

Quest



Free for All

BY **GRETCHEN HALEY**, SENIOR MINISTER,
FOOTHILLS UNITARIAN CHURCH, FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

I was 22, nursing a broken heart, and I knew for sure that I had to get out of town.

I had just bought my first car, a little blue Honda Civic, hoping to break free from the constraints of the Boulder bus system, robust as I now realize it is. Any of you who have stood in the snow waiting for a bus that is behind schedule, and watched person after person pass by in the warmth and safety of their cars, you know just what I mean. Owning a car after not having one—now there is a story of liberation.

In any case, the sources of my broken heart were multiple. My grandfather, whom I had grown up close to, had just died, and my father was wandering around calling himself an orphan with a kind of bitterness profoundly uncharacteristic for the eternal optimist we had known, and none of us knew how to respond. Meanwhile, an intimate relationship I had come to Boulder to pursue was reaching an end, as I watched her falling in love with someone new. And then a dear friend back in the Northwest was struggling with depression, and watching him descend into despair made me feel helpless and stuck.

Most of all, I was lonely and trying to grow up, trying to find my place in this world.

Up until that point in my life, I had set foot in precisely four other states outside of my home state of Washington: just Oregon, California, Hawaii and my new state of Colorado—as well as the bit of Canada that was 17 miles from my hometown. We weren't the kind of family that went on road trips, or vacations at all for that matter. And so when I started to map out where I would go to get out of town, regardless of the direction I took, it was a given that it would put me into unknown, unexplored territory.

I decided I would go visit my best friend who at the time was studying acting at the Old Globe in San Diego. I chose a route that would take me across western Colorado, into southern Utah and then Nevada, through the desert of Southern California. I know, it's no backpacking trip around Europe or yoga intensive in India, but for me the path I set felt radical, terrifying, and liberating.

Liberation hit me most fully, in fact, about six hours into the journey, in southern Utah, just a bit northwest of Moab. Outside my car windows in every direction was terrain I had never even imagined existed—topography utterly distant from the rain forests and inland beaches of my growing up, and just as different from the flatirons of the Rockies I had more recently discovered. There were layers of red rocks, arches, dry desert air, trees and plants sparse if at all, mostly grass that swayed in the breeze, winding rivers cutting a path through the rock, the sky so big and luxurious.

The beauty so overwhelmed me I had to pull over. (It was before smart phones—there was no posting to say *Look at this with me*, no connecting immediately with people I knew to say *I am here*.)

I felt alone and small, and yet at the same time powerful and capable and profoundly connected to everything and everyone past, present, future. The wind hit my hair and everything felt possible. The sun was about to set, and its colors went everywhere, and as I stood between its light and its shadow I could feel my heart starting to re-group. I felt grateful, and free.

Free. Liberated. We use these words so much in our culture and in our religious tradition, but what do we really mean when we describe someone—including ourselves—as free? What are we saying we value when we talk about liberation?

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I wish that every
human life might be
pure, transparent
freedom.
—Simone
de Beauvoir

A monthly for religious liberals

THINKING ABOUT FREEDOM

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And just as importantly, what is it that we are being made free from? What are those things that keep us metaphorically or sometimes literally imprisoned?

I asked friends on Facebook to tell me about their moments of liberation and I got a list of responses. They shared stories of becoming free from debt, being released from self-limiting beliefs, freed from fear or from the “shoulds” of life, freed from pleasing other people. They told me about being liberated from past religious beliefs, from the limbo of experiencing physical symptoms by finally receiving an official diagnosis, from eating disorders, from societal pressures to look or dress a certain way. Indeed, a chorus of voices rejoiced at being liberated near the end of each day from restrictive clothing many of us wear.

I bet each of us has a whole list of other things we have been liberated from, or wish we could be: addiction, depression, rage, unemployment, unhealthy or broken relationships, shame, domestic violence, prejudice both personal and systemic, fear, past trauma, ignorance, pride, self-doubt, selfishness—or selflessness, poverty, perfectionism.... The list could go on and on.

For many of us, discovering Unitarian Universalism could be described as a moment of liberation. Released from ill-fitting dogmatic and creedal requirements, we arrive into this covenantal faith and savor every moment of that free and responsible search for truth and meaning affirmed by our Fourth Principle.

In my story, standing there on the edge of a red rock canyon and beneath the limitless sky, I felt myself becoming free from bitterness, released from disappointment, liberated from grief.

These are the prisons of our spirits, the prisons of our lives; and the spiritual path invites us into a lifelong journey of liberation. It urges us to be made free from all that would separate us

from our truest selves, from one another, from the great spirit of life which connects us all.

I say lifelong journey for two main reasons. First, because many things are not easily overcome. Sometimes they take whole lifetimes, and even that is not always long enough. Some prisons we'll go to our grave attempting to escape, and then leave them behind for others to take on for us. We inherit dreams from our ancestors, but we inherit their burdens, too, the shackles from which they could not find release.

Regardless of what we are being made free *from*, what are we made free *for*?

And secondly, this path is lifelong because new things arrive to block the way to freedom all along this path of life. Get one prison behind you, and it never fails—a new one appears.

Our job then, as a religious community, is to help each other discover these oppressive things, to help name them as forces keeping us from experiencing freedom, and then to help each other create and actually follow a path of liberation. We are—in so many ways—each other's saviors.

But let's step back for a moment. I just said that this is the work of a lifetime. I said that sometimes we don't even know that we are bound, that we need help to see oppressive forces around us, that sometimes you can try all your life and still not be free. Given all this, we have to wonder why anyone would take on such a task. What makes liberation a worthy pursuit? What makes freedom matter?

Or to say it another way, regardless of what we are being made free *from*, what are we made free *for*?

Although we can likely come up with a long list of things we imagine we could be freed *from*, we often boil down our

answer about what we are freed *for* to something pretty singular—individual self-determination. We are free for personal, individualized choice.

How free you are relates directly to how much you are able to act according to your own will, your own desires. Many of our stories of liberation are told this way. Individuals who have been restricted from being themselves, from acting according to their own will are liberated into self-determination. The civil rights movement is often told as a story of self-determination. Queer liberation, too. Individuals are freed from being told how to be and think and feel so they can then act, think and feel for themselves.

And yet, if liberation is only a matter of allowing each of us to act according to our own individualized will, only to enable greater personal choice, imagine it taken to its ultimate expression. How isolated we must imagine ourselves to be when so “free.” How lonely such a world would be. How unsustainable.

When I go back to the story I shared earlier, I know that some of the freedom I experienced related to a sense of personal choice. But that was a small part of what I was really made free *for*. I was made free for new relationships, for new love. I was released from my past and liberated into a new future. And that future was not free because I was independent, but because I could openly—freely—receive it as it unfolded before me.

Liberation is not just about individual choice, but about creative capacity, about resilience, and about depth of resources. Which is to say that liberation is less about any one of us individually than about who we are together.

Returning to the stories I collected on Facebook, friends shared that they were made free for living according to their commitments and to their values, liberated into a greater intimacy with friends in a shared vulnerability,

released into a deeper love for this world in all its challenge and possibility.

It is perhaps a great irony that we are liberated simply so that we can tie ourselves down more fully to our most deeply held commitments.

While we may release ourselves from one kind of prison, if we wish to surrender more fully into freedom and joy we must bind ourselves in other ways. Bind ourselves in relationship, bind ourselves to our values, bind ourselves to a people, to a hope, to a vision of the world and its future we give ourselves in partnership to create.

This paradox of liberation as both personal autonomy and deepened commitments resides in the words from Martin Buber that are inscribed on my ordination stole—that we are “promise-making, promise-breaking, promise-renewing creatures.” Human life is given its fullest expression in the tension between our need to satisfy our individual self-expression and the acknowledgment that we are meant to be free for something more than ourselves.

We often describe Unitarian Universalism as a free faith, which we usually take as an indicator of our personal autonomy. Understanding liberation as both personal autonomy and future flourishing allows us to better integrate that we are not simply a free faith, but also a covenantal faith.

In our faith, as in our personal relationships of covenant, we choose to restrict our individual autonomy because we affirm a different sort of freedom, a freedom that allows us all to flourish, a freedom that fosters our mutual future, a freedom that means fulfilling our mostly deeply held commitments, our sacred promises in partnership with others. A freedom that is about all of us surrendering to joy, together.

This is the hope of liberation. In our faith, and in our lives, as in the world, let us faithfully pursue the promise of freedom, together. ■

The Power and Poverty of Freedom



BY SUSAN FREDERICK-GRAY,
MINISTER, UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
CONGREGATION OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Freedom is not just a crucial principle in our religious tradition. It is also a foundational value for the United States. It's a well-worn word in politics, often used to invoke soaring pride. It speaks to an ideal we all seek to live and know.

But what do we really mean by freedom? And is it possible that the rhetoric of freedom has actually undermined freedom's power to shape our collective commitment to this crucial condition of life?

Let's start with the definition. Freedom is a state of liberty as opposed to confinement; freedom is the power of self-determination, the ability to control one's own life. It means emancipation, liberation, a state of free will, agency.

A major theme of George Orwell's dystopian novel, *1984*, is the authoritarian government's use of *doublethink*. This likely inspired what we commonly call doublespeak, the art of using language in a way that deliberately disguises, distorts or reverses the meaning of words. In the novel, the superstate of Oceania is a world of perpetual war, with constant government surveillance and public manipulation by masters of doublespeak. Doublespeak in politics is when powerful, patriotic, even moral language is used, but with a contrary or empty meaning to the underlying words. As a great example, one of the official slogans of the ruling Party was “War is Peace. Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength.”

I cannot help but think of Orwell when so many of our recent overseas wars are named for freedom, such as Operation Enduring Freedom, and when we use the language of freedom to protect discrimination, as when the notion of

religious freedom is misused to promote religious discrimination. So many politicians speak as if a love of freedom lives in their hearts, but they do not seem concerned about the reality of mass incarceration in the United States.

The statistic that continues to shock me—and should shock us all—is that the U.S. contains five percent of the world's people, but 25 percent of the world's incarcerated population. One quarter of all the people imprisoned anywhere in the world are in the U.S. In fact, the United States has the highest incarceration rate of any country, with a total of over 2.3 million people behind bars. From 1970 to 2005 (a mere 35 years) the US prison population grew 700 percent while the actual population during this time only grew 44 percent. This is reality in what we call the Land of Liberty.

What the Black Lives Matter movement and Michelle Alexander's incredible book, *The New Jim Crow*, have revealed is that our system—at all levels of municipal, state and federal government—is financially dependent on American's criminalization and imprisonment. In this Land of Liberty, the Land of the Free, we create financial incentives and fund our governments by criminalizing the population. Meanwhile, the rhetoric of freedom—silent on the issue of mass incarceration, detention and criminalization—instead speaks only of birth control, marriage, health care, guns, taxes and war.

What was it that Jesus said about looking at the speck of dust in your brother's eye but failing to notice the log within your own eye? But before going any further, let's step back and remember that love of freedom in the United States has never rung fully true. There is no idealized past to look back to on this one.

The soaring rhetoric of liberty inscribed in the Declaration of Independence, what some call our American credo—that “all men are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that

among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”—was written by the slave-owning father of our country, Thomas Jefferson. And indeed, the document’s proclamation of liberty stood in sharp contrast to the undeniable reality of slavery. And even after the brutal Civil War brought an end to the institution of slavery, the struggle for equality, dignity and freedom continued, and continues today.

True freedom is knowing that we cannot be free when others are oppressed.

Yes, we’ve made progress on many accounts, but there are losses as well. We have not reached the pinnacle of equality; our present system is found lacking when compared to the elevated rhetoric of freedom that we hear so frequently on our radios and televisions and in the mouths of too many of our political leaders.

Yet, freedom remains our aspiration. Even if the way it gets trotted out to defend every war and narrow political position undermines and impoverishes its meaning, this aspiration of freedom still has real power to inspire and challenge us. For it is the need and hope and love of freedom that has led human beings throughout history—and still today—to march sometimes joyfully, sometimes in agony, toward full emancipation.

So are we—as Unitarian Universalists, as U.S. Americans—a people of freedom? Do we even know what freedom means?

The Jewish Austrian psychiatrist, Victor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor and author of the famous book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, writes:

Freedom is only part of the story and half of the truth. Freedom is but the negative aspect of the whole phenomenon whose positive aspect is respon-

sibleness. In fact, freedom is in danger of degenerating into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibility.

This is so important, this coupling of freedom and responsibility. I cannot be free if you are not free. For, in the words of Nelson Mandela, “To be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” This idea that freedom by itself, alone, has the tendency to degenerate into mere arbitrariness is why our rhetoric of freedom echoes so hollow when it is deployed to defend and protect individual religious preference, personal ideology, or the protection and benefits of privilege.

What happens when my understanding of freedom infringes on your freedom? Whose privilege, whose ideology will carry the day? This is where we see the limits, the poverty of freedom if it is not coupled with a sense of relationship.

True freedom is knowing that we cannot be free when others are oppressed. The power of freedom is in the call for equity and liberation and justice for all. And this freedom does not exist by itself, or in a vacuum, or as some idealized state. It exists in relationship, arising from how we live in ways that enhance each other’s freedom.

The Black feminist writer and theorist bell hooks says, “The moment we choose to love we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others.” She argues that before we can get to freedom, we have got to learn to love, we’ve got to choose love. And love is about relationship. It is about the connections we have to each other, seeing and valuing the ways we are interdependent.

Expecting freedom without love, separating freedom from an ethic of relationship and responsibility, is how

we can have such a powerful rhetorical proclamation of the unalienable right to liberty defining a nation that was built on domination, oppression and slavery. This is how today we can talk about liberty in terms of protecting wealth and guns, limiting birth control and protecting the right to discriminate against GLBTQ people. This is how we carry out wars in the name of freedom, all the while incarcerating more people than ever in history. It is because we look at freedom as an individual thing—separate from relationship, separate from our responsibilities to each other, separate from an ethic of love.

As Unitarian Universalists, we are a people of freedom, committed to religious freedom, but that commitment cannot be separated from the call to love one another. In one of the most precise and beautiful articulations of the challenge and the aspiration of the religious life, A. Powell Davies describes us as, “The religion that knows that we shall never have hearts big enough for the love of God until we have made them big enough for the worldwide love of one another.”

When we choose love, we move toward freedom—we move toward God, toward beauty, toward our highest aspirations, toward the fullness of what lives within us. When we choose love, we begin to be the people of freedom. ■

"Freedom lies in being bold."

-Robert Frost

Did you know it’s part of the CLF mission to cultivate the courage to act? Help us continue to live into our mission, living into freedom by being bold and loving a broken world. Please make a \$100 contribution or give what you can now, by visiting www.clfuu.org or by calling **1-800-231-3027**. ■

To All Get Free Together

BY CHRIS CRASS, AUTHOR AND MOVEMENT BUILDER, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE (WWW.CHRISCRASS.ORG)



To become an anti-racist faith community, the key question for a white/white majority community is not “How do we get people of color to join our faith community?” It is, instead, “How can we make a prolonged, spiritually-rooted, engaged commitment to uprooting white supremacy within our community and take ongoing collective action to challenge it in society?”

Our goal is not to have white people sit alongside a person of color so as to affirm that those white people aren't racist. Our goal is to build and be part of beloved community, united to end structural oppression and unleash collective liberation in our faith com-

munities, schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, and throughout society. Our goal is to join hands across the divisions of racism in our faith and in our communities, and affirm the humanity in each other.

Our goal is to join our hearts and minds to the task of destroying white supremacy in every worldview, policy, law, institution, and governing body of our society. For our faith communities to be places of healing from the nightmare of racism that haunts people of color and white people. For our faith communities to be places of nourishment, sustaining the multiracial struggle of our people to advance economic, racial and gender justice. For our faith communities to be part of the continual process of working within the movement as part of the journey to end oppression in society. For our faith communities to raise our children of

all backgrounds to be freedom fighters and practitioners of liberation values.

Our goal is for our faith communities to be spiritually alive, learning from and contributing to liberation cultures and legacies. For our faith communities to be welcoming homes for people of all colors, sexualities, classes, ages, abilities, genders and citizenship statuses. For our faith communities to regularly invite us into and prepare us for courageous action for collective liberation, held in loving community for the long haul.

May our faith communities be active agents in the world, to help us all get free together.

From Towards the "Other America": Anti-Racist Resources for White People Taking Action for Black Lives Matter, published by Chalice Press (chalicepress.net/OtherAmerica) ■



Slipped the Bonds

BY REV. VANESSA RUSH SOUTHERN, MUMBAI, INDIA

There are no summer camps open during the last week of August, so my family has taken to spending that week at the beach. The same beach. The same house. My parents come. My cousin, with her two kids. Each year some additional family members join us, too.

The house we rent is three houses away from the sand dunes. It is close enough that when we forget something or one of the babies needs to use the bathroom, we can run back and make it in time. And it is perfectly situated to watch the comings and goings of beach life from the front porch.

On the beach, dogs are only allowed before eight in the morning and after five at night. So it was that one morning I spotted the woman and her Irish setter who had gotten up early to take advantage of this window of time. I saw them at the end of their outing. Actually, I spotted her dog long before

the woman came into view. He was wet, with his long fringe covered in sand, and he streaked down the path, stretching out like a race horse hungry for the track. As soon as he came off the path, he set a course through nearby back yards, then weaved through the adjacent condominium parking lot, down driveways, and round and round again.

The dog's owner, meanwhile, took her time coming down the path. She occasionally yelled his name, but almost absentmindedly so, as she walked the last stretch toward the road. When she reached the end she dusted the sand off her calves and feet, then stood there, checking her nails. She adjusted her bra strap. Meanwhile, her dog continued streaking back and forth, the feathers of his hindquarters flapping like a strange set of wings, tongue lolling, utterly alive and loving this part of his day.

This ritual went on for three or four minutes, as I imagine it did a few times a week, maybe even every day. Eventually, the dog strolled up to the

woman, and she reached down to pat his head. Not once did she chastise him or show any frustration. Instead, there seemed to be a kind of resigned acceptance in both of them as she snapped his leash back into place, as if she knew and shared her dog's need for joy and pleasure, for freedom.

A few days later we packed up the house to head home. Days of sand and fun would be giving way, as they do, to fall, with its schedules and obligations. I thought of the woman and her dog. Like him, I tried to squeeze out every moment of fun and abandon from our window of time there. Like her, I had responsibilities to return to. But as we put the suitcases in the trunk I felt kin to them both in their early morning ritual: We all resist a little the moment the leash snaps back into place.

From Vanessa Rush Southern's meditation manual Miles of Dream, published by Skinner House in 2015 and available through the UUA bookstore (www.uuabookstore.org). ■



From Your Minister

BY MEG RILEY
SENIOR MINISTER,
CHURCH OF THE
LARGER FELLOWSHIP

Now that I'm an adult, I can see that my father was jealous of my older brother. An only child himself, he was used to having the full attention of his parents, and then his wife. And suddenly my mother was putting a huge amount of her attention somewhere else. My older brother was my father's rival, his enemy, and was treated as such until my brother ran away at 18.

As a kid, I watched in bewilderment as my father showered rage on my brother. Though I, the third child, did not suffer nearly the anger and abuse from my father that my brother did, I could never breathe easily in the family. This early experience taught me in my very cells that "no one is free while others are oppressed" —words I've seen attributed to Martin Luther King, Jr., Mohandas K. Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and Anonymous.

Thus, for me, the path to my own freedom has always been to work toward freedom for everyone. I know in my cells that hiding under the covers in my bedroom does not ease the tension in my body and spirit when I can hear screaming outside my door. Although my father is gone, I have continued to hear those screams, in my own psyche and in my interactions with the world around me.

It's taken me decades to accept that the majority of people appear genuinely comfortable with the decision to stay in their own room and ignore (or truly not hear) the screams of others. It's not about privilege, either. I've seen oppressed people cling to the tiny bit of freedom they have like a security blanket, refusing to challenge the powers that be in fear that their tiny bit will be taken away. And I've seen highly priv-

ileged people risk a great deal for the common good.

So I'm puzzled about this choice, whether or not to use whatever limited power is available to take a step forward, to squint into the rubble and discern or imagine a path that just might possibly lead to freedom. I wonder if this is about innate personality or environment or some combination of the two.

I have been most inspired by the artists of freedom who create a pathway even when denied almost every access point to action.

Definitely, people with harder lives have to learn to be more resilient than those who live in bubbles of privilege; they have to learn to "make a way out of no way," as African-American wisdom puts it. Some oppressed people manage to stay firmly centered in the collective purpose of moving towards freedom, even when simple personal survival could legitimately use every skill at hand. These are the artists of freedom, the ones who build freedom out of whatever materials they have on hand. They are the leaders I'll trust for these times we're in.

For now, I've decided that it really doesn't matter why some people exert courageous leadership and others don't. For now, I simply recognize that significant movement on the path towards freedom depends on strong leaders with the ability to not only see a path but to make others believe in it as well. And when I witness such leadership, I harness myself to it and offer my own gifts and talents to move with it. I have been wildly privileged in my life to meet artists of freedom again and again. I've learned enough from

watching them that, when I can't find another Artist of Freedom nearby, I can summon up my own limited abilities to create a path.

"I have been to the mountaintop," Dr. King declared, in his last public speech before he was assassinated. "I may not get there with you, but I want you to know that we as a people will get to the Promised Land." And because of the integrity of his life, people believed him, and walked with him in the direction he pointed.

I have been most inspired by the artists of freedom who create a pathway even when denied almost every access point to action. A white friend, with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and very limited energy, just decided to go to the library and sit outside with books about racial justice, encouraging patrons to check them out and read them. The sign above her reads: "White people! What are you doing to stop our legacy of racist violence?"

Or the prisoner member in solitary confinement, taking a CLF course where he was asked to focus on a source of life nearby. He wrote that all he could find that was alive in his cell were some ants, so he focused on them and learned. Even in solitary confinement he was able to find some freedom to grow and connect with a broader sense of life.

May we each claim our power—imperfect and limited as it may be—to serve as an artist of freedom, to dare to create a way forward. We might just be the missing puzzle piece that the world needs! ■



April 2016

REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP



The Passover story is a story of freedom. And it's inspired a lot of people who were seeking freedom, including slaves in the American South. But I wonder if the Passover story is not just a story about how the Jews found their way from slavery to freedom as they escaped across the Red Sea. Maybe it's also a very personal story about one man, Moses, finding his way to freedom.

Moses, after all, had a very confusing life. He was born to a Jewish mother, who had to abandon him to save his life. But his mother managed to weasel her way in to care for him after Pharaoh's daughter found him in a basket. So Moses was raised in Pharaoh's palace as a member of the royal family, but he was also raised by a Jewish woman who was not only a slave, but also his biological mother. Anyone in that situation might feel pretty mixed up about who they are and where their loyalty belongs.

Which is where the moment of liberation comes in. One day the grown Moses saw an overseer beating a slave, and something snapped. In trying to defend the slave, Moses accidentally killed the overseer, and then fled for the hills. He was probably filled with guilt at having taken a life, and terror that he would be punished as a murderer, and grief at leaving his family behind, and fear about what it would be like to live without all the comforts and privileges of life as part of the royal family.

But I'm betting he felt other emotions as well, like pride at having stood up for someone in danger, and relief at having chosen where his loyalty belonged. That, I think is a great moment of freedom—when you discover that you can stand up for what you think is right, even if it costs you a great deal to do so.

Moses lost the privileges of belonging to the royal family—not only the comfortable bed and delicious food

and the ease of having his every need tended to, but also the ability to assume that people would listen to him just because of who he was rather than what he had to say. He lost the ability to just ignore the price that the slaves—his biological family—were paying so that he could live in luxury.

What he got in exchange doesn't look like such a great deal. He got a job herding sheep and, yes, a wife and the family that came along with her. But he also got something more. He got a calling from God. A burning bush told him to go back to the palace and demand that Pharaoh let his people—God's people—go.

Freedom and comfort don't really have much in common.

Which also doesn't sound like such a great deal, given that returning to the palace could mean being executed for murder. And Moses didn't really think of himself as a leader. He didn't want to be in charge, didn't want to be the one faced with the seemingly impossible task of leading people from slavery to freedom. But freedom and comfort don't really have much in common. Moses, facing that burning bush, became free to grow into his biggest self. Having lost the power to control others from a position at the top, Moses was free to find the power that was inside him—the power to stand up bravely for what he knew was right.

Before he could lead his people into freedom, Moses had to find the freedom within himself to choose who his people were and what principles he would be loyal to. In the Passover story, Moses never does make it into the Promised Land. But he moves into a land of freedom when he is no longer captive to the corrupt forms of power and privilege that belong to the house of Pharaoh.

The Passover Seder, the celebration of this story of freedom, asks that we tell the story as if it happened to us personally: *This is what God did for me when I was captive as a slave in Egypt.* What happens if we take seriously the notion that Moses' story is our story, that we are each called to set aside the benefits that come with living in the house of the oppressor and claim a new freedom? Who would you claim as your people? What things, small or large, might you do to lead folks in the direction of freedom? Which way would you start walking if you were headed toward the Promised Land? ■

Notice of Annual Meeting

To all members of the Church of the Larger Fellowship, Unitarian Universalist

Per Article VII, Sections 1 and 2, of the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) Bylaws, the 44th Annual Meeting will be held via conference call and screen sharing on June 14, 2016 at 6:00PM EDT.

We will post all the necessary documents and contact information to the CLF website (www.clfuu.org/annualmeeting) by June 7, 2016. You can download materials, print them, and if a ballot is needed, send it along to the CLF office at CLF UU, 24 Farnsworth St., Boston, MA 02210-1409. Or call the CLF office at 617-948-6150 and request a paper copy.

The purpose of the meeting is to: elect a moderator from among members present to preside at the meeting, elect three members to 3-year terms on the board of directors and one member to the nominating committee, plus elect a clerk and treasurer from the slate of candidates presented on the ballot.

Rebecca Scott, Clerk ■



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We Have Not Come Here to Take Prisoners

by **Hafiz**

We have not come here to take prisoners
But to surrender ever more deeply
To freedom and joy.

We have not come into this exquisite world
To hold ourselves hostage from love.

Run, my dear,
From anything
That may not strengthen
Your precious budding wings

Run like hell, my dear,
From anyone likely to put a sharp knife
Into the sacred, tender vision
Of your beautiful heart.

We have a duty to befriend
Those aspects of obedience of
our house
And shout to our reason
“Oh please, oh please
Come out and play.”

For we have not come here to
take prisoners,
Or to confine our wondrous spirits

But to experience ever and ever
more deeply
Our divine courage, freedom, and Light! ■

