-Based Anti-Racism is a better approach than Guilt-Based Anti-Racism. For the purposes of this paper, I want to review an even stronger argument found in a study titled *Of Saints and Sinners: How Appeals to Collective Pride and Guilt Affect Outgroup Helping*. The authors studied whether appeals to collective pride, or appeals to collective guilt, were more effective in motivating people to take actions to help disadvantaged groups. Participants in the study were told one of two stories. One story was intended to inspire feelings of collective pride in relation to the participants' Dutch identity. The other was intended to inspire a sense of collective guilt. Both the collective guilt story and the collective pride story dealt with how Dutch people treated Jews during World War II. Both were true. After hearing either one of these stories, questions were asked that identified how supportive the individual was for the Dutch government to continue to aid Jewish families that were significantly damaged by the Nazis.

Another variable played a key role in the study, namely, how strongly did the subjects of the study identify with being Dutch as opposed to simply being human? Everyone in the study was Dutch and would be identified by an outsider as Dutch. Individually, however, people can feel very different levels of emotional connection with their ingroup. Study subjects who very strongly identified as being Dutch were referred to as "high identifiers" while those with weaker bonds were referred to as "low identifiers."

The collective guilt story focused on Dutch citizens who collaborated with the Nazis in their persecution of Jews during WWII. Many Dutch citizens did so collaborate. The collective pride story, on the other hand, focused on Dutch citizens who hid Jews in their homes (Anne Frank being the prime example) and sabotaged Nazi efforts to persecute Jews in other ways. There were also many of this kind of Dutch citizen.

Even though this study was being done sixty-five years after the end of World War II, questions related to helping, or not helping, Jews were still relevant. For instance, the Nazis confiscated property from Jewish families including family heirlooms and many of these have never been returned to their rightful owners. Many Jewish families who saw their homes taken and businesses destroyed have also not fully recovered. The Dutch government could do more to help Jews in either or both of these areas.

What did the study reveal? Overall, persons who were told a story that inspired collective pride in their Dutch identity expressed more empathy for Jews. They were also more willing to support additional government help to Jewish families for recovering lost heirlooms and righting other wrongs that happened during WWII than were persons who were told a story that inspired collective guilt in relation to their Dutch identity.

The most extreme differences came between “high identifiers” and “low identifiers.” To “low identifiers,” people for whom their Dutch identity wasn’t emotionally important, hearing a pride story or a guilt story didn’t affect their level of empathy or willingness to help Jews. On the other hand, “high identifiers,” persons for whom being Dutch was emotionally very important, there was considerable difference in their responses to the two stories. While a collective pride story motivated empathy and support for positive action, a collective guilt story turned them off.

What does this study have to say to our approaches to race and culture in the UUA? Or more generally in the USA today? Is the current emphasis on White Supremacy as the root of all race and class related problems, with all white people seen as directly or indirectly responsible, a good thing? This study would suggest that it isn’t, that it may be provoking white American “high identifiers” to move closer to white nationalism.

“Low identifiers” on the other hand, a place where UUA members are likely to be if they are at all serious about the Seven Principles, can absorb a collective guilt story and not run away. Nonetheless we need to ask the question, how much more energy would there be in the UUA for positive action if we told more collective pride stories?

What contemporary collective pride stories are available? Many of our UU congregations participate in Congregation Based Community Organizing (CBCO). CBCO involves interfaith, multi-race and multi-class efforts to bring about specific changes in the communities surrounding these congregations. It can also involve participation in state-wide or national movements for justice like Rev. William Barber’s Forward Together movement in North Carolina and/or the national Poor People’s Campaign and Repairers of the Breach organizations.

Many other groups, secular and religious, online and elsewhere, also provide opportunities to work for justice. Goals typically include stopping specific forms of discrimination in specific places and/or increasing opportunities for disadvantaged group members. Celebrating small and large victories for justice, whether local, state-wide, or national, can ground stories that inspire collective pride.

There is perhaps a fine difference here. Being anti-racist can mean spending most or all of our time looking at how bad we have been. Or it can mean recruiting every asset possible to address specific injustices and get them changed. I vote for the latter approach. It has the potential to create lived stories that inspire collective pride, stories that have the potential to bring American “high identifiers” into the fold of those who want changes for greater justice. In our world today, where so many people are attracted to the false promises of white nationalism, the switch from emphasizing collective guilt to finding reasons for collective pride is badly needed.

Back to Rev. Sinkford. His essay in *Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity and Power in Ministry* continues with the acknowledgment of a limit to guilt as the basis of authority in some circumstances. He writes on page 37:

Because guilt is so much a part of the reaction I have received, I am not at all sure what the dynamics of ministry would look like without the moral authority it has granted me. On what source of moral authority could an Arab Muslim UU minister rely? Could White congregants justify a claim of innocence and resist appeals to responsibility? Would it be easier or more difficult for them to stretch to understand and know their minister? Because American culture has made terrorists of all Muslims, and Arabs generally, the White culture can wear the mantle of innocence with greater comfort than they can in relation to other racial or cultural identity groups that “we” (the United States) have oppressed.

If guilt is the primary basis of authority for pastors of color working in white congregations, we are in trouble. Moral authority can come from a lot of other places. Martin Luther King Jr. and others have found it in the power of love combined with empathy toward those who were the victims of discrimination on the basis of race or class, or any other form of oppression. Understanding and identifying with the pain of others up close and personal is a powerful motivator for justice action.

Empathy needs to flow in all directions as needed and appropriate to the situation. This extension of empathy toward whites as well as persons of color can be seen as devastatingly urgent when we read books like the runaway bestseller *Hillbilly Elegy* – and responses as in *Appalachian Reckoning: A Region Responds to Hillbilly Elegy*. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the lack of empathy in the culture at large toward struggling white working-class persons in Appalachia and everywhere else in the country helped fuel the rise of Trumpism.

In conclusion, we really do need much more than white guilt to power our ministries.

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1. Dr. Kenneth Christiansen, *The Benefits of Asset-Based Anti-Racism over Guilt-Based Antiracism*, (2010) currently available at <https://uumuac.weebly.com/documents.html> under the heading “Asset-Based Anti-Racism documents written for the UUMUAC.”

<sup>2</sup>2. Esther van Leeuwen, Wilco van Dijk, and Ümit Kaynak. *Of Saints and Sinners: How Appeals to Collective Pride and Guilt Affect Outgroup Helping* found in *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, Volume 16 number 6, pp 781-796. Retrieved March 15, 2019, from the OhioLink Electronic Journal Center available to Ohio colleges and universities. This publication may also be available through your local university library.

3. J.D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy*, (New York: Harper, 2016)

4. Anthony Harkins and Meredith McCarroll, editors, *Appalachian Reckoning: A Region Responds to Hillbilly Elegy* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2019).

## Reflections on Building “Fusion Coalitions”

By Dr. Kenneth Christiansen

What was the Fusion Party? How are Fusion Coalitions formed? Why build a Fusion Coalition? I didn’t know the answer to any of these questions before I read *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear*, by Rev. Dr. William Barber II.

Fusion Party was active during the First Reconstruction in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Blacks who were newly released from slavery and whites who had worked for abolition and wanted equal rights for blacks “fused” their efforts to build political power in the south. Many black state and federal legislators were elected. White elites fought this kind of coalition with violence and with Jim Crow laws including the infamous Black Codes. Divide and conquer situations were created. When they didn’t work without violence, violence was added to the equation by the KKK and other white groups that included many Confederate Civil War veterans.

The Second Reconstruction came about by the efforts of the integrated Civil Rights Movement which traces roots to the founding of the NAACP in 1909 and came to fruition in the 1950s and 1960s. With Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee before May of 1966, with Dr. King and his many followers, black and white collaboration or “fusion” was the key to accomplishing major goals from the Brown vs. Board of Education decision to the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, 1965 and 1968. Powerful white elites again pulled the plug with a series of assassinations, Nixon’s “Southern Strategy,” and the War On Drugs

Rev. Barber knows this history and knows how precarious his own position is as a black organizer for justice in North Carolina. It is as true for Rev. Barber as it is true for any one of us: we can’t achieve much by ourselves. From the first issues he engaged, he saw the need for “fusion coalitions.”

By 2006, Dr. Barber had been involved in issue battles throughout North Carolina with some wins and some losses. He had worked with small and large justice seeking organizations with goals ranging from good working conditions and just wages for employees, to cleaning up communities where toxic wastes had been dumped, to upgrading the quality of housing available economically challenged families, to removing impediments to voting. The sad part was that these organizations didn't see what they had in common and didn't work together. Here is how Dr. Barber's created a "Fusion Coalition" in his own words:

"In December of 2006, we called a meeting of potential partners for this new coalition. Representatives of sixteen organizations showed up. We started with a blank sheet of butcher paper and asked each group to write the issue they were most concerned about. Then, on another sheet, we asked them to list the forces standing in the way of what their organization wanted. We learned something important at that first retreat: though our issues varied, we all recognized the same forces opposing us. What's more, we saw something that we hadn't had a space to talk about before: There were more of us than there were of them." (Barber II, Rev Dr. William J., *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement Is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear* (p. 50). Beacon Press. Kindle Edition.)

I really like the concept that so many of the justice issues that widely varied groups are fighting for today have the same people, institutions and ideologies standing in the way of what they want to happen. If supporters of these varied justice issues can get over their natural distrust of others who advocate different methods and/or represent different populations, much more will be accomplished for justice in our time.

I am writing about this partly because I find many connections between "Fusion Coalitions" and what I have been talking about as Asset-Based Anti-Racism. In both cases people work together because of common targets and because they share in common many morally describable goals. In both cases the goals are focused on specific, winnable, outcomes rather than on generalities such as the eradication of White Supremacy. I greatly appreciate that Dr. Barber has continued his work into the present. Websites that give evidence of this include the following:

<https://www.breachrepairers.org/>

<https://forwardjustice.org/forward-together-moral-movement> and

<https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/> .

## **Racism and Capitalism—Crisis and Resistance: Exploring the Dynamic between Class Oppression and Racial Oppression**

By Prof Alan Spector

To create a more humanistic world, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of processes that undermine this goal. Recently, there has been considerable exploration of the concept of "the intersection of race and class." More than just intersecting, however, in today's world, the two are inextricably tied together, mutually saturated to the degree where each set of processes has become basically inseparable from the other. The exploitation of labor is the key underlying process and as the social world has become more complex and interconnected, this relationship has become fundamentally symbiotic. Racist oppression evolves from class exploitation but has distinctive characteristics; it is especially intense both economically and sociopolitically. A dialectical understanding avoids the one-sided errors of narrow economic determinism and narrow psychological determinism and explores the ways in which the processes of "racist-capitalism"/"capitalist-racism" undermine the interests of all who oppose exploitation and oppression. While some racists and some antiracists cling to the notion that there is a fundamental conflict of interests among different racial-ethnic groups, a more accurate perspective and therefore more effective strategy for action is one that sees the commonality of fundamental interests while insisting that the struggle against racist oppression must be in the forefront of the broader struggle against class oppression.



An apple growing on a farm in Western Michigan. Another apple growing wild on a tree outside of Rome, 2,000 years ago. A Yamaha motorcycle. So, which of these have the most in common. The obvious answer, and it is a correct answer, is the two apples. But is there another way to look at the question? “Sociological Imagination,” as conceived by C. Wright Mills and utilized by many social scientists, provokes us to consider not just what things are “in themselves” but also what they “are” in their broader contexts and relationships to people, institutions, and broader social processes. Certainly, the two apples have a great deal in common. What does it take to create an apple? A seed, proper soil, water, and sunlight and time. But the modern, farmed apple also needs something else—it needs the belief of the farmer that growing that apple might help create a profit. Today’s apple and today’s motorcycle have something in common: They both need entrepreneurs who believe that they can make a profit from that enterprise. And, therefore, they both need a particular type of political economic climate that favors the development of both the apple and the motorcycle. If the modern apple farmer does not believe that he or she can make a profit from the growing of those apples, then those apples will never be “born.” As an entrepreneur, the farmer does not care if the apple is eaten or not, as long as it is sold. Or if the modern apple farmer is offered some money by someone who will cut down the apple trees and put up a Walmart store, then again those apples will never be “born” even if there is sunlight, soil, and water available. In a sense, today’s apple is very similar to the apple of the past, but today’s apple is fundamentally different from the apple of the past because it has embedded in its very existence the political economy of the current era. Similarly, the Yamaha motorcycle will only be created if managers and investors believe that it is economically favorable to do so. Commercially farmed apples are not grown to be eaten; they are grown to be sold. Commercially produced motorcycles are not produced in order to be ridden; they are produced in order to be sold.

Racism as it exists in the world today did not exist in precapitalist society. Certainly, there was hostility between different groups of people and tribes and clans and families, but that is very different from the racism of today. For example, one could imagine a Roman soldier arguing that Nubians as a group are rude because of a bad interaction he had in the market, but that’s very different from the racism that exists today. Back then, so-called whites could own so-called blacks (of course, those concepts did not exist as such), and vice versa. Slavery was not based on the (often flexible) notions of “race” we have in today’s world. Similarly, sexism (discrimination against females), which began millennia before racism and is more deeply rooted, is nevertheless not the same today as it was 2,000 years ago. Of course, there are commonalities and some threads that are continuous but overall, there are profound differences. For example, a man in ancient Rome might have physically beaten his wife and a man today in Dallas might physically beat his wife. Some argue that both are simply reflective of something universally flawed in men. Or one could use the sociological imagination and understand that the conditions in the broader society have a profound effect on the behavior of individuals. For example, the man in ancient Rome might believe that it is his religious duty to beat his wife. The man in modern Dallas might have stress-induced hormones or chemicals (job-related, alcohol-related, early childhood trauma) whirling around in his brain, and channeled through the culture of a society that often dehumanizes women, just explodes and assaults the wife. None of this is excusable, of course, and stress or not stress, that behavior cannot be tolerated and must be stopped, by force if necessary. What is similar in both instances? Biological size? If that were the case, then large men would routinely be beating smaller men with the frequency that women are abused. Is it a culture and social, political, and economic structures in both societies that justify this behavior? Yes, but the specific social, political, and economic structures are not identical any more than a car that will not start because of an engine problem is “the same” as a car that will not start because of an electrical problem. To the untrained eye, they might appear the same, but the underlying situation is very different. When one seeks to solve the problem of “the car that will not start,” one needs to understand the specific cause. If we truly seek to end race–ethnic oppression (racism), we need to understand the specific factors that create and shape racism in particular contexts. Many social scientists, myself included, often refer to the concept of “race” and the practices of racist oppression as being “socially constructed” because it is so important to shatter the foolish myth that “race” has any biological meaning (Brace 2005; Lewontin 1982; Race: The Power of an Illusion 2003).

But perhaps it would be more accurate to refer to them as “political economy constructed;” the term “socially constructed” leaves out the power relations within the “social,” whereas “political economy constructed” opens the door to a more precise investigation. Capitalism remade the world. It rolled over the world, blew it up, flattened the remains, shattered families, religions, languages, cultures, ethnicities, and made a new world. Of course, this did not happen at once. It took centuries. And of course there are vestiges of the old, but only if they do not threaten the new set of class relations. Consider Bronzeville, on the near South Side of Chicago. City officials talk about how they are rebuilding this neighborhood. They are not rebuilding the neighborhood. They have almost completely destroyed this neighborhood, drove out the majority of the population, flattened many buildings, and are now putting new buildings up on the same land where the old neighborhood was that will be inhabited by different people. Yes, it is still Bronzeville. But just as when Heraclitus, a highly underrated Greek philosopher said: You cannot step into the same river twice, so too do we need to explore in order to understand how underlying dynamics may not be so apparent when obscured by superficial appearances.

### Contingency and Necessity in the Development of Modern Racism

At an American Sociological Association conference, someone once asked me the kind of “framed question” that might force someone into a forced choice between two erroneous alternatives. I was asked: “Are you saying that it was inevitable that capitalism had to become racist?” This type of question is, of course, a “setup,” the kind of question that people who want to deny associations and causal relationships toss out to trap the other into one of the two untenable positions. It is often used against leftist radicals and other humanists. If the speaker answers: “yes,” then the retort is “So, then, you are not a scientist at all. You are saying that something is inevitable. This is dogma. You are not open-minded. Science has to acknowledge other possible explanations.” If the speaker answers: “no,” then the retort is “So you agree then, that capitalism can exist without racism—that racism is not essential to capitalism.” Of course, this kind of reasoning can be applied to any assertion about how one variable might have an effect on another variable. So how do we answer? Well, nothing is “Inevitable–Inevitable.” The sun might explode tomorrow, making tomorrow’s sunset “not inevitable.” An unpredictable earthquake might prevent the Super Bowl from proceeding. Seriously, everything is probabilistic. Nothing is “Inevitable–Inevitable” with an Absolute upper case “I.” Was it “inevitable” that humankind would learn how to develop the wheel? Well, yes, but no, not inevitable—there might have been an asteroid collision, but probabilistically speaking, for all practical purposes, yes, given trial and error and memory and enough time. It is in the dynamic of capitalism that enterprises must try to maximize profits. It is not inevitable in so-called human nature that we are doomed to being insatiable for money. But within the limits of capitalism, as in the game “Monopoly,” those firms that are not successful at maximizing income/profits will eventually be overcome. A discovered/invented way to maximize profits is to segment the labor force. In precapitalist society (and today), the division of labor by gender has been most profound, but there have been other ways—age, “ability/disability,” being on the losing side of a war, and so on, as ways to increase the wealth of ruling groups.

Early capitalism became class society on caffeine. When the capitalist class began to develop more strength, in the 1500s, conquest and technology began to rapidly remake the world. In the 150 or so years since capitalism’s ascendancy as the basic political–economic system of the world, we have witnessed changes unimaginable just three centuries ago. Today, capitalism is class society on methamphetamines. Five centuries ago, as capitalist processes were developing (but not yet universally triumphant), the “discovery” of the Western Hemisphere by wealth-seeking empires created a scramble to acquire more wealth (Galeano 1973). Initially, it was gold, but it soon became apparent that the largest wealth lay in the soil—but it was wealth that could only be realized through the labor of the laboring class. Indentured servants were brought in, and, as has been documented, the very early social and legal status of African servants was the same as that of European servants (Bennett 1993). That soon changed as it became apparent that universal slavery was unworkable and that creating a superexploited sector of the laboring class

would provide the benefits of extra profits, of providing the material basis for deflecting the possible antagonism of the rest (European origin) of the laboring class, and, later, actually holding down the compensation for the so-called whites (now wage laborers) by having the superexploited group to use against them.

There are conspiracies in history, but it is not conspiracies that mainly shape history. Nor is it accident. More false dichotomy. It is “trial and error,” not necessarily planned way in advance, but if something “seems to work,” then it gets repeated and institutionalized. Was it “inevitable?” Is it “inevitable” that a Monopoly game will eventually have only two players? Yes and no—no, because it is possible that the game could be disrupted, but “yes” in the sense that within the limits of the game, it “has to” evolve this way. Thus, it is “probably inevitable.” Which is, of course, a little silly, but it makes a point. It was probabilistically “inevitable” that capitalism had to maximize profits, that to do so successfully, it had to segment the labor force, and that one of the key bases of that segmentation would likely have to do with “place”—whether place of origin or maintained and sustained through segregation/separation, because this separation facilitates the winning of the less-exploited/oppressed groups away from allying with the more exploited/oppressed group. And with that came the invention of race and racism, at least, as it exists in the world today. So, was it “inevitable” that capitalism had to become racist? How do we handle that question? How about: “No, it was not inevitable that capitalism had to become racist—it was only the case here on Earth.” If racism and race did not exist, capitalism would have “had to” invent them—and, by the way, racism and race did not exist, and capitalism did invent them. Certainly, the processes and patterns of racist exploitation and oppression as they exist today are directly traceable to those early processes, with a distinct disconnect from whatever might, in appearance, seem to be similar from precapitalist societies. The question of “which came first” can similarly lead to nonproductive discussions, based on false dichotomies. Even if capitalist processes began to develop before racist policies, the reality is that racist policies so completely saturated and shaped capitalist policies that today, they cannot really be separated, except in isolated cases. There is only “racist–capitalism” or “capitalist–racism.”

Another metaphor: Consider a person who must have an artificial heart pump or a pacemaker inserted into the heart in order to live. Is that machine more a part of the person’s body than their hands or their eyes? On one hand no. It is not “organic.” But on the other hand, it is more a part of the person’s body, because without it, the person can no longer live. The person’s body is adjusted to the machine in order to live. Hence, that person is no longer just “a person,” rather that person is a “pacemakered person” or “heartpumped person” (and the pacemaker that now also changes with use actually becomes a “personalized pacemaker” or something like that) as there is a dialectal dependency, a unity between the person’s biological body and the machine. So too is there now only “racist–capitalism” or “capitalist–racism?” They are so interconnected that, for all practical purposes in the foreseeable future, on this planet, neither can survive without the other. The root of modern racism, then, is exploitation, rather than oppression. It is the seeking of profits, rather than psychological gratification, that is at the root (Cox 1948). Of course, these oppressions—political suppression, violence, cultural discrimination—are all devastating to the subjugated group. Fighting against forms of oppression is central to building consciousness and commitment to oppose all of racist oppression and exploitation; such struggles in the past century included opposition to lynching, the right to join unions, the right to vote, opposition to segregation, demands over education, campaigns against police brutality and incarceration, and struggles against racism in the media and culture. But asserting that oppression, rather than exploitation, is at the root begs the question of where it comes from. In the justified effort to avoid narrow “economic determinism” (where oppression is ignored and everything is reduced to the battle for higher wages), it is important to avoid the opposite one-sided extreme of “psychological determinism” (where it is assumed, either directly or by implication/omission that the first cause is something in the brains of people). Brains are very important. Consciousness is very important, central to the struggle. But understanding that the root comes from exploitation helps keep our understanding centered on the core processes and helps keep clear that it will not be possible to overcome racism, in all its forms, as long as capitalist processes continue to reward racist policies and the ideas that reinforce those policies. That does not mean that racist oppression and racist ideas will disappear shortly after the profit incentive is removed. That is nonsense. An uprooted tree can live for a long time. However, without destroying the root, it will be impossible to destroy the tree. It is even more complex than that, however, because while the roots are the core of the tree, it is possible to damage the roots by damaging other parts of the tree

Moving from the metaphor, since capitalism and racist oppression are so intertwined, it is impossible to overcome capitalist oppression without a mighty struggle against racism. Sometimes social scientists, myself included, use the language of “the intersection of race and class.” There can be a problem with that formulation however if it is implied that these are separated “oppressions,” with different origins, parallel, that “intersect” here and there, rather than understanding that class relations in all their complexity (not just “low wages or how much money is in one’s bank account”), but that class relations that materially reward certain arrangements for the ruling class are what give rise to and mutually saturate racist oppression. So of course, some people can be doubly, or triply, or “quadruple” oppressed and it is important to recognize that. But separating them out can lead to the kind of identity politics that actually undermines the ability of the oppressed group to overcome that oppression.

*More of Dr. Spector’s article will be shared in the next issue of the MAC Arrow*

**A SERMON: OPPOSE RACIST IMPERIALIST WARS WITH MULTIRACIAL UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM**, by Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell, spokesperson for UUMUAC (aka the MAC) Note: the ideas expressed in this Tax Day sermon represent only those who agree with them.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight O Lord my Savior and Redeemer; and may they also be acceptable in your sights, my brothers and sisters.

The purpose of this sermon is to argue that we should oppose using our tax dollars to support US American militarism not only for what it is doing to us here at home, but also for what horrific evils it is inflicting on our brothers and sisters in Yemen, Gaza, and Syria.

What is going on in Yemen is a humanitarian disaster being created by the petro-capitalist elite and its ally the autocratic regime of Saudi Arabia. On the one hand, this regime buys billions of dollars’ worth of military equipment from the US American military industrial complex, especially from the aero-space corporations. Most of these weapons currently are being used to kill the innocent people of Yemen under the guise of fighting terrorism. On the other hand, in return for these billions of dollars of weapons sales, multi-billions of dollars are spent by the US military defending the Saudi Arabian Peninsula with a complex of military bases combined with the entire Mediterranean fleet. All this is designed to protect the petro-industrial-financial complex centered in the Arabian Peninsula. Thus, so protected, the Saudi Arabian imperialists can carry out unhindered the creation of a humanitarian crisis in Yemen worse than the one going on in Gaza or Syria.

The Israeli regime's war against the people in Gaza — I see the sisters and brothers of Gaza as citizens of the apartheid government of Israel-Palestine — is another example of the use of our taxes to fund the military - industrial complex. The United States government has historically given billions of taxpayer dollars to the Israeli - Palestinian government, which they then in turn use to buy weapons from the US military-industrial complex — bullets, tanks, aircraft, sniper rifles, tear gas, water cannons, missiles, etc.

The present target for all of this weaponry? In this case the protesters in Gaza, finally driven to desperation by the blockade which has been killing them slowly, to risk instant death in their demand for peace and freedom. With cold blooded efficiency, US armed Israeli snipers pick off protesters one by one, killing scores and wounding twice as many. And by using the neo-racist term terrorist, a word which mixes together good people protesting imperialistic oppression with vicious criminals often created by US-Israeli-British agencies, our brothers and sisters in Gaza can be shot down with impunity, all with the silent consent of racist-imperialist governments. The Gazans are seen as being racially inferior as Arabs, a fact intensified by using the word terrorist, another way of defining Third World People fighting for their humanity as lacking inherent worth and dignity. Meanwhile, the military-industrial complex stands ready

to supply the Israeli-Palestinian regime with more weapons, especially bullets, at the right price; i.e., paid for with our tax dollars.

Finally, what can we say about Syria? The US militarists and their financial industrial allies have benefited mightily in terms of profit from the Syrian Civil War. This war was instigated in part by the Hillary Clinton - Barack Obama coalition as a part of expanding the power of the US Petro-economic complex in the Afrasian area (the correct name for the Middle East). This so-called Syrian Civil War has cost us taxpayers billions of dollars in unaccounted funds. Some spent on financing the so-called Syrian democratic opposition; some spent on creating anti-Assad terrorists; most spent on maintaining a major military US presence in Syria itself.

The results of all this expenditure of our taxes? Beautiful cities destroyed; millions of people displaced; many thousands killed. And now a new money-making scheme being created by unproven allegations of a chemical attack by the Assad-Russian alliance. If President Trump's regime launches an attack, there will be multimillions of dollars spent; if it does not, another multi-millions will have been spent on preparing for such an attack. And who is the pay for all this? US American workers, students, and professionals. We the people.

To summarize and conclude: The issue this April 15<sup>th</sup>, Tax Day, is more than just a matter of how our hard-earned money is being squandered, which could be used for health, education, and welfare programs here at home. Rather it is also a case of using **our** money to fund a bloody military industrial complex, which behind the mask of fighting terrorism is profiting from inflicting misery, murder, and mayhem against our sisters and brothers in places like Gaza, Syria, Yemen, and now I add Afghanistan. It's time to revive a multi-racial, international anti-imperialist war movement here in the United States and eventually spreading around the world, especially as these local wars could lead to a nuclear World War III. Join the struggle in whatever way you can. Amen



