September, 2017

Dear fellow Unitarian Universalists,

We Jewish-identified UU clergy are feeling the sting of the overt anti-Semitism expressed by white supremacists in Charlottesville: the swastikas, pictures of Hitler, and people proud to call themselves neo-Nazis; the chants ("Jews will not replace us"); the posters ("the Goyim know;" "the Jewish media is going down;" "Jews are Satan's children"); the slurs ("kikes") and more.

Some of us have been called these names. Some have experienced overt anti-Semitism. Some lost family members in the Holocaust and pogroms. The words and images from the "Unite The Right" rally chill us to the bone.

It is clear that Jews are one of many targets of these rising waves of hatred. This is not surprising: "Jewishness" as "other" has long been bound up with social constructions of race and racialized oppression. Some Jewish people experience white skin privilege; some do not. White supremacy culture and anti-Semitism are bound up together and must be challenged.

As Unitarian Universalists do this important work, it is important to note that "Jewish people" are not only members of "other" communities which "neighbor" our UU congregations. There are Jewish-identified folks in the pulpits and pews of many of our own UU congregations. Some may be feeling acute emotional and psychological impacts from the rising anti-Semitic actions and rhetoric in the country.

Dear ones, as we together challenge the hatred made explicit in Charlottesville, we feel that it is critically important to be recognizing ALL those under attack. Many are being targeted right now, including People of Color, undocumented folks, LGBTQ folks, Muslims, Jews, persons experiencing disabilities and women. We do not want to displace anyone who is vulnerable and write this with deep commitment to collective liberation. In this spirit, we ask you – we call on you – to notice and name anti-Semitism, as well as other oppressions that are present.

We hope that this letter will open many conversations with UU groups and individuals so that we can work together to counter intersecting forces of oppression and persecution wherever we find them. Together, may we speak out against the multiple expressions of hatred that threaten to divide us.

Faithfully,

Kelly Weisman Asprooth-Jackson
Chava Bahle
Paul Daniel
Rob Eller-Isaacs
Claire Eustance
Suzanne Fast
Lisa Friedman
Debra Haffner

Leah Hart-Landsberg
Marti Keller
Tera Klein
Marlin Lavanhar
Liz Lerner Maclay
Sue Magidson
Alison Miller
David Miller
Amy Zucker Morgenstern
Elizabeth Mount
Paul Oakley
Dara Kaufman-LeDonne Olandt
Barbara Prose
Amy Petrie Shaw
Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn
Lynn Ungar
Marlene Walker
Jay Wolin

Some resources that may help you to name and challenge anti-Semitism.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/08/14/jews-will-not-replace-us-why-white-supremacists-go-after-jews/?utm_term=.62d441486225
https://reformjudaism.org/blog/2017/08/13/8-jewish-stories-read-about-charlottesville-rally
https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/08/nazis-racism-charlottesville/536928/
https://www.facebook.com/helenr/posts/10100527371130880
https://www.facebook.com/dangerfishback/posts/10154917807541452

A few definitions:*

ANTI-SEMITISM: the system of ideas passed down through society's institutions to enable the scapegoating of Jews, and the ideological or physical targeting of Jews that results from it. The term was first popularized in 1879 by German anti-Jewish racists who sought to build specific movements against Jews as an inherently inferior and threatening race (versus a religion, from which someone could convert).

JEWS: a globally dispersed, multi-ethnic, culture linked by a religion, Judaism. Many Jews practice the religion; others are ethnic, secular Jews.

Note: there are many Jewish identified Unitarian Universalists who are Jewish by heritage, lineage, conversion, religious and/or cultural practices.

*These definitions are adapted from *The Past Didn't Go Anywhere: Making Resistance to Anti-Semitism Part of All of Our Movements* by April Rosenblum