



ransforming Times



Hope
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Hope is intricately entwined with memory. Memory is a conversation with the past. Hope is a conversation with the future. In the meeting, there is resilience.

I had the very good fortune, recently, to spend two and a half days singing with 50 UU ministers and Ysaye Barnwell, lead singer for Sweet Honey in the Rock. The occasion was the Institute for Excellence in Ministry sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association. Nearly 400 ministers were in attendance. The setting was the beautiful Asilomar Conference Center in California.

While the February wind whipped up wild waves on the Monterrey Bay, I was warm inside, singing songs of hope. Dr. Barnwell taught us the songs of African-Americans: from the freedom of the jungle, to the tyranny of enslavement and forced labor in cotton and tobacco fields, to the underground railroad and the Civil War, to post-war restoration and to the civil rights movement.

The exuberance of the music had us up on our feet, clapping, stomping and dancing the rhythms while singing in 7 part harmony – all without the aid of sheet music or accompaniment. Dr. Barnwell used the songs to teach us the history of Africans in this country. The exuberance of the music is a stark contrast to the hardship of the people who first sang it. The rhythms, the melodies, the words, and the exuberance all served a purpose – to keep the people moving forward, sometimes for mere survival, but always moving toward the hope of freedom and equality.

The songs themselves tell the stories of a people, binding the community to a shared history and a collective memory. Music is the thread that binds, the thread of resilience, telling stories of the past while moving with intention into the future.

Hope is sometimes hard to find, especially when the news of the world is so relentlessly dismal. Economic hardship here and around the world, riots in Egypt, escalating

tensions in Iran, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, drug and gun violence in Mexico, melting ice caps, raging storms, global climate change. The daily news is often cause for despair.

In time such as these, our religious task is to build resilience, to find those sources that sustain hope and bind us into community, remembering who we are as a people. My time with Dr. Barnwell reminded me that exuberance and joy are generated from within and are not dependent on external conditions -- but it takes a community to do so.

Despair drains energy and bogs us down. We need the energy built by joy and exuberance in order to keep moving forward. Let us move forward, together, in the spirit of community.

Yours in hope,
Diane

Transforming Times is organized around theological themes. Each theme plays a part in the development of a well-grounded religious and spiritual life. The church's offerings are by no means limited to the themes. They do provide common ground for Community conversation, a way to gain more meaning and depth. We want to hear many perspectives on each theme. You are invited to submit your original poetry or short essays of 400 words or less. Be warned: seriously engaging these themes could transform your life!

September: Vision
October: Trust
November: Community
December: Grace
January: Stewardship

February: Justice
March: Hope
April: Credo
May: Ritual
June: Beauty



STANDING ON THE SIDE OF LOVE

On February 13, National Standing on the Side of Love Day, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson presented courageous love awards to the organizations behind the We Reject Racism campaign, a strategic collaboration between Tierra Y Libertad Organization, a barrio-based group on the Southside of Tucson that promotes community self-determination and respect for land, people, and culture - and No More Deaths, a predominately Anglo organization that works in Northern Sonora and Southern Arizona with migrants who have recently been repatriated or are currently in the process of crossing the desert.

Sarah Launius, of No More Deaths, describes the campaign as follows:

"Through the We Reject Racism campaign we recognize that attacks on immigrant communities are fundamentally about race and racism - this is to say, they are about who is to be included and who is excluded from our society, and the criteria used to make this distinction. Ours is a multi-cultural vision that seeks to defend the rights and dignity of all people, regardless of ethnicity, status or national origin. Instead of merely framing our work exclusively in terms of SB1070 or "immigrant rights", we seek to open up the debate and project an embracing notion of citizenship that defends the ability of everyone to live, work and love whomever and wherever they choose."

By recognizing this courageous love, members of our church are building bridges in their own community to overcome injustice.

Lifting up the courageous love in our lives really does matter.

"We are extremely honored to be recognized with this "Courageous Love" award," said Sarah Launius. "Notification of this award allows us to reach congregations and supporters throughout the United States, with the hope of building lasting and transformative relationships with one another that transcend the fault lines that too often divide our communities. We must work together if we are to realize the future of an America based on justice and dignity for all."

Cesar Lopez, of Tierra y Libertad, was also at UUCT for the presentation and will be the Sunday Guest Speaker on March 13.