

Wisdom Circle – Reparations
October 2020



Chalice Lighting , by Ellen Quaadgras

Sheltered in our homes,
Or going to work, at risk,
For week after week after week,
We're edgy, tired, a little raw.
We are tender, vulnerable,
Open.
A little more open than usual.
Those of us who are white,
Who, before, might have been distracted
Who, before, might have been too busy
Who, before, might have been preoccupied with **our** lives,
Are noticing the ways injustice has happened to people of color,
the same way, again and again and again,
Now, we have become aware.
Please, may we be aware.
May we not lose awareness.
May we not get distracted.
May we not turn away.
May we open—really open:

Silence- Take three minutes to settle into this space, to fully arrive. You may also use this time to reflect about the chalice lighting words above.

Check-In

As you feel comfortable, take 2-3 minutes to share whatever you need to share with this group in order to be fully present. This is a time for sharing, but not for discussion.

Business

Use this time for any new business: welcoming new members, scheduling future meetings, revisiting/reciting the covenant, answering questions about wisdom circle processes, etc.

Spiritual Exercise

Share any insight, learning, lesson gained from doing or resisting this month's spiritual exercise. (Focus on your heart/emotions/spirit/personal experience). Because this is a section for personal sharing, attentive listening and no-crosstalk is recommended.

Choose one of the following spiritual exercises. Remember to only try that which calls to you and you feel comfortable doing.

a) Lectio Divina- Use one of our words of wisdom quotes to meditate on. Find a quiet space in your home or in nature. Read the words, then sit in silence. Reflect, read the words again and notice what resonates most with you. Respond, in a form of prayer or reflection aloud what it brings up for you. Rest, read it one more time and sit in silence letting the words and your reflections accompany you.

b) Learn and Reflect- Visit the link below and learn about some local Black-led organizations. Reflect about the values they express and how those relate to our principles or to your own values. Is there one that caught your attention more than others? Why do you think that is?

<https://www.aclusandiego.org/black-led-grassroots-organizations/>

How was this experience for you? What insight did you gain?

Discussion of Reading and Words of Wisdom

Discuss the reading and the questions below. Crosstalk can enrich your conversation here (avoid judging or wanting to “fix” things, and speak from your own experience, avoiding generalizations, and identifying who you mean when/if you use the word “we”).

Words of Wisdom

“The economic illusion is the belief that social justice is bad for economic growth.” -**Robert Kuttner**

“You can oppose reparations all you want, but you got to know the facts. You really, really do.”

“When people think about reparations, they immediately think about people who've been dead for 100 years.”

“I would not have you descend into your own dream. I would have you be a conscious citizen of this terrible and beautiful world.”

— **Ta-Nehisi Coates**

“The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression.” —**W.E.B. Du Bois**

“The time is always right to do what is right.” —**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” —**Nelson Mandela**

“Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they’ve been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It’s an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It’s a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing.” —**Muhammad Ali**

Thoughts about Reparations by Rev. Tania Y Márquez

There's a story about a child whose dad is teaching him the power of words by having him hammer nails into a fence. Then the father asks the boy to remove them. The story ends with a reflection about our inability to take back our words when they hurt someone by reflecting on the marks the nails leave on the fence. It's a good story, but it can lead us to believe that the wrongs we have done are irreparable and make us believe that our attempts to repair are futile.

In a culture that praises success, there seems to be no place for admitting that one has made a mistake. And in a culture that centers the individual, self-care is prioritized over the group or the community. Then, there's the issue of time. When we witness a wrong or hear an account first-hand, we feel immediately moved to make it right, to make the pain go away but, as time passes, we emphasize the need of people to move on. Only those who have experienced the pain know the wounds it leaves behind. Repairing or attempting to repair the damage caused, can help people heal.

Such is the case for reparations. The wrongs committed against Blacks in this country over centuries created and accentuated the economic and racial inequality we can still see today. Reparations is a spiritual exercise of repentance and humility as well as of reparation of trust and relationship. And while the conversation often centers around reparations to Blacks for slavery, it should also extend to Native Americans and other groups and countries that live with the repercussions of having been looted, abused, and dehumanized.

As Unitarian Universalists, when we think about reparations, I wonder, how can we connect this plea with our values? What kind of world is the appeal to reparations inviting us to dream about? And if we can't make it happen, how can we live our lives as if we could?

Recommended reading:

<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening/restoration-reparations>

Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. What is at the core of reparations?
2. How, if this is the case, is the concept of reparations stretching you?
3. How have you repaired relationships and wrongs you have committed in the past? What did it take?

Gratitude: Share 1-2 things that have been meaningful to you from this session.

Extinguishing of the Chalice: by Ellen Quaadgras

Accepting the invitation to change—
really change,
our minds,
our hearts,
our world.
When we encounter calls to defund the police
When we encounter calls for reparations
When we hear “follow our lead” from people of color
May we listen, may we learn, may we be open...
Even if it means rethinking everything
you thought you knew about the world.
We have, all of us, as humans
An enormous opportunity
To change one of the oldest injustices
In history,
To change everything.
May we stay vulnerable
May we stay tender.
May we take action.
Eyes and hearts and minds,
Open.