

Our congregation is participating in Beloved Conversations which is one way for us to build the Beloved Community. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., often spoke of the Beloved Community and the power of love in his speeches. During the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the Fifties, Dr. King said:

the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends.... It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men.

Now, Dr. King was not talking about romantic love but what we know about romantic love can help us understand how Beloved Community can work. The German social psychologist Erich Fromm advocated that love was not a feeling but an action that included 1) care for oneself and care for the other, 2) respect for oneself and respect for the other, 3) responsibility for oneself and the other, and 4) self-knowledge and knowledge of the other. The black feminist author, bell hooks, added a fifth: a commitment to one's own growth and a commitment to the growth of the other. These ideas can serve as a powerful guide as we build relationship with each other.

When Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence and the words, "all men are created equal", he owned slaves and later engaged in a relationship with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings. Theirs was not an equal relationship. It was a relationship which lacked most of the characteristics that Erich Fromm and bell hooks wrote about. But their personal relationship reflected in many ways the collective relationship between white people and black people at that time. The Declaration of Independence was not enough to bring about right relationship. We needed the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. Later we needed the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, and that was not enough. Sixty years after the Civil Rights movement, our country is still struggling, and we need more legislation to build back what has been torn down. Besides legislation, this country is undergoing a cultural shift which is resisted by many who would like to go back to a time dominated by white culture.

The Declaration of Independence and the founding documents of Unitarian Universalism does not say anything about race. It is not mentioned. Racism has always been the elephant in the room that nobody wants to talk about. This reluctance to name racism is found in a common belief that if we stop talking about race then racism will go away as if talking about race is the problem. What I like about the Eighth Principle is that it names the elephant in the room.

The Eighth Principle names what we are going to do. We are going to dismantle racism and other oppressions. It names where the problem resides. It is so easy to focus on the KKK and similar groups, other people in other places. The Eighth Principle states that it resides in ourselves and our institutions. Changing ourselves and our institutions is where we have the greatest power to create change. Lastly, the Eighth Principle names why we need to dismantle racism and other oppressions: so that we can have spiritual wholeness. Together, we have created a better world, and the more we have learned about racism and how it is reinforced by other oppressions, we see that there is much more to learn and relationships that we need to nurture. The Eighth Principle affirms the work that we have already completed and promises that our commitment will grow even deeper. I support adoption of the Eighth Principle. I hope that you will join me.