

## ***Reflections on the Moral Arc***

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As I write this, I was reminiscing just two days prior about the incredible moment just three years ago when the US Supreme Court decided, in the case *Obergefell v. Hodges*, that marriage equality was the law of the land. I was attending the UUA's General Assembly in Portland when that was announced, and I joined in the euphoric celebration that day, along with thousands of others, including many who had found ways to build families with the ones they love in spite of our heretofore discriminatory marriage laws. It was an incredible moment, but not only a moment – it was a turning point in how our nation views marriage and family and the dignity of people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, or Questioning. No change happens overnight, of course, which is as true in these regards as anywhere, yet I recalled how only a few years prior to that court case the very idea of people legally marrying others of the same gender was seen as preposterous by the vast majority of Americans. And looking back on it now, we can clearly see the truth of Martin Luther King's famous dictum, that the moral arc of the universe is long, but does indeed bend toward justice. The cultural changes that *Obergefell* either initiated, facilitated, reflected, or forced (depending on your point of view) are real and lasting, and represent an historic bend toward justice for this country.

I was glad to keep all this in mind as I heard this week about a string of new Supreme Court decisions that decidedly did *not* reflect this bending toward justice, most notoriously in the case *Trump v. Hawaii* – which upheld an unjustifiable ban on travel from several Muslim majority nations that was clearly motivated by bias against that religion and culture. I'm reminded, in contemplating this, that even though this moral arc does bend toward justice, it also, when looked at closely, is uneven and squiggly. In the short term, it goes up and down, following the unstable drifting political winds of the day. Indeed, I believe that when major steps forward are taken – as with *Obergefell* – there often is a backlash that shows up as a temporary reversal. This knowledge is helpful, but it doesn't change the fact that we are in a time of grave crisis in this country, a crisis facilitated by deep-seated racism, misogyny, and fear on the part of great numbers of citizens.

And that is where we, Unitarian Universalists and others of open-minded and accepting faith in humanity, come in. We come in to keep our eyes on the long-term and deep-seated cultural changes that we commit to facilitate. Through the ups and downs, the great leaps forward and the disappointing backlashes, we steadily and with faith engage ourselves and our communities with the immense power of love and acceptance. The power of fear is strong too,

but a more distant glance at this moral arc reveals that we've come a long way from the days when slaves and women were treated as property.

So let us take courage and, reminded of this "big picture" of our moral arc, renew our commitment to celebrate together and continue working toward a world in which the inherent worth and dignity of every person is not questioned.

In faith

Ken