



Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Sleep and Its Symbolism
 USG Facing Racism Together, August 2023

UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING

May the light from this flame be a beacon of our faith, in the days that grow dark and dreary. May the light from this flame be warmth to our spirits, during nights of restless searching. May the light from this flame be a celebration of the truth, meaning and joy we find within these walls and in our dreams.
 Rev. Sara Ascher

OPENING WORDS

It's in the morning, for most of us. It's that time, those few seconds when we're coming out of sleep but we're not really awake yet. For those few seconds we're something more primi-tive than what we are about to become. We have just slept the sleep of our most distant an-cestors, and something of them and their world still clings to us. For those few moments we are unformed, uncivilized. We are not the people we know as ourselves, but creatures more in tune with a tree than a keyboard. We are untitled, unnamed, natural, suspended between was and will be, the tadpole before the frog, the worm before the butterfly. We are for a few brief moments, anything and everything we could be. And then...and then--ah--we open our eyes and the day is before us and...we become ourselves. *Jerry Spinelli*

SILENT MEDITATION / CENTERING

The first sound of the gong brings us to silence. Please take time to center yourself, and temporarily push aside whatever might be preventing you from participating fully in tonight's session. The second sound of the chime returns us to each other's presence.

CHECK-IN *Share recent experiences facing racism in ourselves or others.*

INTRODUCTION

The following material contains excerpts from a Psychology Today article by Mike Brooks, Ph.D., entitled *The Promise and Problems of Being Woke*.

In humanity's checkered past, most people have not been treated fairly, equally, or even humanly. There have always been certain groups of people who claim that they are superior to others by sex, religion, ethnicity, family name, and so on. This perceived superiority by groups in power has frequently justified their maltreatment of other minority and/or disempowered groups. It's easy to treat others as less than equals if you believe they are inferior.

Many people, especially the youth, have a heightened awareness of our troubled past and, understandably, seek to correct our collective wrongs. This is where the term "woke" comes into play. It is defined as, "aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice)." Given that we have a long history of racial and social injustices, it seems like being "woke" to such problems is a very good thing. How can we address such problems without first being aware of them? Movements such as Black Lives Matter, at their heart, are about correcting racism and injustices that have long been ignored or swept under the rug. We need to wake up.

Perhaps the long-overdue correction of wokism is, sometimes, leading to an over-correction of sorts. This can happen when people who are "woke" call out or cancel those they perceive not to be woke (or woke enough). "Canceling" someone occurs when one person says or does something to which others who are woke object and then that person gets roundly shamed and criticized, usually on social media. That person's reputation is sometimes ruined, and he or she might not ever be able to recover from being canceled.

While it might be tempting to call out, shame, or cancel those who are not woke (or woke enough) to racism and social injustice, doing so can create a number of problems. No one wants wokism to be the road to hell paved with good intentions. We must proceed mindfully so that wokism doesn't have unintended consequences.

If we think of "woke" as having its roots in "awakening," that has a very deep, and even spiritual, meaning. In Buddhism, "Buddha" is a Sanskrit word that means "one who is awake." In a manner of speaking, to be awakened means we have an enlightened state of consciousness. If we feel the need to show and tell everyone how enlightened we are and criticize others we perceive not to be, are we *really* enlightened? In a way, an awakening precludes claiming to be awoken.

If our goal is to decrease racism and increase social justice, what is the best way to do that? What is the conduit for change? How do we help others to see that many corrective actions for societal injustices are in order? Here is a fundamental reality: We are most likely to influence others by having a relationship with them. When we "cancel" those who believe differently than we do, we lose the very conduit through which we are most likely to influence them. *No relationship, no change. Know relationship, know change.*

When someone does or says something hurtful or offensive, avoid assuming they are a "bad" person. Like all of us, they are flawed. Like all of us, they want to be a "good" person and to be liked by others. Remember, they are not their shortcomings. Look for the good in them.

QUOTES ABOUT BEING ASLEEP AND BEING AWAKE

I had a dream that I was awake and I woke up to find myself asleep. *Stan Laurel*

I cannot be awake for nothing looks to me as it did before / Or else I am awake for the first time, and all before has been a mean sleep. *Walt Whitman*

Man is firmly convinced that he is awake; in reality he is caught in a net of sleep and dreams which he has unconsciously woven himself. *Gustave Meyrink*

In my youth, daydreaming nurtured me, provided a safe haven. I'd sleep for twelve hours and even when awake escape to the safe place in my mind. *Sandra Cisneros*

Don't go to sleep now, for you have been awakened. Don't shut your eyes, or you will put out the light. Stay awake to the power and force that guides and protects your divine essence. *Debbie Ford*

In most of our dreams, our inner eye of reflection is shut and we sleep within our sleep. The exception takes place when we seem to awake within our dreams, without disturbing or ending the dream state, and learn to recognize that we are dreaming while the dream is still happening. *Stephen LaBerge*

Our heart oft times wakes when we sleep, and God can speak to that, either by words, by proverbs, by signs and similitudes, as well as if one was awake. *John Bunyan*

We must realize that man's nature will remain the same so long as he remains man; that civilization is but a slight coverlet beneath which the dominant beast sleeps lightly and ever ready to awake. To preserve civilization, we must deal scientifically with the brute element, using only genuine biological principles. *H.P. Lovecraft*

I am accustomed to sleep and in my dreams to imagine the same things that lunatics imagine when awake. *Rene Descartes*

Often, psychological laziness will have you switch your life over to autopilot and fall asleep at the wheel rather than stay awake to what will fulfill your heart's deepest desires and your soul's purpose. *Debbie Ford*

My mom had not worked a day in her life, and then she woke up when I was 15 and found herself with four children, no job, no money. But she set out and made it all OK for us, and from that, I saw that there's no problem that can't be solved. *Ginni Rometty*

That first morning that I woke up self-employed, terror quickly consumed me. I found myself sitting with my laptop and realized, for the first time, that I was entirely responsible for all of my own decisions, as well as the consequences of those decisions. *Mark Manson*

What would an ocean be without a monster lurking in the dark? It would be like sleep without dreams. *Werner Herzog*

I've crossed some kind of invisible line. I feel as if I've come to a place I never thought I'd have to come to. And I don't know how I got here. It's a strange place. It's a place where a little harmless dreaming and then some sleepy, early-morning talk has led me into considerations of death and annihilation. *Raymond Carver*

Insomnia is a variant of Tourette's--the waking brain races, sampling the world after the world has turned away, touching it everywhere, refusing to settle, to join the collective nod. The insomniac brain is a sort of conspiracy theorist as well, believing too much in its own paranoid importance--as though if it were to blink, then doze, the world might be overrun by some encroaching calamity, which its obsessive musings are somehow fending off. *Jonathan Lethem*

I woke up full of hate and fear the day before the most recent peace march in San Francisco. This was disappointing: I'd hoped to wake up feeling somewhere between Virginia Woolf and Wavy Gravy. *Anne Lamott*

I had a dream about you. We installed Dr. Robert Jarvik's artificial heart in a mannequin and brought it to life, only to later kill it because a creature that's all fake heart and no brain is what's commonly called a "politician," and must be destroyed. *Dark Jar Tin Zoo*

One day I woke up and realized no amount of love, care, pain, hurt, anger, or retribution could ever transform those who are evil into good or kind people. That day I let go; I stopped caring for them, gave up any hope for their souls, and knew they were never worthy of me or my time. *Ken Poirot*

QUOTES ABOUT BEING "WOKE" AND "WOKISM"

I fell asleep dreaming and woke up alive. *RW Erskine*

I'm actually not a fan of the word 'woke.' I think the connotation of that means being socially aware, which is a beautiful thing to be. But it does not take into account being self-aware. *India Arie*

Never overlook the "now" for an anticipation of the "morrow", which may never arrive. *Reginald L. Russell*

Black Lives Matter started from a post that I put on Facebook after the acquittal of George Zimmerman. I woke up in the middle of the night sobbing, just trying to process what had happened and wanting to find community around being in a lot of grief and having a lot of rage. *Alicia Garza*

At any given moment, we each face a barrage of obligations, often disparate and distinct from what we thought would happen when we woke up. From the tragic to the common to the extraordinary, life refuses to be divvied up into careful slices of time. No technology can manage to overcome the realities of reality. *Stacey Abrams*

Don't count on cheerleaders once you start living a life more reflective of your truth. They may not want to do somersaults and backflips for your awakening, not when they're still asleep. Don't let that stop you. Most of us have only been trained to cheer for conformity, to commend those who are just like us. But aren't you bored of being congratulated for fitting in? Aren't you tired of ignoring your heart's requests?

Don't wait for cheerleaders. Be grateful if they show up, but you show up regardless, with or without them.

You will never be defined by the reception you get from others, only by the truth with which you receive yourself. Be your biggest cheerleader. Love yourself. And applaud every single step you take toward truth. *Scott Stabile*

Still your mind and become a witness to your thoughts through meditation. The more you do this, you open gaps of "no mind" which puts you in a very open, present state of consciousness whereby YOU become more awakened, more aware & more powerful! *Sanjo Jendayi*

By "woke" I mean brainwashed by extremist liberal propaganda. *Lil Fangs*

QUOTES FROM ROBERT BLACK (a Scottish serial killer and pedophile)

The left don't attack racism, they attack the race, which of course is the definition of racism. They have this idea that no matter what is done or said to white people, it is not racism. That is their mentality.

In Western democracies, not only do elected governments, who were elected to represent the people, not favour their own citizens, society, fueled by left-wing mainstream media, has made it racist and bigoted to suggest they should.

The problem with the woke people, the social justice warriors, or the left, is that they consider Islam to be a race, and therefore to criticize Islam is racist. In fact, Islam is a religion, which anyone can join, or be indoctrinated into, men, women, and children, unless you are gay of course, because then you would be murdered.

The police in the UK are too scared to act in case they are labelled racists. This is what uncontrolled immigration does to societies. It's the same in Europe. The best way to destroy a culture is to make it multi-cultural.

SONG: Enter Sandman (by Metallica [James Alan Hetfield, Kirk L. Hammett, Lars Ulrich]); bluegrass cover by Iron Horse) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c7bISLhVl8>>

Say your prayers little one Don't forget, my son
To include everyone
Tuck you in, warm within
Keep you free from sin
Till the sandman he comes Sleep with one eye open Gripping your pillow tight
Sleep with one eye open Gripping your pillow tight
Exit, light
Enter, night
Take my hand
Off to never-never land

Somethings wrong, shut the light
 Heavy thoughts tonight
 And they aren't of Snow White Dreams of war, dreams of liars Dreams of dragon's fire
 And of things that will bite Sleep with one eye open Gripping your pillow tight
 Sleep with one eye open Gripping your pillow tight Exit, light Enter, night
 Take my hand Off to never-never land

Now I lay me down to sleep
 Now I lay me down to sleep
 I pray the Lord my soul to keep
 I pray the Lord my soul to keep If I die before I wake
 If I die before I wake
 I pray the lord my soul to take
 I pray the lord my soul to take

Hush little baby, don't say a word
 Never mind that noise you heard
 It's just the beasts under your bed In your closet, in your head
 Sleep with one eye open Gripping your pillow tight Exit, light Enter, night Take my hand
 Off to never-never land Sleep with one eye open Gripping your pillow tight
 Exit, light
 Enter, night
 Take my hand Off to never-never land

REFLECTIONS ON BEING AWAKE, BEING ASLEEP, AND BEING “WOKE”

- In your life, have you ever experienced a moment when you decidedly became aware of being “awake”?
- Since becoming a UU, how have you been personally affected by group efforts to learn about and address issues of the “isms”--racism, sexism, ableism, etc.?
- As you go about the business of living your life, have you recently been more aware of the inherent racism in the language used by the groups you affiliate with and the media? How do you react when you come across examples of this?
- Did you react viscerally to the quotes from Robert Black? Are his ideas different from those you hear every day, and how do you react (mentally or behaviorally) when you hear them?
- When you are following your various spiritual practices, do you feel more or less connected with nature, your friends and family, and the rest of humanity? How so, and do you intentionally follow up on those feelings?
- Did any of the other quotes or thoughts expressed in the Introduction particularly resonate with you? Explain.

SONG “How Can I Keep From Singing?”-- <https://youtu.be/wMA7mFWAz-k>

EXTINGUISH CHALICE / CLOSING WORDS

After sleeping through a hundred million centuries we have finally opened our eyes on a sumptuous planet, sparkling with color, bountiful with life. Within decades we must close our eyes again. Isn't it a noble, an enlightened way of spending our brief time in the sun, to work at understanding the universe and how we have come to wake up in it? This is how I answer when I am asked—as I am surprisingly often—why I bother to get up in the mornings. Richard Dawkins