

Why a banner isn't good enough

By Justin M McCreary

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I wear a bracelet, it says the same thing our sign says. I put it on because a friend was mistreated, and I have to admit it felt good. Until I left the auditorium full of people wearing the same bracelet, when I walked into a world of non-bracelet people, Then my arm felt heavy. I would catch myself wanting to flip it over so the words were hidden, but I kept it on.

I went to visit relatives and the woman who taught me as a young child to love told me my bracelet should say, "All lives matter." But if that is the case why is it so bad to say that these lives matter too? Why is it so offensive? I wanted to take my bracelet off, but I didn't. Sometimes I feel like people are looking at it and I get nervous. I see some cars in my rear view and I get nervous. Oh so heavy this thing on my arm.

And I am what? Such a prophet for wearing it? Am I standing up for someone by putting on a bracelet? A friend once said to me, "look, I really appreciate the bracelets and the signs but if you aren't going to do the work don't bother."

And I reached for my bracelet and I felt the rubber tear at the hair on my arm.

But, none of that makes me special. None of it makes me better... Because I can take my bracelet off, and there are many people I love who can't because they aren't wearing bracelets. They can't change it, or shuffle it under their cuff, because no matter how uncomfortable it might be, they're born with it, already attached. So I may get uncomfortable and a little nervous but it is nothing, compared to the generations of mistreatment, it is nothing compared to the racism that made owning a human being OK. It's nothing compared to Jim Crow, It is nothing compared to the systematic oppression that still works to keep people of color down. But they are sneakier about it, now they use the prison system, and they defund education, cut healthcare...

No matter how many years I wear this bracelet no matter how long this banner flies, "I WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND" Not the suffering, not the pain, I cannot understand. And the minute my arrogance steps in and I think I do my privilege has taken the wheel.

So we wear bracelets and we hang a banner, with the hope that this says, "I am sorry, and I know that isn't good enough." A Banner that says, "I will commit to the real process of reconciliation," A banner that says, "I can't believe in 2017 we still have to hang these banners." And most of all a banner that says, "We know this is just a beginning, and we have a long way to go."

At the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jackson, Whoever, you are, wherever you are on your life's journey, you are welcome here.

And without question we affirm like the Unitarian Universalist Association before us, **BLACK LIVES MATTER!!!**