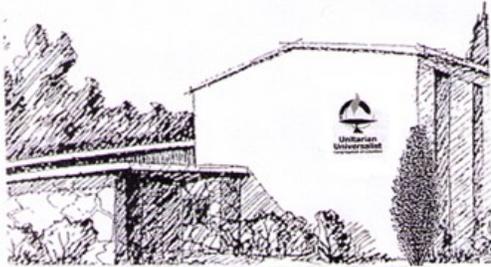




The Unigram

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia, SC

July 12, 2017



2701 Heyward Street, Columbia, SC 29205
803-799-0845 • www.uucolumbia.org

Sunday Schedule

Forum: 9:30 am in the Library

Worship: 11:00 am-12:15 pm

Nursery: Available during service for infants through age 2

July 16, 2017

9:30 am Forum Topic

What is the downside of being considered a “consumer” vs. a person?

11:00 am Sermon Topic

“The Danger of a Single Story,” by Rev. Stephen Robinson

July 23, 2017

9:30 am Forum Topic

What do “deplorables” think? How to work with our deplorable neighbors.”

11:00 am Sermon Topic

“White Supremacy,” by David Crockett, Judy Turnipseed, Laura Hartwig.

Unigram Deadline

The deadline for the next issue is **Sunday, August 6**, for publication on **Wednesday, August 9**. *Items submitted after the deadline will not be published.* Please submit articles and announcements for the next issue to uucc@uucolumbia.org.

The Rev. Jeff Liebmann

Dear Members and Friends,

The house here in Midland is rapidly taking on the appearance of a storage unit. For the most part, this is due to my substantial library. I have probably packed close to 200 boxes of books, in addition to about 50 boxes of vinyl records. Jody and I have set aside one room in our new house as the Media Center to house all the music, films, and comics.

The house purchase is going ahead. The inspection finished, we now need to settle the final addenda to the contract and then tackle the immense volume of paperwork. We hope to close in a couple of weeks. The moving truck arrives here on July 28 and we expect to drive to Columbia with Oliver, Watson, and Holmes on July 31.

I plan to spend much of this fall getting to know you and learning the ropes at UUCC. I will be in the office a lot and invite all of you to stop in and visit.

Over the course of the year, I plan to make a full assessment of the social justice environment in South Carolina and the part UUCC can play. Stephanie and I will examine our religious education program with an eye toward reaching out to more families and youth in the area. I will rely a good deal on Andrea as I explore ways to communicate both within and beyond our walls. And I plan to touch base with all our lay leaders and committees, identifying opportunities and strengths to build upon.

Continued on Page 2

My philosophy of ministry emphasizes vision. I look at the Big Picture and see where connections can produce exciting synergies. Sometimes, I will use my own initiative to take our prophetic pulpit into the community. In this way, I strive to act as a guide for you to do the same in your lives.

But most important, I see the role of minister as a catalyst. Congregations often know what they want, but lack the knowledge or organizational ability to figure out how to get it. I delight in discerning the “how.”

I remind my Buddhist prison group often that they are all gurus, able to learn from each other. Similarly, you all have the capacity to minister to each other. It may be as simple as making coffee, trimming shrubs, or greeting visitors. These are all acts of ministry.

We must never forget that UUCU is a spiritual community that affirms and promotes the principles of Unitarian Universalism. Everything we do, we do mindfully and as a member of a religious body of seekers. I look forward to walking that path with you for many years to come.

Rev Jeff

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Welcome to the new church year. We begin July with a new Board, a new minister on the way, and construction of our building renovations right around the corner. It is an exciting time at UUCC and we have much to look forward to.

Our Church Administrator, Andrea Dudick, suggested that for my first Unigram column as Board President I might explain what the President does. That seems to be a very good suggestion given that we all need a refresher now and again; especially the new person in the job.

The official job description can be found on the UUCC website, in the By-laws. Paragraph 7.5 (a) says:

President – The President shall preside at the meetings of the Board of Trustees and the Annual and Special Meetings of the Congregation. In consultation with the committees, the President shall present to the Board the names of potential Chairs of all committees except the Leadership Development and Shared Ministry Committees. The President shall be an exofficio member of all committees except Leadership Development and Shared Ministry. The President is authorized to sign legal documents approved by the Board on behalf of the Congregation. The President shall be responsible that bond, in the amount determined by the Board, is provided for the Treasurer at Congregation expense.

This is a very straight forward job description; however, it fails to capture the entirety of the fact. The Board sets policy and approves procedures. But even with all the committees, staff, and policies and procedures we have at UUCC there are regularly other issues that need resolution and questions that don't have automatic answers; these all find their way to the Board. It is the president's job to see that that all the business of the congregation is brought to the Board and is addressed.

Almost everyone has heard the phrase, "herding cats" and it is commonly said in UU congregations that leading UUs is like herding cats. If that is true, it makes the board president the chief cat herder. I have been around UU churches for more than twenty-five years and I have had cats in my home for longer than that. I can make the argument that herding cats is easier than herding UUs; but working with UUs is far more fulfilling than with cats.

The members and friends of the UUCC do important work; making a place for many who cannot find a home in other religious communities; working for positive change in a world that seems to have lost its way; and teaching our children and youth the value of balanced lives and service to others. The work of the Board is not usually this direct or fulfilling, but what we do helps make it possible for everyone else to do the work they do.

Twenty years ago, I had the honor of serving as board president in another, smaller congregation. UUCC has twice the membership and four times the programs; I am constantly amazed at how active this membership is and how much you accomplish! It is a very big job. In my time here, I have watched and learned from past presidents; Ann Johnson, Ivy Coleman, Robin Scherer, Regina Moody, Marc Drews, Patti Drews, and most of all Phil Turner. They have left big shoes to fill and I am honored that you trust me to fill them.

Richard Culler

Direction Reflection Exploration

Racism has been for everyone like a horrible, tragic car crash, and we've all been heavily sedated from it. If we don't come into consciousness of this tragedy, there's going to be a violent awakening we don't want. The question is, can we wake up? Anna Deavere Smith

Can we Wake Up and Will We Wake Up?

We presented our youth with a form of the White Supremacy teach-in as part of the UUA national teach-in back in May. And not a one of them questioned whether or not we needed to have this. They immediately caught on that this isn't about them being racist it is about our societal structures, our acceptance that what we as descendants of white European decent are entrenched in our norms and want everyone else to fit in and be like us. How rarely we make societal changes adapting to other cultures. And they are aware that POC children are much more likely to suffer more severe punishments than their white peers. They know this because they see it in their schools, they hear it in the news and they know their fellow students of color are living with stressors they will never have to live adjust to. And they want it to end.

But we adults often think that because we aren't racists as individuals, and/or because we would possibly step up to thwart unfair treatment of others, that we have done all there is to do. But we haven't. If we had we wouldn't live a society where 33 % of all black baby boys will end up in prison. 33%! I honestly can't even wrap my mind around that. I raised a baby boy as many of you have and faced many fears in the process but I never had to wonder if my son would go to jail because of the color of his skin. I never had to wonder if he would be shot by police for perceived non-compliance or shot by an older man because he was playing music too loudly. If my son didn't come through his youth without the shield of white privilege, he wouldn't have made it as he was an angry, volatile teen.

And we as a society cannot accept nor foster this harsh truth that people of color are assumed guilty until proven innocent. We cannot continue hiding ourselves from the reality that our justice system only works fairly if your skin lacks melanin. We must face the fact that although people who identify as African America make up only 28% of our population here in South Carolina men of African American decent make up 58% of our male prison population! Totally unacceptable. Totally due to a racist system.

I know some of us are aware of these figures. I know we mostly empathize and would like to see change. But the question remains - will we wake up, will we be aware, and will we be willing to make changes? My trust and hope is in us.

Stephanie Palmer-Smith, Director of Religious Exploration



Candles of Community

It is with sadness that we let you know that Fred Erb passed away Monday, July 10. Fred and Evelyn Erb were members of UUCC for many years. Our caring thoughts go out to his family.



Thank You

I am writing to thank you for your kind support and your donation of \$1,167 to help homeless families get back on their feet and into permanent housing. We know that our efforts are only possible because of the contributions we receive from generous donors, like you, and we thank you again for believing in and supporting our mission. Most Sincerely, Rhonda Amick, Family Shelter

Building Renovation Update

The Committee on Building Renovation wishes to let everyone know the reason for the recent delay in completing the bid plans. We had a design issue that involves widening the opening between the Sanctuary and Social Hall. The new solution took a few extra weeks to redesign and redraw. Delays are frustrating to us all, but we are determined to do the job right even if it takes a bit longer. We expect the new solution to be less expensive and easier to construct. According to our Architect, the final plans are expected this week. With that expectation, the Board has authorized the CBR to invite bids from Contractors this month. Our target to begin construction has slipped; August 1st has been our target and we will miss that, but are aiming to get a Contractor on board and begin construction in late August or early September. We will keep you posted. Quillin Davis, Chair, quillindavis@icloud.com.

News and Notes

July 23 [White Supremacy] David Crockett, Judy Turnipseed, Laura Hartwig. As UU's we thought we had the racism thing covered, but it turns out there is more work to be done. Learn more about what we've been missing. The Social Action Committee and ARE will collaborate in presenting this service as per a UUA suggestion.

July 30 [Black Lives Matter] Ty DePass

One Unigram in July

This is the only Unigram that will be published during the month of July. The next Unigram will be published on August 9.

Harvest Hope Reminder

Don't forget those Buy One Get One Free bargains when you are doing your grocery shopping. Harvest Hope can use all the canned fruits and vegetables you can bring to the big basket in the Social Hall. They also need other non-perishable food products such as pastas, peanut butter (plastic jars please) child and adult diapers, canned juices. Also be sure to save your plastic grocery bags for them. They use these for bagging groceries and they never have enough. Thanks.

Seeds of Hope



The Seeds of Hope Fresh Market has begun and will run until August 6th. We have sold over \$400 for Farmer Louis Reid thanks to our volunteers who have been willing to work the

sales table these first two weeks. We are still in need of many more who are willing to step up and sign up. Please go to our website Social Action page or email Bauer Westernen at bwesteren@hotmail.com and say "Yes, I'll Help!!!" Thanks.

Updated UCC Directory Coming Soon

Dear Members and Friends, please send any changes to your contact information to our administrator at uucc@uucolumbia.org.

Transitions Volunteers Needed Second Saturday of Each Month

UCC has a recurring obligation to help serve the evening meal at Transitions Homeless Recovery Center, 2025 Main Street in Columbia, on the second Saturday of every month. Contact Bob Whitaker at bobwhit46@gmail.com to volunteer.

Children & Adult Chalice Lighters Needed



Please celebrate a special event by becoming a Chalice Lighter. Having a birthday? An anniversary? New to UCC? UCC longtimer? We would like to celebrate with you! Write:

dre@uucolumbia.org today to reserve your date or sign up on the clipboard found on the information table in the Social Hall.

Suspension of Art Group for Two Weeks During Hogwarts Camp

The art group is taking a two-week vacation during the last two weeks of July to allow Hogwarts campers the run of the facility. Thank you to Ruthie, Connie, Linda, and Cheryl, for your willingness to put your creative expressions on hold Thursday, July 20 and Thursday, July 27. The Art Group will resume meeting Thursday mornings at 10:00 on Thursday August 3.

Eclipse at the UUC

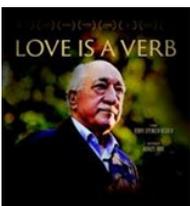
Thanks to Richard Culler, the CYRE will be selling NASA approved eclipse viewing glasses soon! Make sure you get yours and if you have some friends who would like to purchase some, please help us sell these to raise funds for the Boston Heritage Trip scheduled for June of 2018. And while we are talking about the eclipse – who’s up for a fuun time?



Let’s celebrate the end of summer and the eclipse with an afternoon of fun. Contact Stephanie Palmer-Smith at dre@uucolumbia.org if you would be interested in coming to the UUC for an afternoon of fun, food, and games. Our Charlotte neighbors would like to visit and as school will not yet be in session, it will be a great time for our children and youth to have an end of summer blow-out! See the sign-up sheet on the CYRE table!

Standing on the Side of Love T-shirts

SSL T-shirts are still available for \$22 each in the following sizes (3 Small, 3 Medium, 1 Large, 4 X Large.) Get 'em while they last by contacting Linda McLeod at bonneylass44@gmail.com or on Sundays after church service.



Love is a Verb Movie, Thursday, July 13

FREE admission, but please RSVP to pludwig@atlanticinstitutesc.org. This film documents people living the idea of Love is a Verb through their work in the “Gulen Movement”, a social movement inspired by Islamic scholar and teacher, Fethullah Gulen. Hosted by the Atlantic Institute. Thursday, July 13 at 6:30 p.m. at the Columbia Museum of Art.

Visitor Orientation, Sunday, July 16

Our next Visitor Orientation class will be held on Sunday, July 16 in the UUC library, the detached building on Heyward Street with the red door. We will begin about 15 minutes after service and usually end in about 45 minutes. Light refreshments are served. If you are new to the UUC, or have not come for a while and have questions,

this session is for you. This class is designed to help familiarize you with the principles of Unitarian Universalism and answer any questions you might have. For more information or to arrange child care (with at least 48 hours notice please) contact: Buzzie or Mike Kelly email: membership@uucolumbia.org or 803-727-8068.

Christian Heritage Group, July 18

The Christian Heritage Group will meet at 11:00 a.m. on July 18 to at the home of Rebecca and Peck Drennan at 19 Northlane Road, Columbia, SC 29223. If you have any questions please call Jenny Beale at 776-2625. We are continuing our discussion on the Trinity and other Christian topics. We had a great turn out for our last meeting. Hope to see you at this meeting.

Men’s Chorus Practice, Sunday, July 23

The Men’s Chorus is off the ground and will perform soon. Next practice is 9:30 a.m. on July 23. If you missed the last practice, you’re still welcome. All we ask is that you can carry a tune; otherwise, no experience necessary. The music is simple and fun. Richard McLeod: richard-mcleod@bellsouth.net



Plan on a Potluck, Sunday, July 23

There will be a potluck on Sunday, July 23. Please note the start time of 12:20 p.m. to allow our volunteers to join us at the beginning. Put it on your calendar and be thinking about what you plan to bring. This will be a great summer get together and good follow-up for conversation to our Social Action Worship Service on White Supremacy. Hope to see you all there.

Did You Say White Supremacy?

Yes, you might have heard about our upcoming Teach In on white supremacy culture, the white culture all around us that we as white people don't see but that is isolating to people of color. Find out what we're talking about on our website here: bit.ly/uucc-teachin and join us on **Sunday, July 23** to learn more.

UUC Book Club, Sunday, July 23

The next book club discussion is 6:30 pm on Sunday July 23. Joe Long will facilitate a discussion on “*The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature*” by Steven Pinker. We will meet at a member’s home. The UUC Book Club is open to all members and friends of UUC. **We welcome new and returning participants!** Please contact Ruthie Saunders if you have questions or would like more information: rsaunders@sc.edu

Hiroshima & Nagasaki Anniversary

Join a musical celebration of life and a commemoration of the 72nd anniversary of the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on **Sunday, August 6** from 2:30-4:30 p.m. Family friendly. Held in the Canal Room at Edventure, 211 Gervais Street, Columbia. Produced by the Columbia Friends Meeting and Carolina Peace Resource Center. Contact [803-237-2656](tel:803-237-2656) for more info. Download the flyer to share with friends.

Women’s Book Group, Tuesday, August 8



The Women's Book Group will meet Tuesday, August 8, at 7:00 p.m. in Room 8 to discuss *Purity* by Jonathan Franzen. Anyone with questions may contact Sandy Chubon at 776-0784 orsjchubon@sc.rr.com

Short Course: American Grace Begins September 3

What is the role of religion in modern America, and how do congregations work as social systems? A short course on the sociology of American religion, based on American Grace by Robert B. Putnam and David E. Campbell (2012) will be offered this fall at UUC. The book is based on extensive surveys of religion and public life in America. Studies of congregations complement interview findings. The course should assist those who are active in religious groups to understand and work with the dynamics of congregations. The course will meet in the library for an hour and a half on alternate Sundays, starting at 1:00 p.m. after services. It will meet in seven sessions from September 3 through December 3. The instructor will be Don Cooper; his e-mail is dnldcooper@gmail.com, with a phone (803) 466-5087. For details, contact him before the end of August, preferably by e-mail.

Religious Exploration

CYRE Calendar

Sunday July 9 – puppet theater creation with Gail Dawson

Sunday July 16 – Galivanting to Germany with Cindy Blackman (Morgan assisting)

Sunday July 23 – CYRE Water day! Morgan acting DRE (need assistance)

Sunday July 30 – Trekking to Taiwan with Ginny Verne (Morgan assisting – need one more assistant)

Sunday August 3 – Friends in Finland with Carita Barr (Morgan assisting – need one more assistant)

Sunday August 10 – Galloping off to the Galapagos with Richard and Linda McLeod (Morgan Assisting – need one more assistant)



Thank You!

CYRE would like to thank the following folks for gifts of items and time:

Nancie and Emilio for sharing Spain with our CYRE class

Brandi Mimbs, Mitch Ullman, and Jim Duplessis for giving their time to be trained as Youth Advisors

Carolyn West and John Logue for transportation for the DRE

Hogwarts professors, Heads of House, and Head students for their insight and time

Lis Turner for her devotion to feeding us yummy, healthy snacks

To all the parents who trust us with the religious education of their children

To Katie and Erin who nurture our babies and toddlers

Morgan for acting as DRE and leading classes during “We Are UUs” camp

And all of you out there whom I have forgotten or who are helping us thrive by the support you give us.

Dear Members and Friends of UUC,

During service on Sunday, July 16, Rev. Stephen Robinson will be sharing a sermon reflecting and expanding on the words of Chimamanda Adichie, a Nigerian author, who presented a TED Talk back in July 2009 about how our beliefs can be framed by limited experiences. The talk may be found online at https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story. In preparing for the service, everyone is encouraged to view the 19-minute talk or read the following transcript or which can be found at [ssw.unc.edu/files/TheDangerofaSingleStoryTranscript.pdf](https://www.ssw.unc.edu/files/TheDangerofaSingleStoryTranscript.pdf). By doing so, we will all come together having the same experience as a springboard for the sermon.

The Danger of a Single Story - Transcript Courtesy of TED By Chimamanda Adichie

I'm a storyteller. And I would like to tell you a few personal stories about what I like to call "the danger of the single story." I grew up on a university campus in eastern Nigeria. My mother says that I started reading at the age of two, although I think four is probably close to the truth. So I was an early reader. And what I read were British and American children's books.

I was also an early writer. And when I began to write, at about the age of seven, stories in pencil with crayon illustrations that my poor mother was obligated to read, I wrote exactly the kinds of stories I was reading. All my characters were white and blue-eyed. They played in the snow. They ate apples. (Laughter) And they talked a lot about the weather, how lovely it was that the sun had come out. (Laughter) Now, this despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow. We ate mangoes. And we never talked about the weather, because there was no need to.

My characters also drank a lot of ginger beer because the characters in the British books I read drank ginger beer. Never mind that I had no idea what ginger beer was. (Laughter) And for many years afterwards, I would have a desperate desire to taste ginger beer. But that is another story.

What this demonstrates, I think, is how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a story, particularly as children. Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign, I had become convinced that books, by their very nature, had to have foreigners in them, and had to be about things with which I could not personally identify. Now, things changed when I discovered African books. There weren't many of them available. And they weren't quite as easy to find as the foreign books.

But because of writers like Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye I went through a mental shift in my perception of literature. I realized that people like me, girls with skin the color of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature. I started to write about things I recognized.

Now, I loved those American and British books I read. They stirred my imagination. They opened up new worlds for me. But the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are.

I come from a conventional, middle-class Nigerian family. My father was a professor. My mother was an administrator. And so we had, as was the norm, live-in domestic help, who would often come from nearby rural villages. So the year I turned eight we got a new house boy. His name was Fide. The only thing my mother told us about him was that his family was very poor. My mother sent yams and rice, and our old clothes, to his family. And when I didn't finish my dinner my mother would say, "Finish your food! Don't you know? People like Fide's family have nothing." So I felt enormous pity for Fide's family.

Then one Saturday we went to his village to visit. And his mother showed us a beautifully patterned basket, made of dyed raffia, that his brother had made. I was startled. It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them is how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them.

Years later, I thought about this when I left Nigeria to go to university in the United States. I was 19. My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she could listen to what she called my "tribal music," and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey. (Laughter) She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove.

What struck me was this: She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning, pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa. A single story of catastrophe. In this single story there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her, in any way. No possibility of feelings more complex than pity. No possibility of a connection as human equals.

I must say that before I went to the U.S. I didn't consciously identify as African. But in the U.S. whenever Africa came up people turned to me. Never mind that I knew nothing about places like Namibia. But I did come to embrace this new identity. And in many ways I think of myself now as African. Although I still get quite irritable when Africa is referred to as a country. The most recent example being my otherwise wonderful flight from Lagos two days ago, in which there was an announcement on the Virgin flight about the charity work in "India, Africa and other countries." (Laughter)

So after I had spent some years in the U.S. as an African, I began to understand my roommate's response to me. If I had not grown up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images, I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves, and waiting to be saved, by a kind, white foreigner. I would see Africans in the same way that I, as a child, had seen Fide's family.

This single story of Africa ultimately comes, I think, from Western literature. Now, here is a quote from the writing of a London merchant called John Locke, who sailed to west Africa in 1561, and kept a fascinating account of his voyage. After referring to the black Africans as "beasts who have no houses," he writes, "They are also people without heads, having their mouth and eyes in their breasts."

Now, I've laughed every time I've read this. And one must admire the imagination of John Locke. But what is important about his writing is that it represents the beginning of a tradition of telling African stories in the West. A tradition of Sub-Saharan Africa as a place of negatives, of difference, of darkness, of people who, in the words of the wonderful poet, Rudyard Kipling, are "half devil, half child."

And so I began to realize that my American roommate must have, throughout her life, seen and heard different versions of this single story, as had a professor, who once told me that my novel was not "authentically African." Now, I was quite willing to contend that there were a number of things wrong with the novel, that it had failed in a number of places. But I had not quite imagined that it had failed at achieving something called African authenticity. In fact I did not know what African authenticity was. The professor told me that my characters were too much like him, an educated and middle-class man. My characters drove cars. They were not starving. Therefore they were not authentically African.

But I must quickly add that I too am just as guilty in the question of the single story. A few years ago, I visited Mexico from the U.S. The political climate in the U.S. at the time, was tense. And there were debates going on about immigration. And, as often happens in America, immigration became synonymous with Mexicans. There were endless stories of Mexicans as people who were fleeing the healthcare system, sneaking across the border, being arrested at the border, that sort of thing.

I remember walking around on my first day in Guadalajara, watching the people going to work, rolling up tortillas in the marketplace, smoking, laughing. I remember first feeling slight surprise. And then I was overwhelmed with shame. I realized that I had been so immersed in the media coverage of Mexicans that they had become one thing in my mind, the abject immigrant. I had bought into the single story of Mexicans and I could not have been more ashamed of myself. So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.

It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali. How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story, and to start with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story.

I recently spoke at a university where a student told me that it was such a shame that Nigerian men were physical abusers like the father character in my novel. I told him that I had just read a novel called "American Psycho" -- (Laughter) -- and that it was such a shame that young Americans were serial murderers. (Laughter) (Applause) Now, obviously I said this in a fit of mild irritation. (Laughter)

I would never have occurred to me to think that just because I had read a novel in which a character was a serial killer that he was somehow representative of all Americans. And now, this is not because I am a better person than that student, but, because of America's cultural and economic power, I had many stories of America. I had read Tyler and Updike and Steinbeck and Gaitskill. I did not have a single story of America.

When I learned, some years ago, that writers were expected to have had really unhappy childhoods to be successful, I began to think about how I could invent horrible things my parents had done to me. (Laughter) But the truth is that I had a very happy childhood, full of laughter and love, in a very close-knit family.

But I also had grandfathers who died in refugee camps. My cousin Polle died because he could not get adequate healthcare. One of my closest friends, Okoloma, died in a plane crash because our firetrucks did not have water. I grew up under repressive military governments that devalued education, so that sometimes my parents were not paid their salaries. And so, as a child, I saw jam disappear from the breakfast table, then margarine disappeared, then bread became too expensive, then milk became rationed. And most of all, a kind of normalized political fear invaded our lives.

All of these stories make me who I am. But to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience, and to overlook the many other stories that formed me. The single story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.

Of course, Africa is a continent full of catastrophes. There are immense ones, such as the horrific rapes in Congo. And depressing ones, such as the fact that 5,000 people apply for one job vacancy in Nigeria. But there are other stories that are not about catastrophe. And it is very important, it is just as important, to talk about them.

I've always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.

So what if before my Mexican trip I had followed the immigration debate from both sides, the U.S. and the Mexican? What if my mother had told us that Fide's family was poor and hardworking? What if we had an African television network that broadcast diverse African stories all over the world? What the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe calls "a balance of stories."

What if my roommate knew about my Nigerian publisher, Mukta Bakaray, a remarkable man who left his job in a bank to follow his dream and start a publishing house? Now, the conventional wisdom was that Nigerians don't read literature. He disagreed. He felt that people who could read, would read, if you made literature affordable and available to them.

Shortly after he published my first novel I went to a TV station in Lagos to do an interview. And a woman who worked there as a messenger came up to me and said, "I really liked your novel. I didn't like the ending. Now you must write a sequel, and this is what will happen ..." (Laughter) And she went on to tell me what to write in the sequel. Now I was not only charmed, I was very moved. Here was a woman, part of the ordinary masses of Nigerians, who were not supposed to be readers. She had not only read the book, but she had taken ownership of it and felt justified in telling me what to write in the sequel.

Now, what if my roommate knew about my friend Fumi Onda, a fearless woman who hosts a TV show in Lagos, and is determined to tell the stories that we prefer to forget? What if my roommate knew about the heart procedure that was performed in the Lagos hospital last week? What if my roommate knew about contemporary Nigerian music? Talented people singing in English and Pidgin, and Igbo and Yoruba and Ijo, mixing influences from Jay-Z to Fela to Bob Marley to their grandfathers. What if my roommate knew about the female lawyer who recently went to court in Nigeria to challenge a ridiculous law that required women to get their husband's consent before renewing their passports? What if my roommate knew about Nollywood, full of innovative people making films despite great technical odds? Films so popular that they really are the best example of Nigerians consuming what they produce. What if my roommate knew about my wonderfully ambitious hair braider, who has just started her own business selling hair extensions? Or about the millions of other Nigerians who start businesses and sometimes fail, but continue to nurse ambition?

Every time I am home I am confronted with the usual sources of irritation for most Nigerians: our failed infrastructure, our failed government. But also by the incredible resilience of people who thrive despite the government, rather than because of it. I teach writing workshops in Lagos every summer. And it is amazing to me how many people apply, how many people are eager to write, to tell stories.

My Nigerian publisher and I have just started a non-profit called Farafina Trust. And we have big dreams of building libraries and refurbishing libraries that already exist, and providing books for state schools that don't have anything in their libraries, and also of organizing lots and lots of workshops, in reading and writing, for all the people who are eager to tell our many stories. Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.

The American writer Alice Walker wrote this about her southern relatives who had moved to the north. She introduced them to a book about the southern life that they had left behind.

"They sat around, reading the book themselves, listening to me read the book, and a kind of paradise was regained." I would like to end with this thought: That when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise. Thank you. (Applause)

Meetings & Rentals

Art For All Group	Thursdays: Cancelled 7/20 & 7/27	10:00 am	Social Hall
Board Meeting Chair Yoga	Wednesday, July 19 Suspended for Summer	6:30 pm	Social Hall
Children & Youth RE Committee	TBA		
Choir	Suspended for Summer	9:30 am	Sanctuary
Committee Night	1st Wednesday of month	6:00 pm	Dinner in the Social Hall
CUUP's, Gaia's Rising	Every Thursday	7:30 pm	Library
Forum	Every Sunday	9:30 am	Library
Green Committee	TBA	6:30 pm	Classroom # 8
Knit or Not	Every Monday	7:00 pm	Classroom # 8
Membership Committee	TBA	12:30 pm	Classroom # 8
Visitor Orientation	Sunday, July 16	12:15 pm	Library
Science & Religion	2 nd Thursday	7:00 pm	Classroom # 8
September Set	Friday, July 28	6:00 pm	Social Hall
Social Action Committee	Sunday, August 5	7:00 pm	Classroom # 5
Technology Committee	Wednesday, August 2	6:00 pm	Workroom 1
UU Animal Ministry	Thursday, August 9	5:00 pm	Classroom # 5
UU Book Club	Sunday, July 23	6:30 pm	Member's Home
UU Humanist	4 th Thursday	7:00 pm	Classroom # 8
UU Partner Church Committee	Lee Minghi, 798-0904; Carita Barr, 782-0053	TBA	
Women's Book Club	Tuesday, August 8	7:00 pm	Classroom # 8
Writing Group	Suspended for Summer	6:30 pm	Classroom # 5
Rentals			
La Leche League	3rd Tuesdays	6-8pm	Classroom # 5
Tai Chi 803-772-9557 columbia.sc@taoist.org	Every Thursday	6:30 pm	Social Hall
Meditation	Every Monday	7:00 pm	Library
Men's AA	Every Tuesday	6:30 pm	Social Hall
Women's AA	Every Wednesday	6:30 pm	Library

The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

Grateful for the religious pluralism that enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. We covenant to affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relationships
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and society at large
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
7. Respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part

If these principles reflect your understanding of the world and appeal to your sense of spiritual fulfillment, we invite you to consider membership in the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia. If you would like to discuss membership or if you would simply like more information, please speak to any member of the Membership Committee or of the Board of Trustees.

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