

A Reflection on the Insurrection at the Capitol on January 6
Rev. Carol Allman-Morton
January 10, 2021
UUMSB

For our grace note this morning, I want to share a reflection on the events at the Capitol this week.

Wednesday morning, I began the day dancing around in my kitchen. It started as an exciting day for democracy. The very practice of run-offs in Georgia, originally designed to keep Black candidates out of office, had resulted in the first Black Senator for the State of Georgia, and a liberation theologian no less. Despite past voter suppression and intimidation, voters of color turned out and participated in huge numbers in that state. I was joyous. I went upstairs, logged on to Zoom and started my work for Amherst. I wrapped up a meeting around 2:15 and came downstairs to make a sandwich for lunch, and learned that the Capitol building had been breached.

Our Fifth Principle is to affirm, “The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.” The democratic process is foundational to our faith tradition, because of the importance and value we place on both the individual and on community. The democratic process, at its best, is a system that values the rights and inherent worth of the individual and provides a framework for communities to make decisions, to govern, to put their values into action. We use a democratic process in our congregations for decision making, for similar reasons. We are not an organization with a leader or leaders who decide what will happen in our congregations but have webs of relationship, accountability among congregations, and each congregation is independent. We *are* offered guidance by our Unitarian Universalist Association, we learn and borrow from congregations, and we learn and grow together. As you likely know, we are now engaged in a year-long process of looking at the impact of white supremacy culture on our denomination, congregation, and individual lives. In fact, we have our second workshop later today.

I don’t know if we have ever seen such a stark illustration of the power of white supremacy culture than we did this week. In everything from actual white power, nazi, and confederate flags being brought into the Capitol building, the messages and chants of the mob, to the way response to the event was planned for by the military and law enforcement and policed. White supremacy culture was at work in the rhetoric, symbols, actions, and violence of the mob. It was at work in the utter disregard for the safety and experience of others, in the fundamental misunderstanding that freedom means getting to do whatever we want, whenever we want. Even more insidious, more challenging to root out, white supremacy culture shaped every moment of the response of the government and police to that riot. There was intelligence ahead that there would be violence, that people would bring weapons, that police would face a mob, rather than trained non-violent protesters, and they made choice after choice that led to a complete security failure. That failure is not on the guards left to hold back a tide of thousands of angry people, many who were armed with weapons, zip ties to take hostages, and wearing military gear--the failure was at each point when the people in charge didn’t pay attention to assumptions, bias, and plain old racism. This is white supremacy culture at work.

I have a lot of anger about all this, and if you do as well, I offer this. I am reminding myself to breathe and to think about that over which I *do* have control. I can’t reform the

Pentagon or FBI, but I can write to my congresspeople, and perhaps most importantly, I can work to break down white supremacy culture everywhere I find it. Especially in *my own* biases and assumptions, and even in my beloved faith tradition, and especially in our towns and Berkshire county. White supremacy culture has its hooks in us. It is part of the foundations of our country, in our Constitution, in our systems and government, and we do have the power, with each choice we make, with each time we reflect on our responses, bias, and assumptions, to chip away.

I will be spending some time in prayer this week, that those who are in charge might reflect on what they learned, and be called to better action and attention in the coming weeks, when we will likely see violence and white supremacy culture on display. May those in the path of those who seek to hurt and destroy be kept safe. May those whose fear has turned their hearts to hate and violence be shown truth. And if not, may their actions be stopped with firm, compassionate, and just intercession by the system that is *supposed* to protect all people. May we all be informed, do our work to make the world a better place, demand just action of ourselves and others, *and* may we not spiral into watching news all the time. May we find pockets of quiet and calm. May we get outside, and engage in the spiritual practices that feed our hearts and minds. May we remember we are not alone. May we be well. And may we do all we can to face and name white supremacy culture, everywhere we find it.

So may it be.

Our UUA released a statement that I shared on our FB page, and am also putting in the chat:
<https://www.uua.org/pressroom/press-releases/uus-denounce-complicity>