

Fully Accessible and Inclusive



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Perhaps you have seen the widespread cartoon image that illustrates the difference between “equality” and “equity” [included on page 5 of this issue]. First drawn in 2012 by Dr. Craig Froehle, it shows two panels. In each, three people of varying heights are trying to watch a baseball game over a fence, and they have three crates to stand on. In the scenario labeled “equality,” everyone gets one crate, which allows the tallest person to tower over the fence, but the smallest person still can’t see the game. In the scenario labeled “equity,” the crates are distributed so that everyone can see over the fence.

I’ve been thinking a lot about this cartoon as Unitarian Universalists discuss naming equity as one of the core values of our faith. Specifically, I’ve been thinking about why there is a wooden fence in the first place, and about all of the people in the stands whose access to the game doesn’t depend on the distribution of crates.

If someone were to attend the game in a wheelchair, they’d need more than crates to see over the fence. They’d need an expensive ticket, and a ballpark policy that carves out appropriate and desirable places for wheelchairs to be. (It is purely coincidental but illustrative that this week,

a friend who uses a wheelchair and loves baseball took to Facebook to decry the ways in which several major league teams make it harder for him to attend games by putting additional steps in place if one wants to buy a wheelchair-accessible seat.)

It seems to me that true equity is that everyone has access to the game in a way that fits their bodies and brains and not their wallets or the willingness of someone to give them a temporary boost.

It wasn’t until I decided to write about this cartoon, though, that I learned that its original creator researches inequities in healthcare. This makes the difference between getting into the ballpark and trying to see over the fence even more stark. For too many people, inequity leads to death.

I have hope that our Unitarian Universalist embrace of equity will be deeper and more meaningful than a cartoon. Part of the proposed language for what would be our core values reads that “we covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.”

If we are really serious about equity, then, we will work to make our communities—inside and outside of our

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Quest

Vol. LXXVIII, No 5

2024

“Treating
different things
the same can
generate as
much inequality
as treating the
same things
differently.”

KIMBERLÉ CRENSHAW

in this issue

FULLY ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE
Rev. Dr. Michael Tino

EQUITY
Multiple authors

AN ARTIST’S PRAYER
Seamus Vonn-Jernigan

UNTITLED ARTWORK
Thomas

EQUITY

What does it mean to value equity? How does it look?

DARRELL

CLF Member, incarcerated in CA

To be honest, at first I thought this theme might be about real estate. Then my mind switched gears and I began to grasp the foundational meaning of the word equity – value! Upon taking the backseat of my life's vehicle (I tend to let the Universe do the driving nowadays), I've become more conscious of our society in regards to our behavior towards ourselves and others.

When I was in my late teens, an older guy once told me, "people that live in lower class environments are blind to their true worth and potential." Hopefully this same individual has come to the realization that this imaginary blindfold can be worn by individuals from all walks of life, expanding all over the planet. Do we exhibit self-value when we fill our bodies up with harmful narcotics? Are we expressing our self-value by overindulging and drinking alcoholic beverages? Is self-value being shown by the clothes we wear, cars we drive,

people we socialize with, and the amount of money we possess? What is self-value anyway? Does self-value (or acknowledging that you have self-value) determine how you treat or value others?

Someone asked me a few years ago if I would rather be loved or valued. What a profound question! Not knowing the meaning of self-value back then, I decided to choose love, because I was ten

[Equity, continued on page 3](#)



PHOTO BY ROMA KAIUK ON UNSPLASH

Equity, continued from page 2

times more familiar with its existence. If you were to ask me that same question right now, I would say both – but overall, I would rather be valued.

Why? Consider the society that we all are experiencing together. This country runs off capitalism. I hear people say, “money isn’t everything,” and I would concur. But let’s be honest with ourselves for a moment: everything you need to survive in this society only becomes available through the exchange of currency (food/clothing/shelter). This economy has a strong influence over its inhabitants that leads them to place value on people, places, and things when, in all actuality, the majority of those objects (or subjects) have no value at all.

Let’s face it, everybody might not love their boss, but we all value our paycheck because it helps pay our bills, provides clothes for our children, keeps gas in our cars, and so on and so on. This emotion that we call love can be fleeting at times. We all know what it feels like but half of us have a hard time expressing it, because of fear of getting hurt or it not being reciprocated. Some of us don’t even know what love looks like when other people display it to us through their actions. I see way more conditional love than I see unconditional love (which is true love).

This is my suggestion on what I believe this country needs to place value in: God/higher power/nature/knowledge/wisdom/and understanding of various aspects of the Universe and how we correlate to them. We need to

place value in our physical well-being, mental well-being, emotional and spiritual well-being and the well-being of our Mother Earth. We need to place value in positive, powerful, and uplifting beliefs about ourselves and others, and build a positive attitude towards life, self, and others. We need to value unconditional love, family ties, real friends, discovering one’s purpose in life – and so much more.

As I continue to build equity in my life experience, I am forced to go with the flow of the collective consciousness that sees value in some of the most ridiculous things. I will never confirm their beliefs, nor will I condemn them. I will only adapt and use my awareness of this knowledge in a way that will empower me and along the path towards true prosperity. We are all more than worthy! ■

KATHLEEN

CLF member, incarcerated in VA

First, let us look at what equity means.. Webster’s dictionary defines equity as: the quality, state, or ideal of being just, fair and impartial. The first thing that stands out to me in that definition is the word ideal. I’ve been feeling a lot lately that as Americans, we are not living up to our ideals, equity being one of them. I feel that this is because we are often

alienated from one another due to our so-called differences. I think that equity means putting aside our differences and looking through them, to the throbbing, pulsing, living divinity that exists in each one of us.

Equity means that I want for you what I want for myself. Equity is not selfish. As a trans woman of color, I think the more we fight for equity, the more it becomes exacerbated in the media, and people become

fatigued by slogans. Many people are tired of hearing us rally for justice in an unjust world. So what do we do, where do we turn?

I think the key is trying to relate to each person, even when they do not want to relate to us – whoever they are. Because in the big picture, it really isn’t us vs. them. It’s just us. I think it’s time for the world to see that. ■

An Artist's Prayer

SEAMUS VONN-JERNIGAN

CLF member, incarcerated in OR

Oh Great Creator,

We are humbled to have been created by you and to witness your creativity flow through us daily. We understand that we are your instruments of peace, play and innovation, and intend to funnel your imagination through our very existence.

We are your hands, that sculpt the clay and paint the canvas.

We are your eyes, that capture a photograph and perfect a design.

We are your ears, listening to the harmonies among the song of birds, crash of waves, cries of babies and the wisp of the wind.

We are your feet, that dance across the stage, and your arms, that conduct a symphony.

We are your words, that form haiku and fill pages to create great novels.

We are your voice, that sings in the choir and whispers our prayers at night.

We are your laugh, that fosters joy and heals our souls.

We are your mind, that seeks the truth and guides us to think objectively.

We are your heart, that allows us to love our neighbors and forgive our enemies.

We are your spirit, that shepherds us to share peace and compassion with each person we meet and to extend grace to all, especially those who appear to deserve it the least, as they need it the most.

We are your creation, and your creativity lives on through us.

What we dream in our minds, help us to believe in our hearts. What we believe in our hearts, help us to cultivate in our lives.

In the name of the Great Creator,

Amen.



PHOTO BY LAZARESCU ALEXANDRA ON UNSPLASH

Fully Accessible, cont. from page 1

congregations—fully accessible and inclusive.

This means accessible and inclusive to all bodies. This means accessible and inclusive to different ways that brains work. This means accessible and inclusive to people with different financial means. That means accessible and inclusive to people with histories

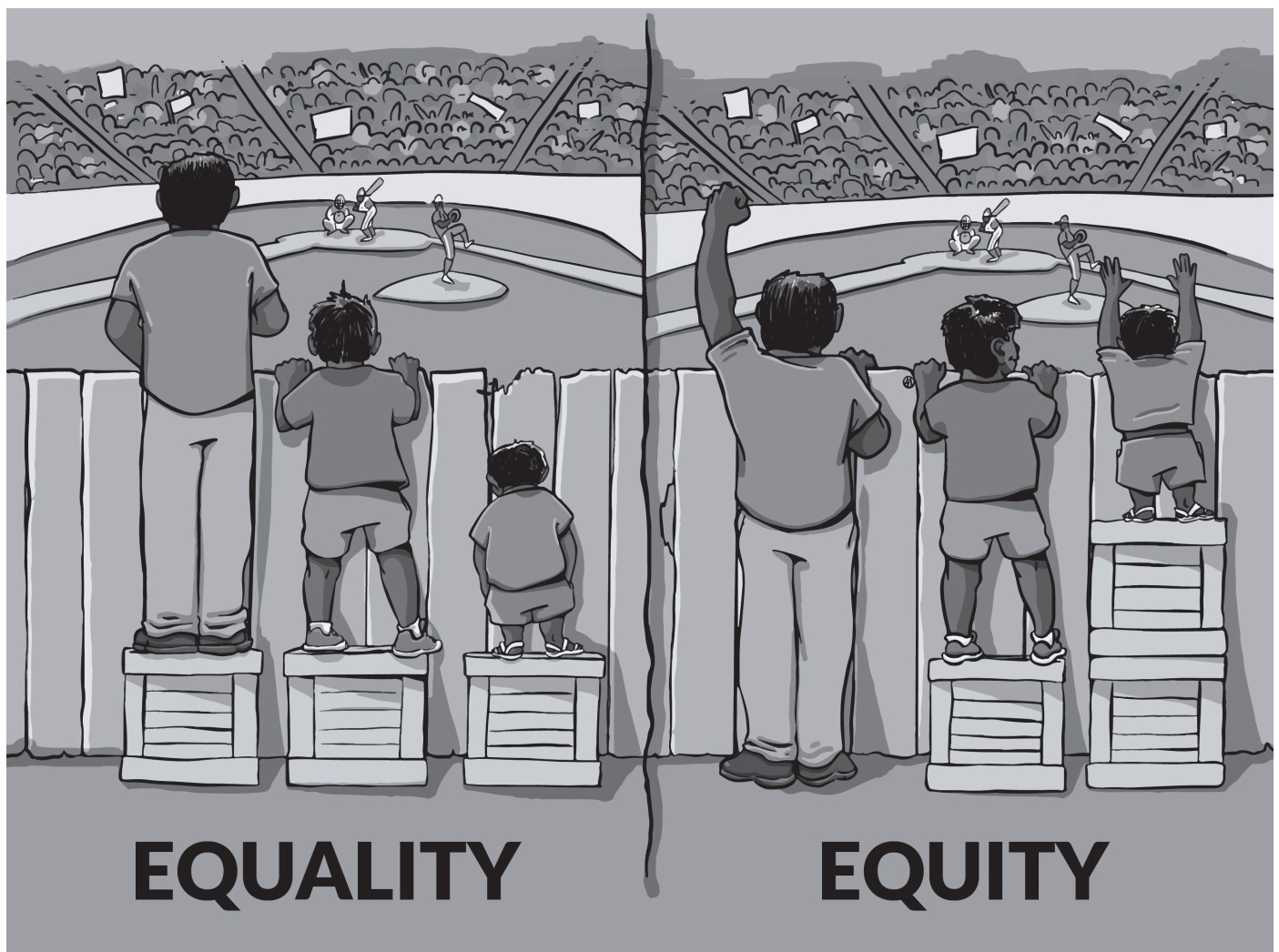
of trauma and also those who are imprisoned.

It also means that Unitarian Universalists are called to understand ourselves as part of accessible and inclusive communities, so that when we build structures that allow everyone to be part of things, they don't come across as unfair or unequal.

Have you ever complained that someone else got a crate to see over

the fence, even if you didn't need one? Sadly, over my years as a minister I've fielded way too many similar complaints.

Instead, let us tear down that fence and let everyone into the game. Let's create space where we can all have the place we need to participate, and where we don't resent the full participation of others. ■

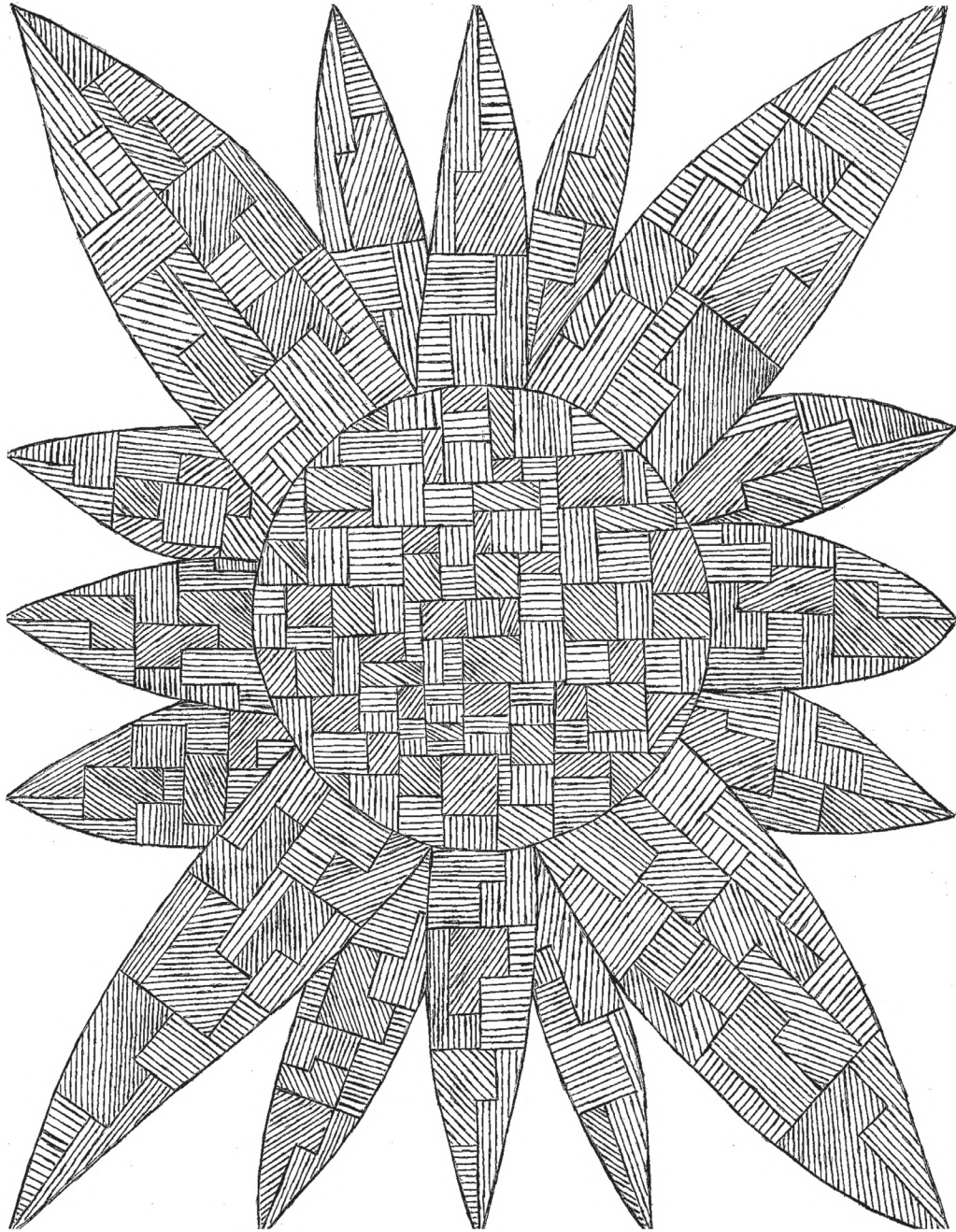


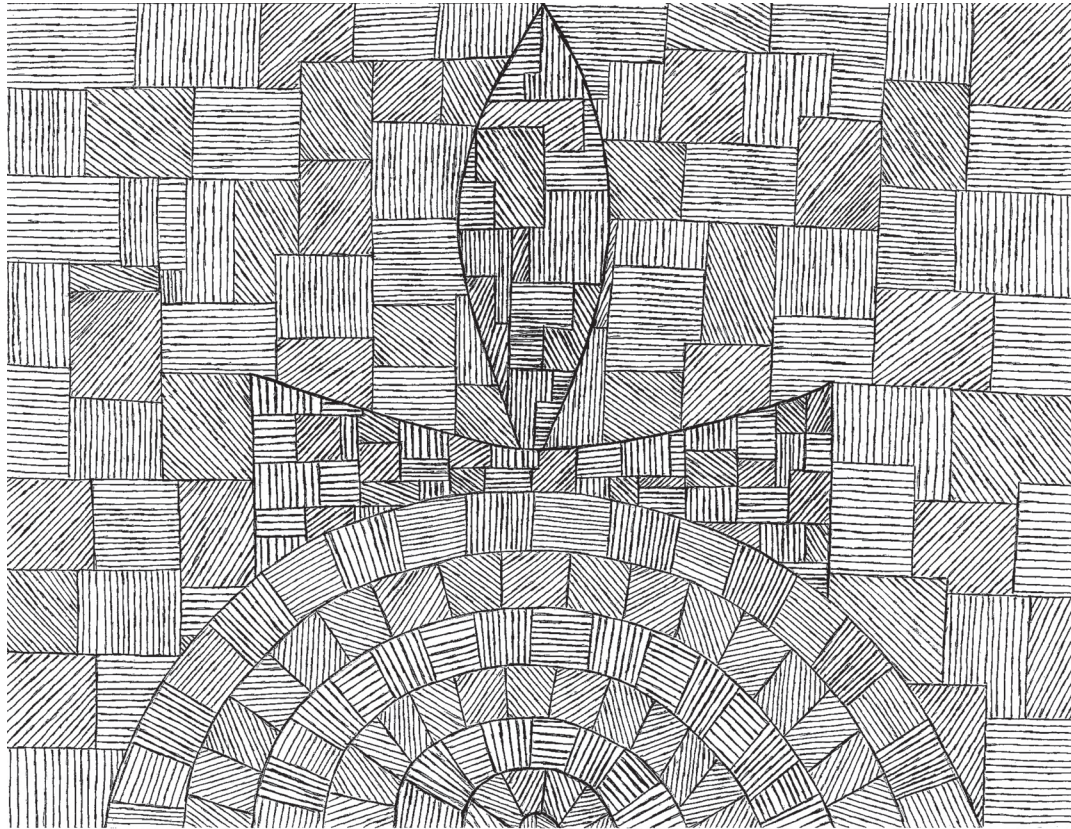
Untitled Artwork

THOMAS

CLF Member, incarcerated in IN

Thomas's original artwork is below, and to the right on page 7.





FOR YOUR REFLECTION

In this section, we offer questions for reflection based on ideas explored in this issue. You may wish to explore it individually or as part of a group discussion. To submit your reflection for possible inclusion in a future issue of Quest, tear off your answer and mail it back to us using the envelope included in the middle of this issue, or mail a longer reflection separately.

What does full accessibility mean to you? Have you experienced it in community?

If you would like us to be able to publish or share your writing in the future, remember to include "You have permission to edit and publish my words" somewhere on your submission.



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