

A letter to UCE- on the Black Lives Matter Sign from Shannon Lang

I have been a member of UCE for almost 2 years. As you may have noticed, I am one of the few Black and Brown lives that attend the Unitarian Church of Evanston. What made me walk through those doors in the in the first place? It was because of the Black Lives Matter sign out front. One of the reasons I stay is because of the Black Lives Matter sign out front.

That sign is a daily reminder to me, a Black Life who is a member of this church, my family and to our Black and Brown Brothers and Sisters in Evanston, that you do care, that you are empathic to the struggle of being Black or Brown in Evanston, even if you don't fully understand that struggle.

What about the statement "well, all lives matter, not just black lives." This is true. Of course all lives matter, but there is serious and painful flaw in that statement. A New York Times article from July 2016 put it this way: "Those in the Black Lives Matter movement say black people are in immediate danger and need immediate attention, like the broken bone or a house on fire. Saying "All Lives Matter" in response would suggest to them that all people are in equal danger, invalidating the specific concerns of black people."

If you attended church on January 28th, you heard Reverend Lynnda White speak about the history of the Unitarian Church and its treatment of Black Lives. We learned that in the past, The Unitarian Church, as an organization, has failed its Black & Brown Members. By keeping the sign up, the Unitarian Church of Evanston can, in a small way, atone for past mistakes of the organization as a whole.

I asked my daughters what they thought about UCE having the discussion about whether to keep the Black Lives Matter sign up or take it down. Marlowe, age 12 said: "We should keep the sign up. If we take it down it would show a sign of weakness. If we leave it up, it shows we are brave and that we support Black Lives Matter and it shows that we are not afraid to say what we think." Francesca, age 8 said: "They need to leave it up because many people don't believe that Black Lives Matter and maybe the sign will help people learn that Black Lives *Do* Matter."

I would love for each of us to ask ourselves the following questions: 1) Do Black Lives not matter anymore? 2) Has the systemic injustice to black and brown lives suddenly resolved itself? 3) And most importantly, what statement would it make the community to take the sign down? If the congregation votes to take the sign down, I don't know if I would be able to walk through the doors again.

Shannon Lang UCE Member