



## *The Unitarian Society of Hartford*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Congregation to Respond to Repeated Theft of #BlackLivesMatter Yard Signs with Gifts of Flowers**

*Political Parties' Extremism Targeted in Sunday Gathering*

**What:** Religious & Lay Leaders Protest Effects of Political Extremism with Gifts of Flowers to University of Hartford Graduates

**Where:** 50 Bloomfield Ave, Hartford

**When:** 9:00am THIS SUNDAY, May 15, 2016

**Who:** Unitarian Universalist pastors, parishioners, & members of Hartford SURJ (Showing Up For Racial Justice)

**Visuals:** Banners reading “#LovesUnstoppable,” gifts of roses with to families on their way to University of Hartford’s Commencement

HARTFORD - The Unitarian Society of Hartford (USH) is calling Love “unstoppable” in response to the 12<sup>th</sup> theft of their [#BlackLivesMatter](#) lawnsigns since they put them up in August. In the most recent theft, the thief replaced the signs with a Trump for President lawnsign. (USH is a non-partisan organization and does not take stands for or against any candidates.)

“Our faith calls us to build the Beloved Community, and rather than condemn those who steal, we are calling on our political leadership to join us in a call for abundant Love, to renounce racism and embrace justice,” said Rev. Cathy Rion Starr, Co-Minister of the congregation.

On Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, the congregation will celebrate its annual Flower Communion service in which flowers are exchanged as a sign of abundant beauty and love. Before the service, members and friends will give flowers to those on their way to the University of Hartford graduation. They plan to attach Love Letters to the flowers calling on all political parties to condemn hate and embrace racial justice. This is part of the national call to action for mostly White faith communities called [Love Is Unstoppable](#) by [Showing Up for Racial Justice \(SURJ\)](#), a group that organizes White people to show up for racial justice.

“We put out a national call for these #LovesUnstoppable actions because the Presidential Campaign continues to raise the bar on racist rhetoric with attacks on immigrant communities, Black communities, Muslim communities, women- the list goes on and on,” said Dara Silverman, National Coordinator for SURJ and SURJ Action. “Messages of hate are sadly finding support among many White people, and the entire slate of candidates across parties have failed to fully embrace a comprehensive and accountable racial justice agenda.”

This campaign has made clear the necessity to deeply commit ourselves to the work of racial justice. Right now, people of color, locally and nationally, are calling on white people and primarily white organizations, to show up in a much bigger way, to take on more risk, to be more open and public in our opposition to white supremacy.

“The repeated theft of our signs is but a symptom of the plague of white supremacy that is killing Black and brown folks, dividing immigrant families, and spreading Islamophobia every day,” said Rev. Rion Starr. “Our Unitarian Universalist faith calls on us to build bridges of solidarity and relationship. We invite the thieves to come talk with us, and we have partnered with the [Bloomfield Muslim Community Center](#) to invite our elected leaders to come talk together as well.”

Faith communities and ethical commitments transcend political parties. As white people of faith we are committed to the power of unstoppable love and justice for the long haul. We must acknowledge the harsh realities of the past and present - from Michael Brown and Sandra Bland to immigrant families split apart and refugees denied basic rights. We mourn these realities, and we envision a future that is different: a future where everyone’s needs are met, where everyone is treated with respect, and where everyone is loved.

**About the Unitarian Society of Hartford:** USH is a Unitarian Universalist congregation that has been nourishing spirits, building community, and working for justice in Hartford since 1830. The mostly White congregation has 200 members and is explicitly welcoming to the LGBTIQQ community, people with disabilities, young and old, and this week welcomed a Syrian refugee family whose resettlement we are supporting in collaboration with several other congregations. [www.ushartford.com](http://www.ushartford.com)

**About Showing Up For Racial Justice:** SURJ is a national network of groups and individuals organizing white people for racial justice. Through community organizing, mobilizing, and education, SURJ moves white people to act as part of a multi-racial majority for justice with passion and accountability. We work to connect people across the country while supporting and collaborating with local and national racial justice organizing efforts. SURJ provides a space to build relationships, skills, and political analysis to act for change. For more information and get on our mailing list, please visit our website: <http://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/>

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