

## 2018 General Assembly Report

Google Drive: <http://bit.ly/ARE-UUAGA2018-Report>

Below is the full report for ARE's engagement at General Assembly 2018 in Kansas City. The [recording of the report overview from our Saturday, July 22, 2018 debrief](#) includes some background information and context not contained in this written version. This written report and the video are intended to augment one another.

### Booth

The primary way ARE engages in GA is at the booth in the vendor hall, where we are available for conversation, provide current ARAOMC resources, and work alongside [DRUUMM](#), who holds the booth next to ARE. One of the challenges of this space is that we are often confronted with folks who are resistant to anti-racism work (including racial caucusing), and we also meet a lot of people who share their stories of frustration with resistance in their own communities. Yet, the booth is also the place where we have some of the most amazing and rich conversations, get to connect with members in person, and have opportunities for deepening relationships with DRUUMM folks and other People of Color. This year, we had more resources than ever, and also provided an eco-friendly [online compilation](#) that included several video resources. **BLACK LIVES MATTER** and **NO REALLY, THE PROBLEM IS WHITE SUPREMACY** ribbons went even faster than they did last year, so we plan on ordering as many for Spokane.

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*LOOKING FORWARD: Since the booth has become more and more of an "ARAO Hub", we're considering creating a more conversation-friendly space. If you're interested in talking through some ideas, [let us know!](#)*

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### Sponsored Workshop

*Christian Hegemony - Living in the Shadow of the Cross* presented by Paul Kivel

By all accounts, this was a success, despite some early controversy and a substantial cost. Lori Stone Sirtosky talks more about the workshop in our [recorded debrief \(starting at 0:57\)](#).

## Connecting ARE@GA Networking Session

This was the first time these were offered at GA, and to be honest, we had no idea if we'd have 5 attendees, 50, or 500; it was 50+!!! and we want to thank everyone who passed up other opportunities to join us for what turned out to be "just the beginning". Apologies to those who planned to tune in from offsite! We had originally planned on live-streaming, but finding ourselves short a facilitator, were unable to do so.

We did some centering, an update on where ARE is now and what we're looking toward, a mini GA debrief, and then invited participants to offer questions, concerns, struggles, and reflections. All in all, it was an incredibly rich exchange and quite a few topics emerged that we're hoping to explore further in conversational Zoom meetings throughout the coming year:

- How can we do ongoing ally work and personal ARAO development (together) all year long?
- We've been doing a lot of education in our congregation, which is great, but what now?
- What are the factors that make good allies? How do we continually improve ARAO practice?
- How do we navigate our accountability relationships among multiple PoC groups who sometimes don't agree with each other?
- What do we do when leaders in a (PoC) partner organization are facing criminal charges?
- We're looking to get our congregation to adopt The 8th Principle; Any advice?
- What do I do when current ARAO and/or Movement groups aren't a "good fit" for me?

If you're interested in helping to develop any of these sessions, please [join the ARE Leadership Collective](#) *Education & Resources* and/or *Internal Life & Support* teams (and any other teams you like) and we'll be in touch. If you haven't yet reviewed it, check out [ARE's organizational model](#), so you know what you're getting yourself into. :-D

## Nightly ARE@GA Debriefs

To better connect offsite and onsite GA participants, we hosted nightly debriefs via Zoom. This is an initiative we began last year and will continue and expand. In Kansas City, we onsite folks were often late to this and are deeply grateful to the offsite folks for their patience and persistence!

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*LOOKING FORWARD: Spokane being in Pacific time, we're considering doing these in the mornings next year to make them more accessible to the folks to the east of GA. Lunchtime might be possibility also.*

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## CSAI: [Undoing Intersectional White Supremacy](#)

The ARE Steering Team consensed to support the Congregational Study Action Issue (CSAI) focused on white supremacy, sponsored by First UU NOLA. Several People of Color and white allies had called attention to problematic language and requested changes & additions in the draft, and a [proposed revision](#) was prepared to present to delegates in the [Mini Assembly \(watch video\)](#). This effort was dismissed by the Commission on Social Witness, and advocates were told that “the language *here* is not of importance”, which ARE leadership found more problematic than the language itself.

The [presentation and advocacy in General Session \(starting at 0:42\)](#), and is worth watching. Many thanks to Leslie Runnels, Aisha Hauser, Ashley Horan, Chris Jimmerson, and Carol Carter Walker for bringing their support to this in such a beautiful way.

Less than 18 months ago, UUs across the country were in heated arguments about whether we should even *use the term* “white supremacy”. Then came lots of upheaval, the #UUWhiteSupremacyTeachIn, and about a million conversations. While this **is** a milestone to celebrate, we have a **lot** of hard work ahead of us if we are to successfully dismantle white supremacy in ourselves and in our shared Faith, so let's get ready to Bring It!

## AIW Advocacy

### **Dismantle Predatory Medical Care Practices in Prisons**

ARE partnered with the [Church of the Larger Fellowship](#) in their proposed Action of Immediate Witness (AIW), which was one of those adopted by the delegates. The [initial presentation of all six \(starting at 0:59\)](#) and the [adoption of the three finalists \(starting at 0:28\)](#) are valuable to share in our communities before taking action. Thanks to all who helped with this process!

## Commission on Institutional Change

At the request of the CIC, ARE had several chaplains (both laity and clergy) on call for people participating in the CIC forums.

## Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism

After some troubling incidents of white folks trying to enter their space, [BLUU](#) called on ARE to maintain a presence outside to interrupt future occurrences. A **massive** shout-out goes to all the great folks who made this their priority, often foregoing other commitments, to ensure that we could provide almost complete coverage for the remainder of GA. More detail, and a good story or two are in our [recorded debrief \(starting at 0:34\)](#), and the relevant [GAPC announcement and Right Relationship Team report \(starting at 0:03\)](#).

## Council for Cross Cultural Engagement meeting

The Monday after GA, moderators usually hold a meeting that includes leadership from groups such as DRUUMM, ARE, EQUUAL Access, etc. to address any issues that came up during our time together. This year, ARE was represented by Karen Armina (clergy) and Carolina Krawarik-Graham (laity).

## Moving Forward

- **Small Group Learning Circles** - Based on issues brought up in GA Networking Session, we are planning a new series of online learning circles that will start in the late fall and continue into next spring.
- **Pastoral Care and Strategic Consulting** - Through feedback received at the networking and debrief sessions, we learned that most folks were not aware of the pastoral care, strategic consulting, and onsite training we do with white folks confronting whiteness in their congregations. We will work to better publicize and expand these services.
- **Fall 2018 ARE Leadership Collective Retreat and Planning Session** - Save the date! **October 19-21, 2018**. Location and other details TBA by mid-August. This event will be open to members of the Leadership Collective. Learn more about [joining the ARE Leadership Collective](#).
- **Field Organizing in 2019** - We are looking to step up ARE presence at District and Regional Assemblies through tabling and facilitating workshops. Send us the proposal deadline and theme for the 2019 District/Regional assemblies in your area to help us get started! Also, consider [joining the ARE Leadership Collective](#) to help make this successful.
- **GA 2019** - We are starting this summer to envision how ARE will show up at GA in Spokane, WA. To get more involved, [join the Events and Actions team on the ARE Leadership Collective](#)

Respectfully submitted by current ARE Steering Team members,

Karen Armina  
Elizabeth Carrier-Ladd  
Chris Jimmerson  
Carolina Krawarik-Graham  
Donna Renfro  
Lori Stone Sirtosky

Contact us at [theTeam@uuare.org](mailto:theTeam@uuare.org)

## GA Coordinator Accountability Report and Reflection

On Wednesday, a member of the GA Planning Committee approached me at the ARE booth to discuss a troubling incident; A "member of the ARE Steering Committee" had told a person who identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander that they were "too white" to attend the witness event scheduled for PoC. I was asked to communicate the concern to our Steering Committee, and directed to be clear with ARE members and other white allies that this is not acceptable practice, regardless of context.

People working the ARE booth were debriefed in case the matter came up there. We also promptly communicated about the situation and our planned response to DRUUMM leaders, who offered support to the affected party. No further action was requested at the time.

After submitting the Accountability Report to the Steering Committee, it quickly became apparent that no one among us had actually had such a conversation. We then approached the affected party for clarification, and found that the (white) person had said something along the lines of "I'm with ARE" or "I'm a member of ARE", and they could not be certain of the person's identity. Additionally, when the affected party was telling a friend about the incident that morning, *another* white person had said a similar thing to them.

We then went to the Right Relations Team to report the incidents, steps taken, and communicated the updated information to DRUUMM. Initially, we planned to alert ARE membership via email and social media during GA, but decided that it was better to address it with GA participants only, which we did in our networking session and remaining debriefs.

The affected party spent the remainder of the week trying to find the person who had made the initial remark in order to address the issue directly, but was unable to do so.

For me, it's pretty easy to imagine this incident happening to any one of us.

I've often been mistaken about my level of intimacy with People of Color, or forgotten that regardless of how close I am to those surrounding me, when it comes to racism and white supremacy, I am *always* in a "political" space... I am *always* white... and I am *nearly always* a member of **more than one** dominant group.

It's also uncomfortable for me to confront the idea that my well-intended desire to "protect" those with marginalized identities from harm is rooted in paternalism; this is white supremacy operating.

Three specific issues in this situation that might be valuable to consider are:

1. It is my understanding that the white person interrupted (barged in on) a private conversation that the affected party was having with someone else. This is typical of the culture of ownership that is at the foundation of our society; a subtle sense of entitlement that encourages us white folks to believe that things are our business if we want them to be, that any space is available to us if we choose to take it, and that we have a say in whatever we wish. Let's disrupt this at every opportunity!

2. When we use the name of an organization, it can too easily be inferred that we have some sort of authority in that organization and/or are representing it. This is why practicing "I speak" is so important in countering oppression. I often hear folks invoking names of organizations, respected leaders, or titles & bona-fides that have **no** relevance in the context of the moment, essentially claiming an external authority as their own. If we can disrupt that practice, in ourselves and in others, it might go a long way to help us show up more authentically, humbly, and equitably.

3. White people determining Whiteness - what it is and what it isn't, how much is too much or not enough - is what got us into this mess in the first place, and is what has perpetuated white supremacy for over 500 years. The documentary *Race: The Power of an Illusion* mentions the [Supreme Court reversing its own position](#) within 3 months about who qualified as white and who didn't. I think it's critical for us white folks to begin interrogating our (often unconscious) assumptions about identity, and challenging our own "authority", as members of the dominant group, to determine others' identities. Challenging as it is, this is imperative.

I'm a first generation immigrant from a northern European country, and I grew up in small-town NJ where the demographics were whiter than UUism. To me, everyone who wasn't Black was "white". When I really examined my own ideas about whiteness some years ago, my (somewhat horrified) realization was that if a person had no "*easily determinable 'ethnic' features*", I saw them as white... and I had to root out where that come from. I'm still working on it. Thank you for sharing this journey with me.

In Service and Solidarity,  
Carolina Krawarik-Graham  
Allies for Racial Equity GA Coordinator