



UU Class
Conversations

Unitarian Universalist Class Conversations

**Create Justice – Not Walls:
Class and Race in UU and US Settings**

Champlain Valley UU Society

Saturday, April 8, 2017

#uuclassstoriesCVUUS

Covenant

Our goal is to create safe space for the exploration of potentially sensitive issues related to class and money. Agreeing to covenant with each other in this process of mutual discovery reminds us that what we do here is sacred work.

- Speak with “I” statements. Honestly raise issues that come up for you.
- Step up, step back. Share airtime.
- Listen with an open mind. Assume good intentions.
- It is okay to disagree with each other respectfully.
- Set your own limits. You have the right to pass.
- Respect others’ confidentiality. Sharing information and ideas after the workshop is encouraged, but keep personal statements and experiences confidential.
- Others?

Workshop Activities and Questions

Welcome and Orientation

A Visual Review of Race and Class

Directions:

Please take a minute to read each of these cartoons. Turn to the person next to you and share the first thought about each that came to you. You have 3 minutes each to share your thoughts.

Taking the Temperature of the Room

Directions:

The facilitator will ask a series of questions about race and class – one by one. Please think about the question asked, and then stand in front of the sign that best reflects your answer: Agree, Disagree, Unsure. We will discuss each before moving to the next question.

Exploring Our Class-Race Background Development

Directions:

In small groups of 3 or 4, please answer the Qs. Each person should take 3-5 minutes each to share in the group.

- Who (and) how were you socialized to look up to and look down on in terms of race and class? Think of specific stories, if you can.
- What was your exposure to people from a different race? (If not in person then through what other modalities? Media, hearsay...)

Break

Class Indicators

Directions:

In our large group, let's share the "indicators" of class that made you look up to or down on people as you were growing up?

Exploring Our Thinking About Race

Directions:

In groups of 3 or 4, please answer the following questions:

- a. When is the first time you noticed race in the community in which you grew up?
- b. And what was your experience of race in the community in which you grew up?
- c. How do you experience race today in your current community?

Circles of Oppression

Reasons for Race/Class Inequality

Directions:

Now that we've had the opportunity to review the timeline, please divide into 4 groups, 80s 90s, 00s, and 10s, and please add boosts and barriers to the paper provided that various groups have experienced.

Lunch (one hour)

Becoming an Ally

Directions:

In small groups, please answer these questions:

- a. Where is the congregation already being a strong ally?
- b. What steps can you take to move closer to being a strong ally?

Share this information in the large group.

Evaluations

Closing Circle

Directions:

Please form a circle, and one-by-one share one action you will take personally be a better ally.

Definitions

What Is Class?

Class is the relative social rank in terms of **income, education, wealth, status/position, power and aspirations**.

- Class is comprised of.
 - **Economic Capital** – The command over economic resources (cash, assets).
 - **Cultural Capital** – The forms of knowledge, skill, education, and any advantages a person has which give her or him a higher status in society.
 - **Social Capital** – Resources based on group membership, relationships, networks of influence and support.
- Class affects people not only on an economic level, but also on an emotional level.

What Is Classism?

The institutional, cultural, and individual practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socioeconomic class; **and** an economic system that creates excessive inequality and causes basic human needs to go unmet.

What Is Race?

Race is a powerful social construct that gives people different access to opportunities and resources based on skin color.

- Race is not biological, but it is real.
- Race is often confused or conflated with class.

Racism

Racism is the belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another and a person's social and moral traits are predetermined by his/her inborn biological characteristics (ADL).

Circles of Oppression

Class-race intersectionality shows up in many different forms in our lives. We might think of the ways intersectionality affects us as ***intersecting circles***.

- **Individual:** The internalized inferiority of those with less advantage and internalized superiority of those with more advantage affect how we treat ourselves and each other.
 - Internalized feelings about class and race may lead to feelings of inferiority in relation to those of the “dominant” culture who, in turn, may have feelings of superiority to those with less advantage. Both are forms of internalized oppression.
- **Interpersonal:** Both subtle and overt attitudes toward people from races and classes that are not part of the dominant culture affect how we treat each other and whether or not we feel accepted. Becoming aware of our own feelings can help us move toward greater acceptance of people from different backgrounds.
- **Cultural:** This form of oppression comes from pervasive beliefs or ideologies of individualism, meritocracy and equal opportunity vs. greater equity contribute to cultural oppression.

- **Organizational:** Oppression is embedded in many of the policies and practices of our organizations, including faith communities. Organizational oppression can be changed by the growing awareness of congregations and commitment to justice and equity.
- **Systemic:** Policies and practices are embedded in our major social institutions that benefit the those from the “dominant” classes and races at the expense of those who are not.

Working Descriptions of Class Identities

The United States has no hard and fast divisions between class groups. Income and wealth are both on spectrums, and most of us move up or down the spectrums during our lifetimes. Some people grow up in one class and live as adults in another. For immigrants, there’s another layer of confusion, as their class status in their country of origin is often different from their class status in the United States. There are many classification systems, with different numbers and names for class groups. Nevertheless, it can be useful for understanding class dynamics to place people roughly into these seven groups.

Persistent poverty: Less than a high school education. Outside the mainstream labor market, with significant unmet basic needs. May experience periods of homelessness, live in substandard housing, or seek public housing and other forms of assistance.

Working but still poor: May have a high school education and a full-time job, but still living below the poverty line with unmet needs. May rely on public assistance for housing and food stamps.

Working class: High school degree and sometimes vocational education. In supervised wage jobs or hands-on small business. Renting or modest homeownership.

Lower middle class: Relatively stable and decent-paying working-class jobs or small businesses. May live in marginally middle-class neighborhoods, but lack social and occupational prestige.

Professional middle class: Four-year college degree or more and in professional/managerial jobs with relatively more autonomy and often higher income and security. Homeownership in safe community with good schools.

Upper middle class: College and graduate degree or business success, enabling home ownership in communities with excellent schools. Trading up to bigger homes.

Owning class: Elite private schools and colleges. Enough income-producing assets to not *need* to work, and with multiple homes or a luxury home.

Mobile Class Identities

“Upwardly mobile”: Gaining more class advantage, particularly in terms of education, income and neighborhood. In earlier eras such mobility was enabled by the GI Bill, federal housing loans, and Affirmative Action policies. Without such social programs, there is far less upward mobility today.

Voluntarily “downwardly mobile”: From professional middle class, upper middle class or owning class background or life-style. Some people choose to not pursue a professional career for political, artistic or environmental values and down-size their housing and/or lifestyle to establish a smaller ecological footprint.

Involuntarily “downwardly mobile”: Because of health crises and disabilities, addictions, crashed economy, bankruptcy, war or other traumas, people from the professional middle class or upper middle class may end up in poverty or working class.

Being an Ally: *BY ÖZLEM SENSOY AND ROBIN DIANGELO*

- Validating and supporting people who are socially or institutionally less advantaged than yourself, regardless of whether you understand or agree with where they are coming from.
- Engaging in continual self-reflection to uncover your socialized blind spots where you have privilege.
- Advocating when the oppressed group is absent by challenging misconceptions.
- Sharing power and taking risks to build relationships with target group members.
- Taking responsibility for your mistakes, having humility and willingness to admit to “not knowing,” letting go of control.
- Earning trust through action.
- Checking in and asking the person or organization you want to support, How can I/we best do that, rather than assuming you know.

UU Class Conversations

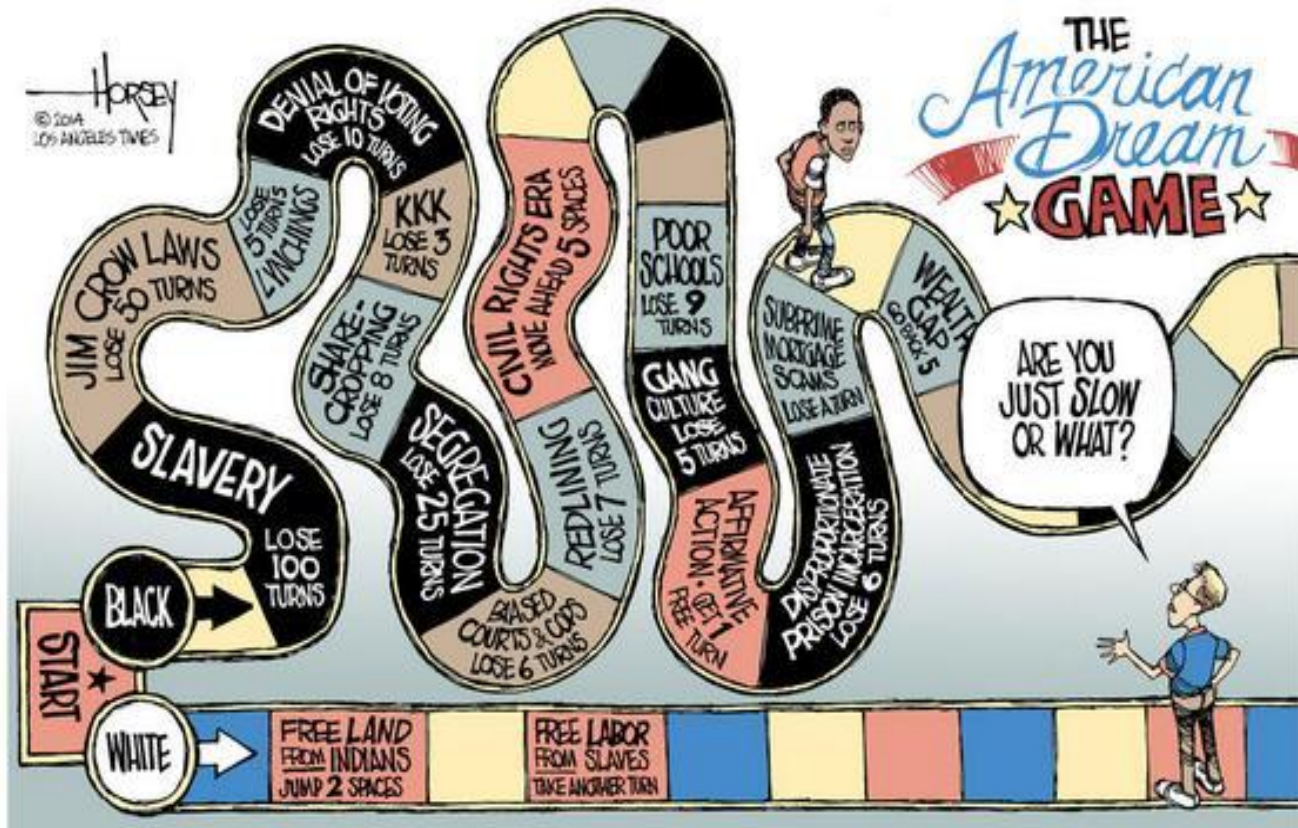
UU Class Conversations explores class and classism through a Unitarian Universalist lens to strengthen our faith community’s spiritual life and shared commitment to social justice. Class Conversations workshops and resources expand on our faith’s ongoing diversity and anti-oppression work – from race to gender to sexual orientation. We have intensified our work on class/race diversity in recent years in response to requests from the faith community.

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How to Get Involved with Class Conversations

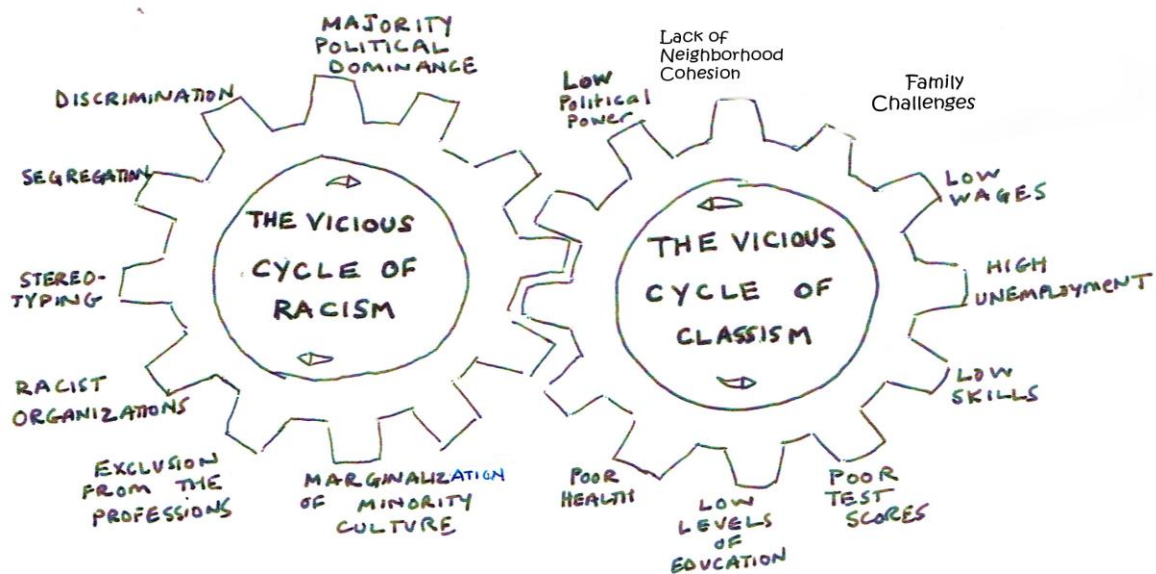
- Learn more about class and classism, by exploring the resources available on our website, www.uuclassconversations.org.
- Share your class story at www.uuclassconversations.org/stories.
- “Like” our Facebook page, UU Class Conversations, and follow us on Twitter @UUClassStories.
- Visit the website of our partner organization, Class Action, at www.classism.org and explore their resources. Follow the blog, *Classism Exposed*, at www.classism.org/blog.

Appendices



RACISM AND CLASSISM INTERCONNECTIONS

adapted from Gunnar Myrdal



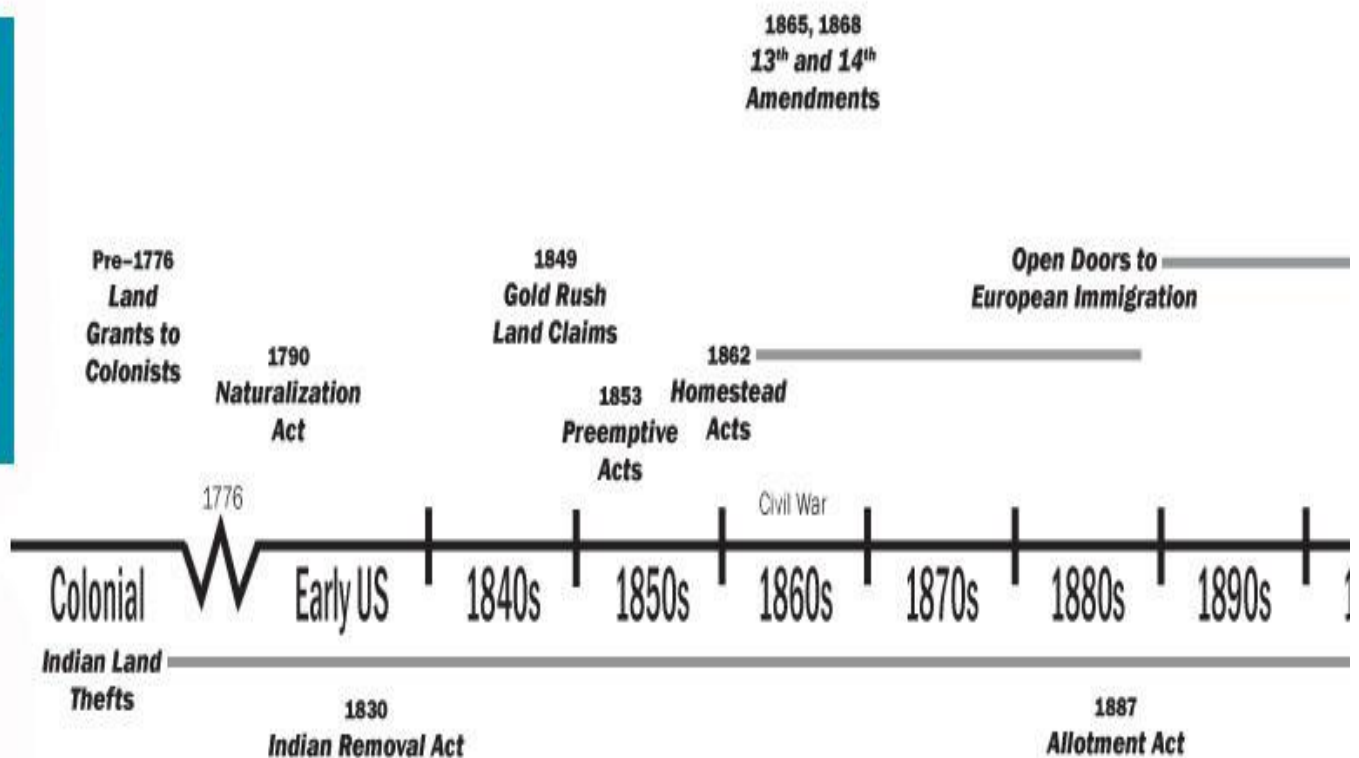
ON A PLATE





U.S. Government and Race

Boosts



Blocks



Race & U.S. Government Role

