Excerpts from My Forthcoming Manuscript: by Rev. Carolyn L. Boyd
Stuck in the Illusion: Spiritual Healing for Global White Supremacy
Sermon topic: “Stuck in the Illusion of Racial Progress”
Text: Galatians 3:28 – Hope UCC Alexandria, VA – Pastor Amber

28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Hope UCC MLK Theme:

“Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Introduction:

I am honored to join you as you begin your journey on sacred conversations on racism. How timely these conversations are and oh yes, so difficult and challenging to have--- I applaud your courage and commitment in doing so.

The Sharing/Preaching Moment:

Your theme, ‘Building the Beloved Community’, prepares us --- not only to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King’s birthday – prepares us too--- to reflect on his important work, his accomplishments and historic legacy. It requires we remember the many brothers and sisters –white, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, First Nation People, black, brown, yellow, rich and poor, young and old – who fought in the trenches of evil, sin and injustices --- we say thank you to them for their contributions to the cause of racial justice.
Is Dr. King pleased?

In every way-- we measure racial progress: education, health, wealth attainment, entertainment, law, labor, housing, employment, social-economic status, civil rights, human rights, culturally--- black people are suffering disproportionately – significantly greater than other segments of the US population.

The scripture text comes from Galatians 3:28

28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

My very short talk, entitled, “Stuck in the Illusion” of Racial Progress offers ---- a window into building the beloved community and ensuring real, meaningful and measurable racial progress for black people. In no way, should you hear my remarks as an attack on white people, rather as a critique of global domination created and maintained by racism. And, nor do I subscribe to a belief that all white people are bad. And, nor do I subscribe to a belief that all black people are good. I focus on patterns in culture, in society, in collective consciousness that ---- create and sustain racial inequality –at all of levels of social interaction.

As we examine the illusion today –it is my hope that HOPE UCC will avoid some of the racial traps that create frustration, hope unrealized and false progress—as you study racism over the next few weeks....on your journey to building The Beloved Community.
What is the Beloved Community?

According to the King Center --- “Dr. King’s Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict.”

‘Stuck in the Illusion of Racial Progress’ --- suggests we are ignoring the fact the world works through white supremacy –all institutions, organizations, churches, businesses and segments of our society are linked by this ONE overarching original sin- white supremacy – defined as a web of seamless and systemic interlocking, reinforcing institutions privileges white bodies over black and brown bodies in every sector and aspects of human life---locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

When we ignore these mechanisms by which white supremacy is sustained, protected and defended—we stay stuck in the illusion of racial progress. Thank God for courageous and faithful people —-here today, Hope UCC ---who have decided to take this journey.
I would like to focus our time together on three illusions we often are stuck in that impact the building of the beloved community and in achieving racial justice.

They are:

1. The Illusion of power equality.
2. The Illusion of sameness.
3. The Illusion of one reality for all people.

1. The Illusion of Power Equality:
   White culture is motivated by power, driven by power ----- It is power over, not power with; power between white and black people is never equal; white people view relationships with black people in terms of functionality – what can white people get from the relationship? How do black relationships serve white interests? How is white identity shaped and influenced by power?

   On the other hand, black people view relationships, generally, in terms of intimate connections, communal and spiritual-
   Power in black relationships is one of power with, power to do- to achieve – not power over...
   Power over---shows up in black culture as the oppressed oppressing the oppressed—hurting black people hurt black people-victimized by self-hate, a manifestation of racism.

2. The Illusion of Sameness
   Post-racial; Color blind society: I don’t see race-Whites and Blacks assert this – I don’t see race ---there are in denial...
In the meantime social systems of organizing, governing, rewards and punishment are based on skin color & privileges white skin over black, brown,--and with this comes a hierarchy of skin color preference – the lighter skin color is better Colorism …. Protects and supports white racism Racial inclusiveness does not mean justice-important to understand.

3. The Illusion of One Reality for All People

- White people are culturally xenophobic –defined as fear of the other, the unknown

- Black people are culturally xenophilic –defined as an affection / attraction for unknown people, foreign objects.

What are the ramifications of these cultural power dynamics for social policy and racial healing: for creating a beloved community; for meaningful racial progress?

For white people---- as a xenophobic culture tends to exhibit the need to control and dominate what is feared -- black people and other non-whites----so policies, practices, and individual and collective --preferences support white domination.

Therefore, whiteness and white power equate to a superior place and voice in the world. Structures, institutions, public policy are designed and implemented to favor white culture and white people for ----- generations to come----at the expense of black life.
Theodore W. Allen, a white American intellectual, writer, and activist, is best known for authoring ‘Invention of the White Race- says, “The white race must be understood, not simply as a social construct, but as a ruling class social formation.”

White people read the work of Theodore W. Allen

For black people- as a xenophilic culture – Black people experience cultural cringe – an internalized inferiority complex that causes black people to dismiss their own culture as inferior to the cultures of other countries. It can manifest in black people as cultural alienation. (Explain cultural alienation: it’s devastating and deadly impact on black people and black culture)

Black people read the work of Hubert Harrison.

I am working on my own internalized oppression / inferiority complex / post-slavery syndrome – my own self-hate, fear of being less than – my own acceptance of my physical beauty, my kinky hair, big nose --my own intellectual capacity to think another way – frame the world another way --- to own my own anger – as you know I am an anger black woman.

So angry that I work so hard; I am extremely well educated and professionally trained, yet like so many other black people similarly situated --we lived in an economically apartheid world-penniless, voiceless, struggling, worrying about daily life ---no one even cares. Angry— that no matter how many more degrees black women have white women will get more jobs, promotions than we will.
Angry –
that more black women live in poverty without any trust funds, safety networks. I feel privileged to be married – how sad it that –that I should feel privileged to be married. Black women are the most un-partnered women in the world.
Angry---
that increasingly, our babies live in cycles of multi-generational poverty. Angry---
that black men ---- so unavailable to us – are disempowered disenfranchised, emasculated, and so easily discarded as throw away bodies.

For the Beloved Community to be a real, lived experience-- it must contain three critical aspects of communal living:

1. Equality in Relationships-How is this achieved?
2. Justice as its core operating principle-What questioned must be asked?
3. People are able to live up to their highest potential-How is this determined?

In our text, Galatians 3: verse 28 it looks like it is Paul is beginning to address the issues we have been discussing; suggesting that everyone is truly equal and a part of the one God. The text reads,“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

When this verse is preached in a black church- we go absolutely crazy. We want so desperately to be a part of the one -- human family. To be
loved by God without exception. But, I don’t think we really understand the larger objective of this passage of scripture. I assert Paul, the great apostle -- was in fact, uniting the various religious faiths and tribes during ancient Rome--- around a new National Religion – one that allowed the Roman Empire to expand Roman power to new territories--- to export its special kind of universal nationalism/imperialism – under the banner of salvation ---where nations, territories and people ---would be conquered by the cross – (As envisioned by Constantine in a vision) under the controllership of the Roman Empire --- in the name of the one true God-Jesus Christ; fashion in the image of a white man.

I suggest this is a place for the church universal to reflect and re-examine its position that we are all one or certainly to be truthful about it deeper psychological/social implications – to ensure we are not exporting a universal / nationalism in service to white supremacy. I suggest too, this feeds into an illusion of unity and equality (denial) that simply does not exist in our church institutions or wider society. I submit this is a place for sacred spiritual reflection and sacred action.

Dr. King’s brilliance as a visionary, prophetic voice and his timeless message, points us to the hard --- but necessary work ----we (white and black) still must do.

Our clarion calls ---- for justice ---- for righteousness action—need (require) each of us on the battlefield of white supremacy. We can’t get tired and weary. God is faithful to keep her promises for our liberation and justice. In Psalm 97:11, we find, Light shines on the righteous and joy on the upright in heart.
Yes, I hurt, black folks are hurting, brown people are fearful .... Poor people are impoverished...My spirit is deeply wounded. However, we cannot stop...we must hold hands and hearts even tighter --- for the sake of our children yet to come --- for the sake of mother earth and father sky .... For the safe evolution of our environment --- and all the life contain there-in...Don’t stop working. In order to ensure racial justice we cannot be stuck in the illusion of racial progress --let go of the fear, uncertainty and shame. Don’t stop working—to risk further delay .... in birthing a global beloved community... Be clear-- not to let the illusion be the reality. Be resolved not to live in the illusion.

I am especially, hopeful and even encouraged –by our young people; white activists and organizers/black lives matters leaders and activists--- are shaking things up. White church congregations are challenging themselves to create the beloved community. I am inspired by the possibility of creating a multi-racial, multi-cultural Hope UCC, mostly because I valued Pastor Amber, an authentic voice.

We all have stuff – fear, white fragility, black internalized oppression. We all need to heal, be whole and wise disciples of a greater new revealed truth. It is God’s light – that pierces the heart – It is her love that strengthens and sustains us – through the journey to wholeness as citizens of the world --- In the words of Dr. King, we are “bound together in an inescapable network of mutuality and tied to a single garment of destiny.”

Continuing in the words of Dr. King, “With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail
together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.”

What are you going to do to birth this global beloved community --- starting first – in Hope UCC?

Let the illusion of racial progress burst ... let the beloved community spring forth in each heart, mind and spirit.

Closing Prayer:

Mother and Father Spirit, in this moment—I have served your people and shared as you have given me—may they be blessed. Amen.

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