



UU Congregation of Phoenix

October 2018

Heritage



A Reflection on Heritage by Anthony N. Johnson

Heritage may be defined as something transmitted by or acquired from an ancestor or predecessor. Heritage may be a genetic quality or trait that is or may be inherited by tradition or by birthright. As I reflect upon my heritage, which I am so proud of, I recall the night of June 27th, 1990 in Washington, D.C. It was a typical hot and humid D.C. summer night, the usual, with one huge exception. Tonight, I was one of some 19,000 people crowded into the D.C. convention center to see one of my heroes. I pumped my fist in the air, I danced the toi-toi- in the aisles with many others, mesmerized by the man who embodied the hopes of millions. It was Nelson Mandela's first visit, as a just-released political prisoner, to the United States.

I was working as Director of Production and Operations for Black Entertainment Television at the time. Recalling Mandela's arrival, two days earlier, on a now defunct Trump Airlines plane, brings an ironic smile to my face. My heritage includes my father telling me stories of his having to get off the sidewalk if a white person was also walking on the sidewalk and to never look a white man in the eye. He told me stories of my grandfather who worked in a warehouse and could hold the entire inventory in his head and how he trained all the young white managers who would become his bosses.

When I ponder my heritage, I feel an ancestral call for restorative justice for the African-American community. Restorative Justice or, as in 1969, Dr. Homer Jack, Director of the Division of Social Responsibility of the Unitarian Universalist Association referred to the issue, "Reparations Investments." This call for restorative justice is woven into the very fabric of our country. It is not un-American to call for justice, to call for the redress of criminal wrongs. In a moral sense, our American religious literature and scriptures speak to a morality between humans and the Divine. Was it not this morality that spawned those Unitarian Universalist ministers and lay people to hear the call of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and travel to Selma, Alabama, in 1965? I Bless the Rev. James Reeb, Ms. Viola Gregg Liuzzo and the other white Americans who heard the call and supported the movement for justice for all Americans.

I believe we are faced with the reality that American slavery was and remains the basis of American Prosperity. All of our prosperity. In the words of Ta-Nehisi Coates," until we reckon with the compounding moral debts of our ancestors, America will never be whole." How do we do it? I don't know, what I do know is we need to talk about it. Let's talk about it in sacred space from a place of grace, with no blame, no shame, and allow to happen what James Baldwin reminds us of; "love takes off the masks that we cannot live without and know we cannot live within." This is our heritage and it is the work that remains.

Quotes and Thoughts for Reflection

Heritage

As you begin to realize that every different type of music, everybody's individual music, has its own rhythm, life, language and heritage, you realize how life changes, and you learn how to be more open and adaptive to what is around us. -- Yo-Yo Ma

Scientific thought and its creation is the common and shared heritage of humankind. -
- Abdus Salam

You don't stumble upon your heritage. It's there, just waiting to be explored and shared. -- Robbie Robertson

My father used to say that stories are part of the most precious heritage of mankind.
— Tahir Shah, In Arabian Nights: A Caravan of Moroccan Dreams

We do not have to be ashamed of what we are. As sentient beings we have wonderful backgrounds. These backgrounds may not be particularly enlightened or peaceful or intelligent. Nevertheless, we have soil good enough to cultivate; we can plant anything in it. — Chögyam Trungpa, Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism

You are one woman in an endless line of women who were chosen to love more passionately than others, be committed to justice more fervently than others, and seek our Maker's higher expressions more reflectively than others.— Mandy Nachampassack-Maloney, Autumnal Dancer

Heritage - be proud of it for you will be its legacy. It's your responsibility to carry on and learn your heritage. Otherwise, it will be lost. Do not diminish who you are. Your gender, your heritage, your identity. That's what makes you unique. - Kailin Gow

When you stress individualism, as this country does; materialism, as this country does; personal weaponry, as this country does; and racial hatred, which is part of our heritage as white Europeans; and then you add the volatile ingredient of "nothing." — George Carlin



Together Hymn for October

*Wanting Memories (from CROSSINGS by
Y.M. Barnwell (c)1992)*

You can hear this month's Together Hymn at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vW2TpW4gCt8>

And you can find the lyrics at
http://barnwellarchives.com/BARNWELL_FAMILY_ARCHIVES/Wanting_Memories.html

Deepening Connection Small Group
Session Plan
Theme: Heritage
October 2018

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

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Brief Check-in

Focus Reading:

When I meet a person, when I enter a community or an organization, I instinctively seek out the signs and signals of heritage and experience. How did they begin, from what identities and traditions did they emerge? What ancestral and personal experiences have shaped them; where have they learned to use their gifts, how have they managed to survive and thrive in the face of challenge? We all bring gifts; we all carry scars. That is our human reality. – Rev. Margret A. O’Neill

Focus Questions:

- What do you know about your family heritage, and how did you learn that?
- How did you learn about the heritage of the places you come from, the places you inhabit?
- How has your heritage shaped who you are today – your choices, your values?
- What is the heritage you most want to pass on to those who follow you, in a family line or in your larger circle?
- How are you being intentional about sharing your heritage?

Checkout/Likes and Wishes

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:

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