

HOW TO REMAIN AN ALL-WHITE CONGREGATION
by Leslie Takahashi Morris

Bob: And then, at the retreat, we presented our vision for the congregation and I had found these really cool multicultural crayons that have different flesh tones—

Judy: That is not what we are here to talk about. Let's get back to the agenda. Nominations. Who do you all think can do what —

Michael: Was it racist or anti-racist multiculturalism that you drew?

Bob: What are you talking about? We can't be racist — we're — LIBERALS.

Judy: Nominations take a lot of time. If we don't get started we may have a leadership gap —

Michael: Which would be bad since we already have a perception gap.

Bob: Are you saying that we are racist? How can we be? We're the good guys.

Judy: Not like those mainline Christians —

Michael: Those mainline churches have more people of color in their pews than we have here.

Bob: Pews. Don't get me started. So who died and made you Mr. White Guilt for the greater Triangle area?

Michael: I've just been trying to re-educate myself, that's all.

Judy: You are being a little hard on us. I LOVE gospel music, not to mention Native American rituals.

Michael: Well, instead of being the nominations committee, we could call ourselves the appropriations committee.

Judy: What are you talking about?

Michael: Taking the artifacts of a culture without having a sense of its — essence and dignity is appropriation.

Judy: Maybe we should get back to the agenda—

Bob: Just a minute. (to Judy) Look. I marched in the sixties. And my parents even sent me to one of the first integrated schools in our area.

Michael: You know some African Americans didn't want to go to white schools and lose all that they had invested in their own.

Bob: Oh that is NOT possibly true.

Michael: It is. Many still think black kids are better off in schools with black role models where black history is taught --

Bob: Well that's just backward.

Michael: (stepping forward, putting out finger as if ringing a doorbell)
Hello. I'm here from the Racist Sweepstakes ringing YOUR doorbell to tell you that you are the GRAND prize winner.

Bob: What are you talking about now?

Michael: Yes, you and your friends have been voted the Most Likely to Remain an All-White Congregation Award!

Judy: Enough already. We have a service on black issues every --

Michael - Bob & Judy: JANUARY!

Judy: (quietly) For Martin Luther King's birthday.

Michael: (gently) I'm not saying we're bad people. We just have our prejudices that we get from being brought up white in a culture which designs all its institutions to serve US. So we have prejudices and we also have privilege.

Bob: As a poor kid in a single-parent home I was not privileged.

Judy: About the AGENDA. Nominations. This is getting sort of EMOTIONAL --

Michael: I'm not saying you haven't seen hardship. But imagine how much worse it is to face it and then at the same time have to fight stereotypes and the need to be twice as good as any white person to get ahead.

Judy: Now you look -- affirmative action has leveled the playing field. Maybe even tilted it the other way. My son got passed over for a job because they wanted to hire a black.

Michael: And how many African American people were there to take that position? How many had made it through education system without any black teachers? Did you know one in three black men between the ages of 18 and 28 are involved in the criminal justice system?

Bob: So this is unfair. Or maybe it's about choices they made. But it is not my fault.

Judy: I hardly see what this has to do with church stuff.

Michael: Don't we say we seek truths from many sources? Why aren't we open to the possibility that other ways and experiences other than the white experience might have value? Isn't this OUR religious challenge?

Bob: But there are hardly any minorities here. How can I help it if THEY don't come.

Michael: How do we reach out to them? How do we make them feel welcome?

Judy: Unless this has any direct relationship to the leadership of the church, I think we should move on. We can talk about this at a social justice forum.

Michael: Maybe in February? Black history month? I'm not trying to be self-righteous, but this is at the heart of all our leadership actions. Membership. RE. Worship. How many people of color do we honor?

Judy: Nominations, anyone?

Michael: Have you ever thought of advertising open positions before you recruit? That way its not just who we know whols just like us.

Judy: Look, we don't have time for this. That's the thing. All this multi-culti stuff takes too much time and effort. I'd rather not think about it.

Bob: Your choice. Of course, if you aren't white, you don't have a choice.

Judy: We're just volunteers trying to do our best. We come together because of what we believe in common not what tears us apart.

Michael: Yes, the promise of Unitarian Universalism. I know.

Chester: (steps forward to stand in front of the three)
 Maybe I am here already and you do not see me. Maybe I am just a few steps away, but you cannot take those steps. Maybe I have been here and left because there wasn't enough to feed MY soul, to speak to MY experience, to heal MY pains, celebrate MY joy. Yes, I am one of those with inherent worth and dignity. Because of where I am in relationship to you, we both know there must be more justice, equity and compassion in human relations. I am the one you must struggle to accept, the spirit you must overcome fear to let grow. Because I have not always been free, you question my ability to make that responsible search because my truth and meaning are so different from yours. I am where the right of conscience can become more important than the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large, that majority process which silences my minority voice. I am part of the interconnected web of all life of which we are a part – and the history of my life is tangled in the history of yours.

I AM who you need to fulfill the promise of Unitarian Universalism. How can you do it without me?

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