

## UUA Article II: Anti-Fascism is Us

David R. Weiss – October 7, 2025

[A message to my co-conspirators (those who breathe alongside me) in the Unitarian Universalist tradition, although the values that animate our lives will resonate with many others.]

Beloveds,

The time for unmistakable clarity is upon us.

We are now living under a fascist regime. Consider the features: hyper-nationalism; cult-like veneration of the leader; open disdain for democratic elections; repression of protest and critique; demonizing one's adversaries; ignoring the courts; rampant militarism—including the intentional terrorizing of immigrant communities; rampant self-serving corruption that enriches the few, impoverishes the many, and scapegoats the vulnerable. We are witnessing a textbook unfolding of fascism in real time.

That clarity, however, is mere preamble for the clarity to which we are now called.

I suspect most UU's tilt anti-fascist on impulse. Our twin historical roots centered the primacy of love (Universalism) and the priority of reason and free conscience (Unitarianism). And it's likely that one or both of these sentiments drew us to this tradition. But these same sentiments are ones that fascism is wont to condemn or even criminalize.

Our commitments have often put us out of step with societal norms and have occasionally proven costly. We have our own roster of martyrs—from Michael Servetus (d. 1553) to Rev. James Reeb (d. 1965)—whose lived convictions cost them their lives. We have ample reason to be wary of authoritarianism, religious or secular. And fascism is unbridled authoritarianism. *Of course, we are almost instinctively against that.*

And yet, in this moment—as fascism becomes the ruling logic in our country—we need more than an intuitive impulse that is anti-fascist. Today it is critical for UU's to be explicitly aware of and reflectively articulate about our often implicit anti-fascist leaning. For several reasons.

1. Becoming explicit and articulate will enable us to be in deeper covenant within and across our congregations. Because fascism is utterly antithetical to our shared values, being anti-fascist is expressive of our UU faith/identity. It is foundational for our covenantal solidarity.

2. This will also help us reach out to family, friends, and others who may be troubled by what is transpiring in our nation, but whose misgivings have not yet crystalized into a clear position or into actual resistance. We won't persuade everyone. Yet, if we are thoughtful and clear we will persuade some few. And under fascism every few matters.

3. This will also set us in solidarity with immigrants, trans persons, the poor and unhoused, persons of color, protestors, and others who are being dehumanized, even demonized, by the rhetoric of this fascist regime, and its echoes in the streets and on social media. Our witness to our anti-fascist convictions may well be life-giving to those who find their lives under daily assault.

4. This will also sow seeds of possibility. Fascism's theatrical displays of power and brute force aim to create the perception that it is inevitable and unstoppable—that resistance is not just futile, but unimaginable. Even while fascism plays out in our country, our faithful counter witness creates space for the imagination of liberation and Beloved Community to persist.

5. Finally, our clarity about the deep roots of our anti-fascism is critical because these convictions may prove costly. Fascism operates by a dynamic of domination. *We will not resist it without risk.* We may begin in ways that carry lesser risks, but we cannot know in advance how much further we may find ourselves

called to act. Or how intolerant this regime's fascism will be of even minor or merely symbolic resistance. Thus, the simple clarity of our convictions *needs* to be held heart by heart.

At any given moment one or more of these reasons may take priority because of the context. But I expect all five are likely to be front and center in our lives at different times.

As my title suggests, Article II of our UUA bylaws—which names the shared convictions around which we have covenanted to live—provides a framework for an anti-fascist faith. The foundational values by which we make meaning and pursue moral discernment are intrinsically and, upon reflection, explicitly anti-fascist. Let me show you.

We affirm **Liberating Love** at the center of life—the core of life's purpose and meaning, the basis of life's flourishing, and the motivation for our aspirations and actions. Fascism, because it trades in brute force as its currency, can only acknowledge love as a quaint feeling best domesticated and limited to personal relationships with no role in political and civic life. *We know otherwise.*

Fascism wants to replace love with order. In doing so, it denies the mystery, whimsy, and diversity that are the signature of Love across the cosmos from distant quasars to quantum mechanics and to the inmost sanctum of the human heart. The only anti-dote to fascism is the persistent choice of Liberating Love. So, in this moment we earnestly choose Love.

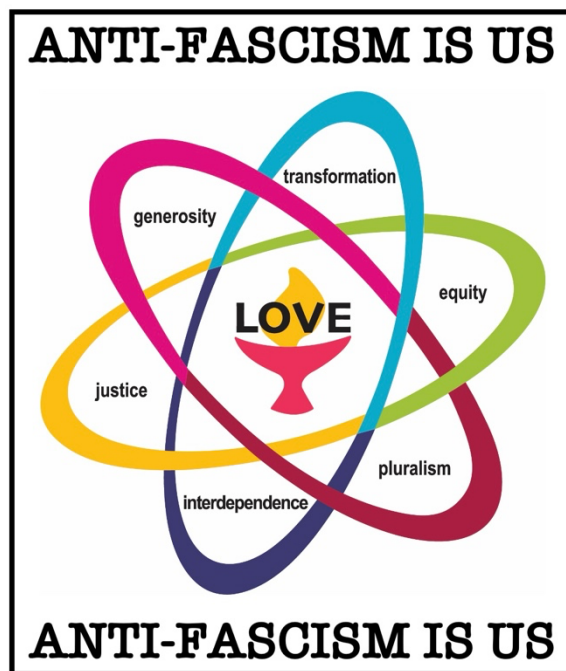
We value **Justice**—believing that systems of impartial judgment place a needed check on power and provide the infrastructure for sound democratic practices which benefit our lives at all levels. As Cornel West has said, “Justice is what love looks like in public.”

Fascism, however, has no use for justice except as the coerced or masqueraded approval of its unchecked power. Hence, the vetting of judges for ideological fidelity to the nearly unlimited reach of Executive power—and the disregard and disparagement of judges who still try to place checks on power. Fascism views justice, like love, as a quaint notion no longer relevant in a society where power is accorded absolute value.

Our commitment to justice sets us at odds with the injustices that are endemic to fascism. Insofar as we attest by our words and deeds to the ultimacy of Love as that which empowers not only our lives but also the just and liberating fabric of our communities, we set ourselves on a collision course with fascism. Not because we want that fight, but because we want to be faithful.

We value **Pluralism** because we regard diverse views and multiple voices essential for the pursuit of truth, the work of justice, and the joy of fellowship. We affirm difference as an echo of Love's rampant creativity in the world and a fundamental good in our common life.

But fascism, as the embodiment of political arrogance and narcissism, considers the regime and its leaders as the sole arbiter of truth. Its hyper-nationalism never celebrates the nation's diversity, but rather claims that only a certain sliver of a population represents the true nation. In this regime it is Americans of white European ancestry who matter. (Those who are nonwhite but willing to be loyal servants in the regime are praised, but when their usefulness to the regime runs out, they will be discarded quickly and brutally.)



Fascism is driven to belittle, condemn, or altogether erase difference. From mocking public figures with differing views to dismissing minority voices and erasing their history, from demonizing immigrants to dehumanizing trans persons, fascism's behavior relentlessly endangers both pluralism and persons. We will need to be equally relentless in actively valuing pluralism in our practices and in our public witness.

We value **Interdependence**—understanding it to be a fundamental truth, both ecologically and socially. Any one of us *is*, only because others *are*. And we humans *are*, only within a complex web of all else that *is*. Yet we humans have shown ourselves all too capable of choosing to actively deny this truth. Indeed, we have created economies and worldviews that operate *against* interdependence, thereby placing humanity and all members of the Earth community in peril. Thus, to say we value interdependence, is to say we *choose* to live by this truth.

In contrast, for fascism, interdependence is heresy. Fascism insists, loudly and belligerently, that its power (alone!) defines all relations and renders them subservient to its desires. Hence, its full-scale assault on the interwoven reality of immigrants in our economy and communities, its disregard for the community of nations, its aggressive denial of basic human rights, its undoing of the green policies of past administrations, and its ignorant rejection of the finitude of our world.

These very real echoes of interdependence elicit only contempt from fascism. Our valuing independence as essential to healthy community will invite contempt from this regime as well.

We value **Equity** as the practical manifestation of pluralism, interdependence, and justice across a social system. Equity seeks to ensure that all have the opportunities and resources necessary to flourish. AND—that no one holds or controls such a disproportionate share of power or resources that this prevents equity from being realized. Ultimately, we value equity because it reflects our bedrock conviction of the intrinsic dignity of each person.

But fascism reduces every person to their transactional value to the regime, inevitably reducing many to precarity, others to poverty, and others to sheer contempt—their transactional value being only to serve as scapegoats for the regime. This only amplifies the grotesque inequity capitalism has already brought about despite the abundance of material goods.

We will never establish equity in a society ruled by a fascist regime. Still, we can pursue equity in our congregations, our partnerships, our social justice initiatives, and our personal lives. In doing so, we bear witness to the possibility of a world other than the one fascism wants to dictate.

We value **Generosity** as an authentic response to our awareness that Life is ultimately Gift. In all its ecological and social complexity, all its spiritual/mystical depth, Life unconditionally offers itself to us. The reverence—surpassing awe—that we feel at Life's Gift echoes in the generosity that emerges in our relations with others.

Fascism, however, because it is steeped in self-veneration, has no capacity for genuine awe or reverence. It may reward its inside players gratuitously but divvying up the spoils of goods stolen from the labor of others or from the Earth is the very perversion of generosity. When every relationship is rendered transactional, generosity is a concept devoid of meaning ... except as corruption. Hence, the rejection of empathy and the open assault on those in need.

Our practice of generosity will not merely make us appear weak or foolish, it will directly challenge the lie of fascism's ruthless logic.

Finally, we value **Transformation** for two reasons. At the personal level it is the promise and pathway of personal growth and self-understanding. In this aspect, transformation honors the unique and sacred character of each person's journey. Fascism pays lip service to the heroic journey, but in reality, except

for the elite few, it imposes crushing conformity on everyone else. To value personal transformation in a fascist society is to refuse—to resist, even to subvert—the pressure of conformation.

In its historical-communal aspect, transformation names the importance of discerning our vocation across time and place. We regularly ask as a community, “What form shall faithfulness to Liberating Love take ... *here*, in *this* place and in *this* moment?” (Our recent revision of Article II is evidence of our commitment to transformation in our internal denominational life.) But under fascism all transformation is at the dictate of the regime. There is no room for communal conscience, only for conforming to the regime’s demands. Thus, every fascist regime including the present one cannot tolerate the dissenting voices of comedians, poets, artists, or religious leaders. Because such persons sustain our civic capacity to imagine things otherwise than they now are.

Genuine transformation, both personal and communal-societal, is antithetical to fascism.

Our Unitarian Universalist values are the foundation of our covenantal fidelity to one another. They shape our faith and the life we envision together. They guide our aspirations to be a liberating and transformative presence in the world. They do not dictate specific opinions or actions for us. They represent something more like the musical key in which we have chosen to improvise our music. Still, seven-for-seven these values—anchored deep in our consciences by intuition and mutuality—provide a musical key in which *all our faithful improvisation will be anti-fascist*. Not because we choose to be in opposition to the current regime, but because fascism is in utter opposition to our chosen faith.

On September 22, 2025, this regime designated Antifa as a domestic terrorist organization. There is, of course, no such actual organization as Antifa. The term refers to something like an organic but largely *uncoordinated* alliance of efforts across a *wide* diversity of tactics (ranging from disciplined nonviolence to strategic property destruction) that share a singular concern: to oppose the rise and reach of fascism in societies. Indeed, it is satirically emblematic that this regime would declare Antifa a domestic terrorist organization. *Any government that declares a movement that is by definition and by historical practice anti-fascist is by implication itself FASCIST.*

I suspect most of the shadowy, autonomous, disconnected groups that might quietly and legitimately own the designation antifa would view our efforts too timid for their taste. Still, it’s noteworthy that our “brand” symbol, the flaming chalice, has its own anti-fascist origins in 1941 during World War II. Created by an Austrian artist refugee—the flaming chalice was first used by the Unitarian Service Committee as an “official” seal on the altogether unofficial travel documents they issued to assist countless refugees in their escape from the fascism of the Nazi regime.

As we live our way into this precarious moment with Liberating Love as our compass, our calling is clear. With the flaming chalice as our emblem, we must consider our respective contexts and our unique gifts, placing our values in the service of our faithful imagination. Our worship, from ritual to reading to reflection; our congregational practices, from polity to planning to fellowship and mutual care; and our public engagement, from welcome and outreach to witness and advocacy—*All of these should be unapologetically and explicitly anti-fascist*. Neither for our sake nor for the world’s sake can we afford to be discreet and unnoticed. Not now.

Our Unitarian Universalist faith, centered as it is in Liberating Love with an array of mutually supporting values, is anti-fascist from first to the last. Article II makes clear: *Anti-fascism is us*.

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