



Truth-Seeking Leads to Truth-Telling

Velda Love
Minister of Racial Justice

A few weeks ago the phone rang. “This is Velda, with whom do I have the pleasure of speaking?” On the other end of the phone was a member of a UCC church in the Southern region of the country. She was interested in racial justice due to some recent incidents in her church and community.

The UCC caller wanted to “dive into dialogues and have sacred conversations to end racism.” I was excited—that’s my role at the UCC national office. I am the Minister for Racial Justice.

We talked for more than forty-minutes, because embarking on a lifelong journey towards dismantling racism means doing the internal work along with uncovering the history of, our contemporary conditions. Her most pressing questions had to do with how the Christian Church, is so stubbornly entangled in upholding racism. Her recent visit to the Equal Justice Initiative’s Peace and Justice Memorial Center in Montgomery, Alabama stirred feelings she’s not been able to release since her return home.

I began with history older than humans, pre-human existence. We discussed the age of the earth, first humans, and the Cradle of Civilization which is Africa. Our species is an African one: Africa is where we first evolved, and where we have spent the majority of our time on Earth.

We discussed at length the years of research that went into uncovering truths in Africa’s Great Civilizations, a video resource narrated by Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. In episode one, Gates travels to the center of Christianity’s beginnings and the people who built churches to honor Christ on the continent of Africa.

Our conversation circled back to her initial question—the entanglement of the European Protestant and Catholic Church and its ties to racism, including the 1493 papal edict, The Doctrine of Discovery, that defined persons outside the realm of European blood to be inferior humans. Those beliefs shape modern theology and racist structures in the United States.

“Why didn’t I learn this history?” the UCC caller asked. “I never learned this history in my church, at home, or in any of the schools I attended.” I assured her that these few lessons and more were available to her through the study guide, Sacred Conversations to End Racism. I encouraged her to go back to the webpage, and be part of a dynamic online learning community of pastors and lay persons across the county.

We ended our call with a commitment that she would be part of the 2020 cohort. A few hours later I received her application. At the end of the day I am reminded that I too am a drum major for justice, and justice is for all God’s people. God desires all people to be treated with dignity and respect, to live free because there are enough resources for all. God desires we move about the earth without borders, walls, and threats of separation and annihilation. We who believe in freedom cannot rest because God is still speaking.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Velda Love is Minister of Racial Justice for the United Church of Christ.

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