

8th principle's development & process

The need for an 8th principle to complement the 7 that UUs are familiar with, traces back to the work of Paula Cole Jones, Director of Racial & Social Justice for one of the former UUA districts. After working with congregations on these issues for over 15 years, she realized that a person can believe they are being a “good UU” and following the 7 Principles without thinking about or dealing with racism and other oppressions at the systemic level. She realized that an 8th Principle was needed to correct this, and worked with Bruce Pollack-Johnson, a member of the UU Church of the Restoration in Philadelphia, to put together a draft in 2013.

In 2017, the national UUA was shaken up by a regional hiring decision that was widely interpreted as racist, leading to several resignations, including that of President Peter Morales. His successor co-presidents created the Commission on Institutional Change to recommend how the UUA could improve its culture and move forward. Also in 2017, delegates at the UUA General Assembly clearly called for an explicit anti-racism principle.

The Commission on Institutional Change issued their report –Widening the Circle of Concern -- in June 2020. One of its recommendations was that by 2022, an explicit commitment to become anti-oppressive be included in the bylaws of the UUA, which include the Principles and Purposes. They also recommended that congregations do the same, using the example of congregations who had already adopted such statements.

In May 2017, the UU Church of the Restoration became the first congregation to adopt the language developed by Pollack-Johnson and Jones and recommended that the UUA adopt it as well. Since then, over 25 congregations have adopted that language, including ones in Richmond and Virginia Beach.

In the summer of 2020, the UUA charged a commission (the Article II Commission) with a duty to study revisions to the bylaws—including the seven principles and six sources. The charge stated that the bylaws “should ... challenge UUs to place the liberation of all, in all its dimensions, at the center of our lives. They should be honest about our past, name what we are facing and our aspirations and where we hope to be not for just today but looking out at the horizons. They should ask us to choose Love in Action as the path forward. Our commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism is love in action, and should be centered in any revision.” The recommendations that the commission comes up with will be voted on at the 2022 GA.

The language already adopted by congregations calls UUs to affirm and promote *journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.*

Pam asked me to say why I think we should adopt the 8th principle. Someone I admire very much here once said something like, "If in our church isn't working for good, then it's just a country club." We say that Love is our doctrine. Dr. Cornel West said, “Justice is what love looks like in public.” We need to go public with our love.

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