

Religious Education (RE)

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I attended the fall CON of LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association) the first week of November. The theme this year was "Brave Spaces: Learning about Non-violent Communication." I missed the opening session due to flight delays. The second session began with the two white male leaders chosen by the LREDA board to lead us in Non-violent Communication exercises. Twenty minutes into the session a question was raised by a participant and questioned by the leader. This began a short conversation that led to the leader asking, "Do you want me to leave?" Participants responded, "YES!"

The leaders were asked to leave the conference. Some people had felt uncomfortable with the leaders since the evening before. The leaders had conversations with the board about the discomfort among participants, but did not comply with the requests for changes. The conference now became all about white supremacy issues. There was a lot of anger and confusion. As for me, I didn't fully understand the issues that some participants had with the leaders.

I now began seeing myself as a possible white supremacist for the first time. I felt like a label was being put on me for everything I do when I had done nothing. Or had I?

The remainder of the conference was about dealing with the hurt and harm caused by the presenters. Through the use of reflective communication, we shared in groups how we were feeling and what we felt about the situation. This gave us time to debrief. People of color were in their own group. I would have liked to hear more of their views, so we could have communicated with them more clearly. I felt like we should have all been together talking. However, the reflective questioning was well-led and helped most of us work through the situation.

I stayed after the conference for a Multicultural Education Renaissance Module. The module was very informative and worked through a lot of information in a short period of time. The highlights for me were:

- 1) We as a church really do need to look through a multicultural lens when planning programs, services, and classes. We need to make sure all are included in a way that meets who they are.
- 2) Learning about the different types of power and oppression related to white supremacy made me realize how I have been resisting the idea for many years.
- 3) I learned about some new resources we developed in class and available through our UUA resources to help us look at the issues closer, so as to make RE a more multicultural place. There are more new books on RE table for you to check out.