

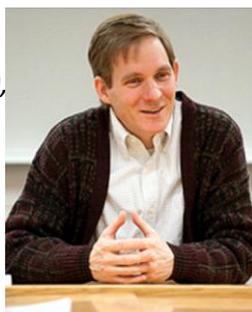
**MFSA Spring Statewide Gathering
Sunday, April 2 – 2:45 p.m.**

Walnut Hills United Methodist Church
12321 Hickman Road, Urbandale, Iowa 50323

Global Politics, Mr. Trump, and the Church

The new administration has promised to escalate international confrontations and to repudiate traditional forms of U.S. engagement in international society. How should the Church respond? What are the consequences for international security and for the global economy if the United States is no longer willing to provide leadership? What is at stake in conflict flashpoints from Europe to the Middle East to East Asia? What economic policies are prudent and just in the context of interdependent economies, global value chains, and an increasingly fragile environment?

Randall W. Stone (Ph.D. 1993, Harvard), is Professor of Political Science and Director of the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies at the University of Rochester. He is author of three books and numerous articles on international organizations, international finance, Russia and Eastern Europe. <http://www.sas.rochester.edu/psc/stone/>



Reflections on Camping and Laser Tag

by Dale Hanaman
Iowa MFSA Peace and Justice Advocate

MFSA-Iowa declared its opposition to Laser Tag as a Wesley Woods Camp offering in a letter dated December 2015. Wesley Woods offered a laser tag camp last summer and will continue another camp in 2017. Quoting from that letter, we wrote: *The bottom line is that campers are targeting other campers and shooting at them in order to score points. No matter how it's framed, this 'Christian' Laser Tag cannot hide its roots as training for combat troops on the battlefield, and serves to cauterize us to the reality of gun violence.*

We sought information directly from Deke Rider, Wesley Woods Site Director, before writing. Deke communicated with Dale Hanaman that a major incentive was to attract new campers and this camp did attract new campers. Deke said the laser tag camp was modeled after one originated at Camp Fontanelle in the Great Plains Conference, beginning in 2005.

Wanting to know how other camps have approached laser tag as a camp offering, Dale contacted Kevin Witt, Camp and Retreat Ministry, Leadership Ministries, Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Dale wanted to know about the benefits and philosophy of laser tags in Christian camps. Kevin noted a great diversity of perspectives about incorporating laser tag. He said he could post a question to their network of leaders regarding laser tag, which was done.

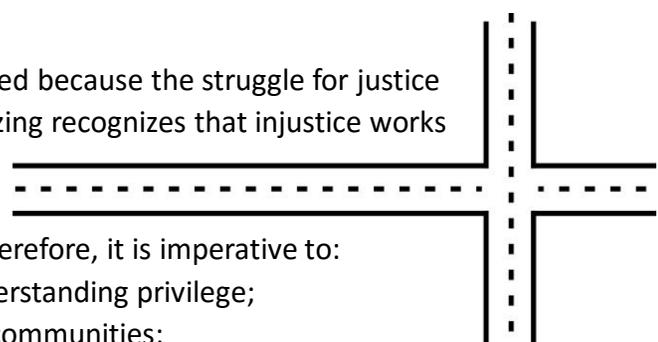
Several camp leaders took time to respond. I did receive detailed information from both site directors of both Wesley Woods and Camp Fontanelle affirming why laser tag is part of their summer camp offerings. I received a short note from Ken Overholser, Director of Camp and Retreat Ministries, West Ohio Conference, who stated *"We do not allow any type of play guns or real guns on camp property."* David Hargreaves, Saw Tooth Camp in Idaho, stated emphatically that laser tag is not allowed at this site, PERIOD. David said, *"We have many other opportunities to enjoy nature, and experience Christian Living."*

All this said, it is still the belief of MFSA-Iowa that laser tag has no place in the Camping Program in our Iowa Conference. If new campers are wanted: create new camps that do not use violence or simulate violence like the rest of the world. Create camps that encourage young people to seek and "promote an alternative to violence in our society by teaching and modeling love, peace, justice," that provide a place to get away from the world and its violence, to learn or re-learn to embrace what it means to love God and neighbor, to reflect on what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

MFSA Intersectional Organizing Principle:

All experiences of marginalization and injustice are interconnected because the struggle for justice is tied to concepts of power and privilege. Intersectional organizing recognizes that injustice works on multiple and simultaneous levels. Practical intersectional organizing always focuses on collaboration and relationship building. Experiences of injustice do not happen in a vacuum; therefore, it is imperative to:

- Develop the most effective strategies to create space for understanding privilege;
- Organize in an intersectional framework led by marginalized communities;
- Build effective systems of resistance and cooperation to take action for justice.



The Distance Between There and Here

by Colleen McRoberts

There is a long, long road between noticing there is a problem and actually doing something about it. What's more, there are a lot of stoplights, potholes, and rest areas between one end of the journey and the other. Still, on that road, when stopped for the umpteenth time, sometimes I just don't know whether to laugh or to cry.

The 2014 Iowa Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted resolution 9339 Combating Racism and Sexism. The full text of this resolution is on page 31 of the [2015 Iowa Conference Book of Resolutions](#), but the meat and potatoes of the resolution are as follows:

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the churches of the Iowa Annual Conference take the call to repent of racism and sexism seriously by holding quadrennial seminars or workshops on Racism and Sexism in which all pastors and District and Conference staff are required, and church members are strongly encouraged to participate."

So I was excited to be asked to train as a facilitator for the Healthy Boundaries training which the Iowa Annual Conference requires for all clergy persons. Like many large organizations, the United Methodist Church carries insurance which includes requirements to train staff on sexual ethics, professional boundaries, and power dynamics.

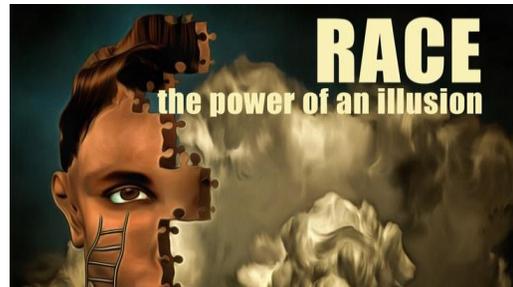
The presenter was Dr. Miguel De La Torre. Dr. De La Torre is a Biblical ethicist whose "academic pursuit has been ethics within contemporary U.S. thought, specifically how religion affects race, class, and gender oppression." Dr. De La Torre gave the workshop using his book *Liberating Sexuality: Justice Between the Sheets*. It was a day of lecture and small group discussion which was filmed with the intent that each District of the Conference would use it for the Healthy Boundaries training.

To my surprise, about a month after the class, I received an email letter telling me that my services as a volunteer facilitator won't be needed. The reason given: The Ministerial Ethics Committee is going to "refocus the curriculum and method of presentation." According to the letter, while expressing appreciation for Dr. De La Torre's training "as it related to sexism and racism. There was also the shared belief that the content did not focus directly on the purpose of our mandatory training: maintaining healthy boundaries, promoting appropriate self-care, and understanding power dynamics. These are important as we seek to promote safe and healthy congregations."

[The full article is linked here](https://iowajustice.wordpress.com/) and is found on Colleen's blog: <https://iowajustice.wordpress.com/>

Race: The Power of an Illusion:

MFSA is co-sponsoring a one-day guided educational experience offering faith and community people a chance for "courageous conversations" as they explore intersections of race, equity, and child welfare in Iowa. Lunch for a donation (or bring your own.)



These Learning Exchanges are sponsored by Iowa Conference UMW in cooperation with the Iowa Department of Human Services. (0.5 UMC CEUs, SW CEUs & foster parent credit hours available.) The workshops run from 8:45 AM-3:45 PM.

Dates and locations:

- **Monday, March 13 - Trinity UMC, Fort Dodge**
- **Thursday, April 20 - Salem UMC, Council Bluffs**
- **Thursday, May 25 - Columbus Junction UMC**

The event is free, **but pre-registration is required.** Participation is not limited to United Methodists. To register, email Rita Carter at: ritaac@mchsi.com or call 515-979-0605. Details at www.iaumc.org/newsdetail/race-the-power-of-an-illusion-7214207

Iowa MFSA Membership:

Membership includes membership with National MFSA & SQB newsletter subscription. To join, contact Mike Biklen (515 E. 11th St., Muscatine, IA 52761-3920).

No dues are required to be a member, but any gift is greatly appreciated. 80% of your membership donation goes to fund the work of National MFSA.

Ways to support IOWA MFSA financially include:

- **Organizer Fund:** Supports the work of MFSA Iowa coordinator Eloise Cranke.
- **General Fund:** Operating budget expenses
- **Memorial Fund:** Gifts can be given in someone's name and designated.

Donate by check mailed to Mike Biklen or through the PayPal link online at mfsaiowa.org.

Visit MFSA Iowa online at mfsaiowa.org

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