

**8.13.20**

**Rev. Abhi Janamanchi**

**Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church**

**Opening remarks**

**Faith in Action on Racial Equity**

**A Panel Discussion (hosted by FCAC-SSTCi)**

We are all at different places in racial justice work. And some of us are already tired of talking about race and racism. Some of us think we are already there and that I am preaching to the choir. Others of us are still learning not to shut down or turn off when the subject of racism, white supremacy, white privilege, white fragility challenges us. But many of us are ready to start down a new path of learning and growing into our highest antiracist ideals.

As Unitarian Universalists, our principles and purposes do not tell us what we should believe; they tell us how we should *be*. They tell us how we should act in the larger world and with each other.

They call us to promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. They charge us to affirm and promote justice, equity and compassion in human relations, and the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part. These principles inform, guide, and challenge us in our racial justice work.

In his book *How to be an Antiracist*, Dr. Ibram X. Kendi defines racism as “a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produce and normalize racist inequities.”

Racism takes several forms and works most often in tandem with at least one other form to reinforce racist ideas, behavior, and policy.

Types of racism are:

**Individual racism** refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways. The U.S. cultural narrative about racism typically focuses on individual racism and fails to recognize systemic racism.

**Institutional racism** involves policies, practices, and procedures of institutions that result in inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race, produced and perpetuated by institutions.

**Systemic or Structural racism** is the overarching system of racial bias across institutions and society, a system of hierarchy and inequity, primarily characterized by white supremacy. Systemic racism is more difficult to locate in a particular institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present, continually producing new, and re-producing old forms of racism.

**White supremacy** is an “historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of nations and people of color by nations and white people of the European continent; for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege.” (from *Challenging White Supremacy Workshop*, San Francisco, CA)

Those who study white supremacy liken it to an iceberg. Slavery, the US genocide of indigenous peoples, the KKK, the neo-Nazis, lynching, hate groups – those are just the visible tip of the iceberg.

Below the water surface is where we find the bulk of white supremacy. The structures and systems that are in place that privilege whiteness and white people to protect the status quo, stuff like the legacy of Jim Crow laws mandating segregation; mass incarceration; police brutality; gerrymandering; the electoral college; the ongoing impact of redlining and housing discrimination; long standing economic inequality; voter disenfranchisement; and much, much more.

**Racial Justice:** Racial Justice [is defined] as systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. It is the deliberate and proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that achieve and sustain racial equity, that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

**Racial Equity:** is used as one part of racial justice, and thus includes the work to address root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

So how do we cure this cancer called racism. How do we move from not racist to antiracist? How do we promote racial equity and racial justice?