

*June 12, 2017*

To My Dear Fellow Faithful,

Thank you for your interest in this exploration of whiteness and what it means to be white in America at this time. This course is meant to wake us up both as individuals and as groups to the unspoken position we find ourselves in because of our whiteness. We will explore whiteness as a concept and begin to see how it operates and perpetuates in individuals, institutions and systems.

The truth of the matter is that although we may consider ourselves to be socially liberal, or even fervently anti-racist, until pointed out it is nearly impossible for us to see the totality of what it means to be white. One of the things we will find is that whiteness hides behind a mask of normality, in assumptions that are never questioned.

You have made it this far into our investigation, so it appears you are motivated to look further into this question of whiteness, and that is a huge step. By ignoring our place in our racial society, we allow the status quo to continue. You have stepped beyond that and are already working to create a more equitable future for all. In order for all of us to be liberated, we must all wake up. It is an act of deep compassion.

As part of this course we will be developing our capacity for compassion. We will introduce a daily spiritual practice that is specifically focussed on development of compassion for others, but also for ourselves. This is a crucial part of this inquiry into whiteness. It is not helpful to act from a place of guilt, shame or anger - those actions would end up being self-serving. Instead we aspire to cultivate a sense of unconditional love for all people, both the oppressor and the oppressed. Compassion practice is designed to help us to see the common humanity in everyone, with both all of our warts and our stunning beauty.

This course has been adapted from "White Awareness Insight Curriculum for Uprooting Privilege (WAIC UP!): A Dharma and Racism Study Program." The program was developed in 2015-16 and offered by Spirit Rock Community Dharma Leader 5 participants to Buddhist sanghas everywhere. The Spirit Rock program was based on the framework originally published by [White Awake](#). We have adapted it again for Unitarian Universalists and others of similar liberal faiths.

The Unitarian Universalist [Seven Principles](#) articulate the values that provide motivation for our work here. We seek a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all. We affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Many of us, like Martin Luther King, envision a Beloved Community, where people of all colors and economic stations stand together heart-to-heart. We seek wholeness in our communities and ourselves. But when we look at our spiritual communities, we realize we have work to do. This work must start with ourselves.

Thank you for being part of this journey. May you find and spread the wholeness you seek.

Alice Reinheimer and Gina Whitaker  
Arroyo Grande, CA