



Religious Leaders Caucus

December 15, 2021 MINUTES

12-15-2021 Minutes. Religious leaders gathered Dec 15 2021 via zoom to hear Rev. Shari Halliday Quan, lead minister at Unitarian Universalist Church on Winton Road, Rochester NY and Dr. Tabassam Javed, president of the Islamic Center of Rochester and Rev. William Wilkinson, pastor of Medina Presbyterian Church speak on Healing Hate. A video of the meeting is posted on the RocACTS website Religious Leaders' page. Thus, only a brief summary follows:

Rev. Halliday Quan spoke of anti Asian hate and emphasized that the UU congregation equips one another to have difficult conversations. "We give people communication skills. We locate ourselves, fiercely, in practical skills. We practice having hard conversations. We lean into risk taking - doing the thing again and again. UU congregations are faithful to anti racism and racial identity. The ability to hold two truths at the same time is a mark of spiritual maturity. Respect for human dignity is expected." Shari is the first person of color to last longer than a year at this UU church. "We are not policing people's behavior but we do actively prioritize the wellbeing of people in the minority. UU Church has circles of accountability."

Rev. Wilkinson emphasized that hate is a societal problem. "We need to move towards transforming the culture of hate. Hate is a social phenomenon." He spoke of dismantling racism, of the hate spewed in the Jan 6 insurrection and of RocACTS recently addressing the overt prejudice in a suburban school district. He asks, How did Rochester become so segregated and why is it still? Hatred is a tool. Are we living hate? Are we living them and us? We are called to look at our institutions. Are we willing to ask the deeper questions. Love can take out hatred.

Dr. Javed spoke of asking the Imam to find all the verses in the Quran where there is equity for all persons, where we are all sisters and brothers, soul mates. Tabassam said, to heal hate we must find root causes and learn how to overcome these barriers. Dr Javed said that almost 500 people heard the imam speak on those verses at their Friday night prayer over two weeks. Dr Javed evokes a change of heart through holding one on one conversations on difficult topics. Tabassam said Muslims are targeted



hatefully; Pew research noted only 7% of Americans had a favorable view of Muslims. A National Islamic leader said that number rose to 21%. He believes that is because 10% of all physicians are Muslim. Many Muslim physicians run free clinics in Jacksonville, Orlando and elsewhere. We try to find community solutions that will eventually stop white supremacists from spewing hate so that we will have equity and less racial bias.

Rev. Marilyn Cunningham spoke of being verbally attacked by 200 people and is afraid of being treated rudely everywhere she goes.

Carlos Santana spoke of hatred of Hispanic people and of segregations' lasting effects and asked why does segregation continue?

Kathleen McGrail spoke of the woefully inadequate amount of safe affordable housing for low income people in suburbs

Dr. Deni Mack told stories of a self proclaimed white anarchist working on healing hatred. His chief guide is a Muslim man whose father was killed by a man in the anarchist's group! Deni spoke of several interfaith gatherings in response to the former administration's Muslim bans, Tree of Life massacre, Muslim - Christian dialogues and more. An announcement was made re Jan 24 and 31 evening zoom meetings re Christian Nationalism; Intersection of Religion and Politics offered by St Luke's Episcopal and Bethlehem Lutheran churches in Fairport.