

Colleagues, friends and those whom I do not know, I have appreciated the fact that United Methodist News Service published with the list of signers, my "Elephant in the Room; Race" article. As expected, most of the public comments were critical, however a few were positive. I have received some complimentary comments from some persons, and for a variety of understandable reasons received "the sound of silence" from many. It is summer, some saw no need to respond, and some with whom I share many perspectives may be in silent disagreement with the article. Of course this is nothing new for any of us who speak to the issues of the day. We remain friends and colleagues in the struggle, even when we disagree.

But as a way of continuing the conversation, not with me, but with us all on the "Elephant in the room; race", I remind you of July 21, 2008. A cartoon pictured Barack and Michelle Obama in the Oval Office. Barack is dressed in traditional Muslim clothing, wearing a turban and sandals. Michelle is dressed in camouflaged military clothes, army boots, a belt of bullets, an AK-47 rifle and a giant Afro hairstyle. There is an American flag burning in the fireplace and a picture of Osama Bin Laden on the wall. We of course remember that this was long before the November election. This cartoon described as satire was not on the front of a political or religious right publication, it was on the front of the New Yorker magazine, described by many as a liberal publication. I continue to be a reader of the New Yorker, even though I disagreed with this satirical cartoon of our prospective President and Mrs. Obama. The cartoonist as well as the editors of the magazine were sincere in their efforts to "explain" the "cartoon".

But colleagues with whom I share so much; our togetherness in our journeys against injustice and our respect for each other, in hindsight as we remember that cover in relation to the "soft" and "not-so-soft" racial/racist responses of today, could we now admit that the editors of the New Yorker would not publish that cartoon today? (I hope). As Jews and non-Jews remember the Holocaust and the history of Jewish oppression, they and we respond, "Never Again". I am fearful that we do not remember the slavery of Africans and the racial segregation of African Americans that way. Or, we are uncertain as to how we should address that history in the 21st century, particularly in light of the joy that supporters and non-supporters have over the election of Barack Obama as our 44th President. But despite this modern day "American Dilemma" (Remember Myrdal's work?) for some, we must find helpful ways to address race and racism, because to do so is in the vested interests of us all.

My "Elephant" article has caused some persons to share with me some outstanding efforts by whites and persons of all colors to discuss, debate, confront and engage in "racial justice and then healing and reconciliation" activities. My hope and prayer is that all of us in ways particular to us, will do the same.

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