

2023 May Chalice Circle: Liberation

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting By [Theresa Soto](#)

To be free, you must embrace
the breadth of your own existence
without apology, even if they try to take
it from you. You must know, not that you
can do whatever you want; you are not
a kudzu vine, eating entire hillsides for
the purpose of feeding your own lush life. You
must know instead, that inside you are entire
Universes—milky blue, magenta, and gold—
expanding. But to actually be free, you must
know and you must fight for the entire
Universes inside of everyone else.
Being free is not a license, but
A promise.

Song

[No One Is Getting Left Behind - Joshua Blaine](#)

No one is getting left behind this time
No one is getting left behind
No one is getting left behind this time
We get there together or never get there at all. (x3)

Reading 1

Early May is the season every year when it feels as though my soul comes out from under its pile of winter blankets for the final time, shakes off the wintry sleep lingering through early spring, and takes flight. Everything is bloom and leaf and fullness, and I can feel it rising in my spirit like freedom.

In May, you could catch me skipping down the street, when most of the time I'm at least pretending to be too dignified for such a thing. In May, I can hardly keep from singing. I have come to believe that this feeling is the starting place of our collective liberation – this joy, this pleasurable freedom that springs up from deep inside, rising inexorably like bird song. It is the soul-sensation that we are here to live life abundant and to ensure that others can do the same.

When I feel this soul-freedom – this rising song of joy – I want my loved ones to feel it too. When I see my loved ones so free, I want it for the whole world. And from there comes collective liberation, when a song of joy rises from within us and spreads in widening circles until everybody's got their part in the song.

"Nobody's free until everybody's free," says civil rights pioneer Fannie Lou Hamer, and that includes you – your own spirit is the starting place. ~ Rev. Molly Housh-Gordon

Check-in: Without crosstalk or interruption, briefly describe where you are in your life now, and notice what needs to be shared in order to be fully present in our circle.

Reading 2 By [Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley](#) & [Clyde Grubbs](#)

O Great Creative Spirit: You have given a vision of the good, and we yearn for a new way. But where are we to find the courage to begin this work? We know that a different tomorrow is possible, but how can we build it?

We think of the prophets, women and men, who voiced unpopular opinions, who made personal sacrifices, and sometimes lost their lives, for the sake of justice.

We think of Isaiah, who called out to let those who are held in captivity go free, to give solace to the poor and homeless. Let us be inspired by all who work to overcome misery, poverty, and exploitation.

We think of Harriet Tubman, who called out to people of goodwill to join her on an underground railroad, to lift a dehumanized people from the bondage of slavery to the promise of freedom, even when it meant challenging unjust laws. Let us be inspired by those who are outlaws for freedom.

We think of Gandhi, whose belief in "Soul Force"—the witness to Love's Truth—helped to overthrow the oppression of an empire and gave witness to the way of nonviolent action. Let us be inspired to become witnesses for peace.

We think of Chief Seattle, who reminded us that we belong to the earth, not the earth to us. Let us be inspired by all those who work for the healing of creation, of Mother Earth and all her creatures.

Who are the prophets who inspire you? They may be well known, or known only to you, offering personal inspiration, courage, and hope.

May they join a great cloud of witnesses to a new way of life—the way of peace and justice, the way of justice lived according to the way of peace, the beloved community.

Questions to Consider

1. What do you think of first when you hear the word “liberation” - the underground railroad, liberation of nazi camps, fat liberation, release from imprisonment, the Berlin wall coming down, the end of apartheid in South Africa, leaving an abusive partner - something else?
2. What does liberation mean to you?
3. The opening words are taken from a piece titled ‘To the people who have mistaken freedom for liberation’ - how are “freedom” and “liberation” different?
4. When in your own life have you experienced liberation?
5. Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt says “A Universalist theology of liberation in the present day centers our capacity to be sanctuaries of radical truth telling and abundant compassion so that the all-embracing love at the center of our tradition can serve to make all of us more whole.” What do you think Unitarian Universalism has to do with liberation?

Sitting in Silence: We will sit in silence for 5 minutes. Take this time to reflect on the readings, questions, and theme. Center yourself and consider what you want to share with the group.

Sharing/Deep Listening: Please share your own experiences and thoughts about the topic/readings with no crosstalk or interruption.

Additional Thoughts/Crosstalk: As time allows, after listening to others, do you have additional thoughts to share?

Reading 4 By [Margaret Walker](#)

For my people standing staring trying to fashion a better way
from confusion, from hypocrisy and misunderstanding,
trying to fashion a world that will hold all the people,
all the faces, all the adams and eves and their countless generations;

Let a new earth rise. Let another world be born. Let a
bloody peace be written in the sky. Let a second
generation full of courage issue forth; let a people
loving freedom come to growth. Let a beauty full of
healing and a strength of final clenching be the pulsing
in our spirits and our blood. Let the martial songs
be written, let the dirges disappear. Let a race of [people] now
rise and take control.

Checkout: How are you feeling now as we leave this circle? What can we do to support you?

Closing Words/Extinguishing the Chalice

May the truth that makes us free,
and the hope that never dies,
and the love that casts out all fear
lead us forward together,
'till the day breaks,
and the shadows flee away.