

*Proposed by the Public Witness Subgroup of the Racial Justice Steering Committee, 3-4-16*

**Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church-Unitarian Universalist  
Congregational Public Witness in Support of  
the Black Lives Matter Movement and Racial Justice**

**WHEREAS**, Unitarian Universalists strive for justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

**WHEREAS**, Unitarian Universalists have a goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

**WHEREAS**, allowing injustice to go unchallenged violates our principles;

**WHEREAS**, the Black Lives Matter movement has gained powerful traction in conjunction with recent tragic events involving, in particular, police brutality and institutionalized racism that target the black community;

<https://youtu.be/L2HQbScS43c> “Obama Defends Black Lives Matter Movement

**WHEREAS**, Tanisha Anderson, Rekia Boyd, Michael Brown, Miriam Carey, Michelle Cusseaux, Shelly Frey, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Trayvon Martin, Kayla Moore, Tamir Rice, and Tony Robinson are just a few names of people who were recently killed by the racism that exists in the United States today;

**WHEREAS**, people of all ages and races are killed by law enforcement, yet black people ages 20-24 are seven times more likely to be killed by law enforcement;

**WHEREAS**, mass incarceration fueled by for-profit prisons and racially biased police practices drive the disproportionate imprisonment of black and brown Americans;

**WHEREAS**, the school-to-prison pipeline is an urgent concern because 40% of students expelled from U.S. public schools are black and one out of three black men is incarcerated during his lifetime; and

**WHEREAS**, we must continue to support the Black Lives Matter movement and Black-led racial justice organizations;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church-Unitarian Universalist calls members to action, to become closer to a just world community, and to prevent future incidents of this nature;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church-Unitarian Universalist of Charlottesville, VA urges members to engage in intentional learning spaces to organize for racial justice with recognition of the interconnected nature of racism coupled with systems of

oppression that impact people based on class, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability and language;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church-Unitarian Universalist encourages members to work toward police reform and prison abolition (which seeks to replace the current prison system with a system that is more just and equitable); and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church-Unitarian Universalist recognizes that the fight for civil rights and equality is as real today as it was decades ago and TJMC-UU will take initiative in collaboration with local and national organizations fighting for racial justice against the harsh racist practices to which many black people are exposed.

No matter who you are, black lives matter, and a system of fair, transformative, and restorative justice that is accountable to communities is something to which each of us has a right. Unitarian Universalists and our greater society have the power to make this happen. Let's do it!

### ***Introduction to Public Witness Statement:***

The Unitarian Universalist General Assembly meeting of June 2015 overwhelmingly adopted an Action of Immediate Witness in Support of the Black Lives Matter Movement. **We bring it unchanged (except that TJMC replaces UUA)** for the congregation's consideration as a Public Witness statement. We do so for three reasons.

- The UU General Assembly has asked us to act.
- There is much evidence of racial injustice.
- We must act because our UU Principles call on us to affirm “the inherent worth and dignity of every person” and our TJMC-UU Mission Statement urges us to “have a lasting influence on local, national, and global programs that promote equity and end oppression.”

***Interpretation and examples*** *(These examples do not include all the possibilities of action. They are listed to give ideas for potential activities but are not meant to limit activities to promote racial justice.):*

A Member or Staff of TJMC-UU could speak and act publicly as a representative of the church about racial justice issues, such as racial disparities in housing, health, education, employment, and criminal justice.

Members could participate in nonviolent rallies, marches, and protests, carrying a TJMC-UU banner with Black Lives Matter on it. Such a banner could be held up in front of the church on Sunday mornings.

Classes/groups could be offered for all ages both within our church and for the broader community on topics such as unequal justice, white privilege, unconscious and structural racism.

Our church could join with other groups in Charlottesville to conduct prison ministries and to hold local law enforcement and elected officials accountable regarding methods of law enforcement and unequal statistics.

Regarding banners/signs: The public witness if passed would allow for a portable banner/sign to be carried on church properties and at events. It does not allow for an external banner physically attached to the church building.

*Edited 3/22/2016*