The concept of white supremacist culture and how it invades our life every day without our knowing it is tough to talk about.  I hardly know where to begin, l’ll start with a story some of you have heard before...

During a part of our lives, for too long, Tom and I worked to maintain the **systems and institutions that protected the power and privilege of white people**, to keep intact the white **Supremacist culture we are talking about today**. Tom organized and I taught in the all-white private schools created to exclude blacks and maintain segregation The legacy of that white supremacy institution is seen in rural SC counties especially along the I-95 Corridor of Shame where privileged white people divert their resources from public schools to support the largely white private schools while the public schools, largely black, stripped of sufficient tax support, lack decent facilities, experienced teachers, basic equipment and other resources.

Later, as paid staff of Governor George Wallace for four years,

we were determined to remain supreme by keeping black people "in their place”, we had a **white-knuckled death grip on what is ours by birth right** and worked hard to deny black people  the right to vote, access to jobs, equal education and on and on.

Most of you have heard us speak of our transformation. Tom and I often say if we can change anybody can charge. Transformation almost never happens suddenly but it does happen**. We came to realize the truth that we swim in the culture of white supremacy like a fish swims in water without any real notice of the water that surrounds us.**

**The wake up call that moved me and changed my world view forever** happened back here in SC through our community work on economic issues--the terrible disparity between the high utility rates charged to poor people, mostly black, compared to rates charge large corporations.  In meetings with mixed audiences to talk about economic inequality and utility reform, we heard from folks who looked very unlike ourselves but **as I listened to their stories about what was important to their lives**, the health and safety of their children, , decent jobs, fair electric rates I begin to understand how alike we were in some many ways, **that while some of us have fears  and uncertainties all of us have similar hopes and dreams** of a better tomorrow for our children. My eyes were opened to how the comfort we claim, the power and privilege we own is at the expense of so many and we had helped perpetuated that system.

UU's have been at the forefront of the struggle for racial justice for over 200 years in America--Universalists demanded the franchise for newly freed slaves. Our Board of Trustees cancelled a meeting to fly to Selma and march with Martin Luther King.  We have committed ourselves to becoming an-anti-oppressive multicultural faith and this congregation has held 3 District Antiracism conferences. And so, I've heard some say why do we have to talk about this again. I'm tired of it. Let's not. You see, that is part of our privilege. We don't have to, we can walk away.

I think one of our faults, along with our good parts is our lack of humility, our unwillingness to admit that there are more things we can learn about this Supremacist Culture we live in and benefit from.

Let me give you only a few examples, just scratch the surface. One of the many advantages white skin carries with it is the **presumption of intelligence**. In the first grade your white child is likely to be put in a **high level reading class** more readily than a person of Color, based merely on the color of his skin. Our son Jeff was.  His black friend and future law school roommate, Leon Spencer, whom many of you know, was not, until several weeks later after they heard him read.

If that same white child makes poor grades, it is because he is **not applying himself or he is underachieving**, not that he is **incapable**. In history class, students studying about our **national heritage or civilization learn *white people made it what it is*.** Black history, often distorted, hardly exists.

When your white child applies to law school, no one will question if she got the benefit of affirmative action, even though the unquestioned advantage she and her white friends enjoy is that their parents are three generation alumni, Senators or Gamecock Club contributors.  And those who think affirmative action should end, need to remember that while the white law school was founded in 1867, there was no law school that would admit People of Color until 1947.

After graduation, when your child send out resumes she will get a call for an interview at a rate 50% higher if her name is Emily or Cyndy than if it is Lakisha or Christaka.

There’s more---

A shameful part of our cultural unconscious is the image created long ago of the brutal animalistic savage, an image created to make whites feel better about slavery and that remains in our culture, leading whites ***against their conscious intent*** to fear and mistrust black people. We feel superior to people of color and fear them. **That is why we clutch our purse, cross the street, lock the car door, why our heart beats faster when we meet a black man** **walking on the street at dusk**. Why several white guys together on the corner are just that, if they're Black they're a gang.  Jeff jogs in his middle class neighborhood after dark in safety: Leon jogging, is a burglary suspect fleeing a crime scene.

The privilege of being white is to feel welcomed anywhere, to cause no fear, to feel personally safe. The talk you give your white son along with the car keys is how to act when the cop stops him so he won’t get a ticket. The mother of a black child starts the talk much earlier, because she knows her sweet little boy will grow up to be a **big scary black man** in other people's eyes who don't know him. And her car talk will be how to act toward the cop so he won't get killed. **In this Supremacist Culture He will often feel like he doesn’t fit in and he will never feel completely safe, anywhere--ask him.**

There is so much more to learn. This teach in and next week’s Black Lives Matter Talk are just a start .**Read more, Talk to each other more, especially, listen to the stories**. As we continue to grow in our understanding of this white supremacy culture we live in, I hope it will strike you as it has me that we must dismantle it, **if we want to live in a just world. And don’t waste time feeling white guilt as I surely could, there’s too much to be done. Beyond meetings and flip charts,** it will require our hands, hearts, minds and voices joined in the work. Let's get started.