

MLK Reflection  
Rev. Carol Allman-Morton  
Interfaith Worship for MLK with Multicultural BRIDGE  
January 18, 2021

Good afternoon, I am Rev. Carol Allman-Morton from the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire. I am joining you today from my home in Montgomery, MA at the intersection of four native nations: Agawam, Nipmuck, Mohican, and Pocumtuc. Unitarian Universalism affirms a set of Principles and Sources which are signposts for us in our spiritual lives. One of the sources we share is to lift up the, “Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.” One of these prophetic people is of course, Rev. Dr. King.

Earlier in the speech at Illinois Wesleyan we heard from Dr. King, he said that both legal and illegal segregation must be rooted out of our nation in order to save democracy. Not only because it would save democracy, but because segregation is morally unjust and sinful. In contrast, the practice of non-violence is not only effective, it is morally righteous. It seeks to create change through transforming systems, changing the minds, and, importantly, hearts, of those who are part of an unjust system. The practice of non-violence shows those who are not paying attention to the struggle of another, because of their privilege to do so, how much those folks are willing to put on the line to make change. In Dr. King’s 1967 book “Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?” he wrote:

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish truth. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

The question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love?

Those with power are not usually lining up to let it go, and so the practice of non-violence can be dangerous. We have seen violent responses to perceived changes in power in the actions not only of the white supremacists rioting this month, but in the response of the politicians who incited, appeased, and encouraged them.

In the face of anger and fear, I have been reminding myself to breathe and to think about that over which I have control. I can work to break down white supremacy culture everywhere I find it. White supremacy culture is not only about people marching on the capital, or chanting racist slogans, though of course that is part of it. The most insidious aspects of white supremacy culture, what shows up in our all lives, are the cultural norms of whiteness and white culture being lifted up in conscious and unconscious ways, including white experience held up as the “norm” against which all other experiences are measured as “other.” In the face of huge, systemic issues, I can work on what *is* in my control, especially in *my own* biases and assumptions, 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. We need to pay attention, listen, and especially for those with privilege and power, to remember to whom we are accountable. Dr. King called to accountability, white people, and particularly white clergy. He asked where we were when we were needed, where we were when our voices needed to be heard. Accountability is vital to justice work because it is not only about the promises we make, and our intentions, but building relationships. Accountable relationships help us to reflect on how our choices, our policies, and our systems impact others. With and to whom are you accountable?

I will be spending some time in prayer this week and invite you to join me, that national leaders might reflect on what they learned on January 6th, and be called to better action and attention as we experience violence and white supremacy culture on display. 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 those in the path of those who seek to do violence be kept safe. 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 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. One of the aspects of the practice of nonviolence in Dr. King's work was that the "nonviolent resister must have a "deep faith in the future," stemming from the conviction that "The universe is on the side of justice" (King, *Stride*, 88)."<sup>1</sup> In the coming weeks and months, we will have opportunities to stand for truth, and for one another, for those to whom we are accountable. May we live into this hope. May we be ready. open. brave. May "justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream."

So May it Be. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/nonviolence>