

FALL 1996

The Continental Newspaper of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists.

SYNAPSE

*A Point of Contact Where Information and Energy
Are Exchanged.*

Volume IX, Issue II, Fall 1996.

Printed in the USA.



Hi. Feel free to use this handy form to ensure your *Synapse* satisfaction. FYI: We give names and addresses from the *Synapse* list to UU-affiliated groups upon request.

TRIM IT! ☐
Whoa! I don't need two copies of Synapse! Please send my one copy to the address below. Thanks.

ADD IT! ☐
Yes, I would like to receive Synapse! Here is my name, address, and birthdate.


I've Moved! ☐
I no longer reside at the address printed on this cover. I have written my new address in the space below. Please make a note of it.

My District Is:

TRASH IT! ☐
'Bye, 'bye Synapse. I no longer wish to receive this oh-so wonderful publication. Please remove me from your mailing list.

CHANGE IT! ☐
I sure would like the correct information on my mailing label. Please note the corrections I made to the right and enter them into your database. Namaste!

I LOVE IT! ☐
Things just couldn't be better. I'm mailing this back to you just for the hell of it. Lupe!

 **YRUU at the UUA**
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BOSTON, MA.
Permit No. 8652

Printed on recycled paper.

Fall 1996



Tony Nappa, Beth Minor, Abbey Tennis, and a friend in a heap at GA 1996.



JPD YRUUers at the Stand for Children Rally in Washington D.C.

Dear Fellow UU's,
I just moved from the Bay Area to Texas.... It's a long story. Anyway I'm missing the UU church and its community, so hook me up with any and all newsletters! I love *Synapse*!
Thank you!
Love,
Lindsey Ott

Dear Lindsey,
Just because you're not in California anymore doesn't mean that you have to go through YRUU withdrawal. Contact your district YCR (see pg. 4) for information on district programming and conference dates. YRUUers are everywhere and your YCR can help you find them.
David and Kathy

Dear Fellow *Synapse* Readers,
My name is Darcy Baxter, and I recently received my first issue of *Synapse* (Spring 1996). Through that oh-so-fabulous issue, I got in contact with a fellow YRUU, and we have been writing each other since. It is a lot of fun, and I think it would be really neat if a YRUU system was set up in which UU's from all over could get in touch (through writing since currently I am on-line deprived). I love to get mail and I know a lot of other people do too. Since I have determined that UU's often tend to be the coolest around, I would love to get in contact with more of you. So please feel free to write me and if enough people do, I could maybe, possibly compile a list of people and addresses. Of course I'm writing this letter in the middle of summer, and I'm optimistic, but what the hell, I'll give it a whirl. Get in touch soon!
Love,
Darcy Baxter
29 Forest Acres Drive
Ithaca, NY 14850

Dear YRUUers,
I'm really interested in hearing from other high school UU's about any efforts you've made to end military recruiting in your high schools. Military recruiting is a two billion dollar-a-year industry, a "small" part of the 1996-97 \$663 billion military budget (52% of the Federal Budget). Two billion dollars goes a very long way when high school administrators and school boards voluntarily work in partnership with the military to recruit us.

I'm also looking for information about the level of military penetration at other high schools. For example: unsupervised recruiters on campus, classroom visits by recruiters, military recruiting assemblies, JROTC, ASVAB (voluntary or not), recruiting booths at campus Career Fairs, recruiting posters and brochures in campus Career Centers. Also, does your high school tell students to register for the draft and/or provide registration

forms? This is a legal function of the Post Office, not public schools.

I distribute a one-sheet freebie paper, promoting nonviolence, at my high school (if you want copies, send a stamped, self-addressed business size envelope) and my mom does an anti-enlistment bulletin board in my high school Career Center (if you want copies of the posted materials please send a self-addressed, \$1 stamped 12" x 9" envelope).

The military can't have another war without youth cooperation; let's not give it to them. "Whatever you do may seem insignificant, but it is most important that you DO IT." (M.K. Gandhi)

Thanks,
Christopher Knox-Davies
10737 La Grange Ave. Apt. #1
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Dear *Synapse*,

We all know our world is far from perfect (very, very far). Right now, just forget it. Rekindle your idealism. Relax. Breathe deeply. Imagine your ideal society. Imagine a place where:

- + Homosexuality is taught as a legitimate option in schools.
- + If a single mother is equally qualified for a job as someone else, she will be hired.
- + There is universal health care.
- + There is free counseling for youth about their sexuality and relationships.
- + Abortion is only illegal if it is performed after the tenth week of pregnancy, outside of a hospital, against the mother's will, or if the mother has to pay for it.
- + Virtually all the people voted in the last election.
- + There is a bill pending in parliament to make it illegal to use women's bodies as sex objects in advertising.
- + The richest people make only four times as much as the poorest.
- + Child support laws are strictly enforced; there are no deadbeat parents.
- + People feel safe walking alone after dark.

You may think this ideal society is just that, an idea. I assure you it is not. I visited last summer and nearly had my passport confiscated. I visited Cuba.

(Okay, so Cuba isn't quite as perfect as I just made it out to be. They have problems, just like everyone else. The US embargo causes most of them.) Why do we hate a country that is doing so much right?

Rachel Long
Woodinville, Washington

Dear *Synapse*,

As stated by Geoffrey Canada at the Stand for Children March in Washington, D.C., the youth of this nation are in crisis. My hope with youth is that youth, along with a long list of others representing all groups involved with youth, will take the problem from the political to the reality of the problem. I understand there are alliances but the united front is still not present.

Sincerely yours,
Dave Campbell

About *Synapse*...

Synapse is a publication of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU), the youth organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Subscription is free. Two issues per annum.

Staff: Kathy Daneman, David Taylor, Jory Agate, and Anne Fleming.

Mechanicals: Proofreading, edits, and layout by Youth Office staff.

Editorial Policy: Articles for *Synapse* are chosen from among those submitted by Unitarian Universalist youth, adults working with youth, and other interested parties. Articles are chosen on the basis of content and quality, with some preference given to new authors. All written materials are subject to editing before publication, and graphics may be enhanced. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editors or the majority readership.

Submissions policy: Each submission must have the name and address attached. Multiple submissions are accepted. When submitting photographs, please include the name of the person who took the photo to provide proper credit. The following submissions limits apply:

Articles: One per issue of each of three types: news, theme, reflective.

Poetry: One poem per issue.

Graphics and Photographs: No limit. Black and white photos or line drawings preferred.

The above limits do not apply to letters to the editor. Submissions not used will be kept on file for possible use in future issues. Name may be withheld upon request. If you wish to be notified prior to publication, enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Advertising: Rates vary depending on size and type of organization. UUA affiliate and associate organizations are given preference by the editors. Also, non-camera-ready or odd-sized ads have special rates. Advertisements should not be construed as endorsements by the Youth Office, YRUU, or the UUA. The editors reserve the right to refuse any advertisement. Contact the Youth Office for specific rates for your organization.

Due date for the next issue of *Synapse* is:
April 15, 1997.

The theme of the next issue is:

Rainbow Connection: Building Rainbows Through the Music of Our Lives

(The issue will explore racial and cultural diversity through music)

Send all Submissions and Advertising to:

The Youth Office
Unitarian Universalist Association
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 742-2100
e-mail: yruu@uua.org

Editor's Note:

-All pictures from GA 1996 in this issue were taken by Nancy Pierce.

-Cover by David Taylor.

-The original artwork on the covers of the last two issues of *Synapse* were drawn by Rachel Reed.

LETTERS TO THE

EDITORS.....

How I Spent My Summer Vacation

A boy wanders near a construction site and sees a man laying bricks.

"What are you doing?" the boy asks.

"I'm laying bricks," replies the man.

Being curious, the boy continues walking around the construction site. He happens upon a second man who is also laying bricks and asks his question again.

"I'm building a wall," comes the reply.

The boy, not yet satisfied, finds a place to sit down and watches the workers. He spies a third bricklayer who is carefully and steadily doing his job. The boy walks up to the man and whispers his question for a third time. The man smiles.

"I'm building a church," he whispers back.

I heard this story while in Greene County, Alabama, rebuilding churches that had been burnt down in "suspicious" fire. From across the country and all over the world, people came to Boligee, Alabama, a town with a population no bigger than my high school, to restore destroyed places of worship and the congregation's faith in humanity. It was not an easy job.

When my friends heard what I had planned on doing for the summer, they all concluded that I was crazy. After hearing their convincing arguments, I began to doubt my sanity as well. Why was I going to the deep South for the whole month of July when I could be relaxing in air conditioned places at home? Why was I devoting a third of my summer doing hard manual labor in a place I had never been to with people I did not know? An why was I so excited about going?

It is difficult to put my answers into words, but I will try. I have always been involved in social causes, but my involvement never went beyond organizing, protesting and donating. When I heard that Washington Quaker Workcamps would be rebuilding a few of the torched black churches through the UUSC, I decided to do something more than just stand by and watch. I



Rising Star Baptist Church in Greensboro, Mississippi. The Rising Star Church is the next church that the Washington Quaker Workcamp will work on. It was burnt down in June 1996.

am proud to say that I can now hammer, paint, shovel, saw, tile, install, and use construction lingo without sounding like an idiot. I learned not just about construction work, but also about people and life. Watching your own handiwork in tangible form is the second most empowering feeling that I have ever felt. But hearing people's heartfelt gratitude for what you have done is the first.

I have adopted the people that I met through the work camp and through the congregation as an extended family. They touched my soul with a mixture of kindness and zaniness (a quality that everyone would need to be down there for as long as I was). Although I was sore, fatigued, covered with bug bites, rarely took a warm shower, and had paint stuck in my hair and clothes, I had the time of my life. So, when people ask me what I did over the summer, I answer with a smile, "I built a church."

By Elaine Lowe
Concord, MA

For more information on UUSC projects and opportunities, contact Jose Ballester at 130 Prospect St., Cambridge, MA 02139-1845.

Meet Marc Loustau, the Newest Addition to the Youth Office Gallery of Oddities

Greetings and Good Thoughts! Hi, I'm Marc Loustau, the new YRUU Programs Specialist at the Youth Office in Boston. Right now I am of sophomore standing (although once mid-terms are finished, I think staggering will probably be more accurate) at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. For most of my five years in YRUU, I was in that glorious ol' homeland, the Metro-New York District, and I'm overjoyed to be moving back to the east coast nearer to the tri-state area where you can travel through three states in the span of a half an hour. For those of you I know from General

Assemblies, Con Cons, Youth Councils, and Conferences of years past, I'm excited to be finally seeing you again. For those of you who I have met at one time or another, I'm the curly blond-haired imp of a guy you might have seen bouncing around a room or singing a song. And for those of you who I have yet to meet, I'll introduce myself a little bit and tell you some of the stuff I like to find myself in.

Stuff Marc Loustau Likes To Find Himself In: Snowy winters, the smells of bonfires in the night, lots of layers of clothing and big piles of leaves in the autumn, funky Halloween costumes, big piles of mashed potatoes after playing with my food, big piles of YRUUers being really ridiculous, really good books, having forgotten what time it is, great big sing along sessions till we're all hoarse, fits of laughter till my stomach hurts, introductions to new people, and oh I could go on but I won't because I'm sure I'll be able to find myself in the middle of all this stuff with you and I won't have to talk about it because we'll be in the midst of doing it. So feel free to give me a call at the Youth Office. I move in and start working on the first of January, and I look forward to working with you all and answering your phone calls to Boston.

Love and walnuts,
Marc R. Loustau



Marc participating in a panel discussion at GA 1996.

Table of Contents

Page 2:

Letters to the Editors
About Synapse

Page 3:

How I Spent My Summer Vacation
New YPS Introduction

Pages 4-5

Continental Events

Youth Council 1996

Youth Council Representatives

New Resolutions Passed

Continental Conference

Pages 6-7

Gender Justice

Gender: The Last Box?

Very Good Girl

Gender Boxing

Egalitarian Perspective
cutting

Page 8

General Assembly 1996 Youth
Focus

The Unsung UU Youth Award

Page 9

Femininity Training
UUSC in Burma

Page 10

Gender Justice cont'd

Page 11

In the Spirit

(Spirituality Section)

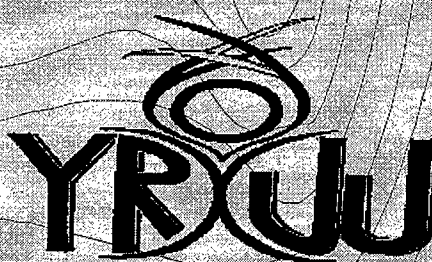
Homilies from the GA Youth Focus
Task Force Worship Service

Page 12

YPS Job Opening

New Resources from the Youth
Office

Journey Toward Wholeness
Calls for Submissions



Youth Council 1996 - 1997

New Resolutions

- Resolution to Give Two Awards Annually at General Assembly to an "Advisor of the Year" and to an "Unsung UU Youth."
- Resolution towards Maximizing Youth Presence and Participation at 1997 General Assembly.
- Resolution on Easing the Transition from Youth to Young Adulthood within Unitarian Universalism.
- Resolution on Transitional Age-Range Programming for Jr. High Level.
- Resolution on YRUU Support of "JOURNEY TOWARDS WHOLENESS."
- Resolution for the Creation of a Youth Specific Anti-Racism Resource.
- Resolution for Exploring the Possibility of Establishing a Liaison between the Youth Council and the Black Concerns Working Group.
- Resolution on Assimilating Racial Justice into Continental YRUU.
- Resolution on Changing the Bylaw Pertaining to the Composition of the Steering Committee.
- Resolution on the Creation of a Canadian Youth At-Large Position.
- Resolution for Continuing Development of Spiritual Resources.

Leadership Opportunities Available for Youth and Adults

The YRUU Youth Council is the governing body of Continental YRUU. They meet once a year to make policy decisions, pass resolutions, worship, have fun, and decide the direction for the UU youth movement for years to come. YRUU Steering Committee is now accepting applications for the following Youth Council Representative positions:

Applications should be typewritten and should include:

Vital Information: Name, address, phone number, date of birth, home church or fellowship, UUA district, and a list of the people from whom you are expecting letters of recommendation.

A Letter of Intent: Why you want to be on Youth Council, the position for which you are applying, what you feel you can offer that position, what you think you can offer the group, any experience you have to bring to the group, what YRUU issues concern you, and your dreams and goals for YRUU.

Two Letters of Recommendation: These can be from Ministers, YRUU Youth, RE Directors, YRUU Advisors, teachers, or others with whom you have worked (at least one letter from a youth and one from an adult).

Address your applications to the:

All applications are due
February 15, 1997.

**Y R U U
Steering
Committee**

c/o the Youth Office
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108

Questions? Call the Youth Office at (617) 742-2100 x351 or x352, email at yruu@uua.org, or fax at (617) 523-4123.

There are three At-Large positions for youth:

The youth at-large positions are one year commitments with an option to re-apply for a second term at the end of the year.

Continental Social Action Coordinator:

Duties include disseminating and gathering information from district Social Action Contacts and representing social action concerns of YRUU.

General Assembly Liaison/Youth Caucus Business Manager:

Duties include attending and managing the business of General Assembly 1997 Youth Caucus and facilitating communication between Youth Council and Youth Caucus.

Transitional Age-Range Representative; Representing Junior High:

Provides the viewpoint of an often under-represented age group at Youth Council.

There are seven positions for adults (age 25+) who each serve a two-year term. This year there are three adult at-large positions open. YRUU advisors, UU Ministers, and Religious Educators are particularly encouraged to apply.

Con Con 1996

200 continental youth and adults gathered Aug. 12 - 18 at Camp Arrah Wanna, 45 miles east of Portland, OR to celebrate the earth and community through worship, song, and camaraderie.

The week was peppered with special events like an all-camp murder mystery, a Treasure Hunt with staff bombers and medics, Wacky Olympics, and the traditional Coffee House, banquet, and dance.

Eight week-long workshops were offered, ranging in theme from "Storytelling" to "Homophobia" and Heterosexism."

Nightly workshops were offered. An independent women's spirituality worship was held by the Salmon River one evening. The sweat lodge worship was Friday night.

Looking at the Con Con evaluations, it seems the best thing about Con Con '96 was the cool people there. That's the one thing we can promise won't ever change. See you next year!

"Back to the Earth"



Youth Council 1996 at the Portland Rose Garden, Thursday, Aug. 8.

Photo by Rachel Reed

S Morgan "Cid" Lynn
22600 Aquasco Rd.
Aquasco, MD 20608
(301) 888-1018

T Metro New York
Sandy Schneider
271 Eccleston Pl.
Maywood, NJ 07607
(201) 843-1678

E NH/VT
Kirsan Amann
25 Bloody Brook Rd.
Amherst, NH 03021
(603) 672-2907

R Pacific Central
Malcolm Pullinger
2209 Westmoreland Ct.
Walnut Creek, CA
94596
(510) 939-6560

I C*SAC
Ellen Sale
1502 Hampton Rd.
Charleston, WV 25314
(304) 344-3701

N POA
Alison Purcell
3225 Kinsrow Apt.
#85H
Eugene, OR 97401
(541) 344-7982

G Adult At-Large
Joanne H. Victoria
29 Pearl St.
San Francisco, CA
94103
(415) 621-3071

C UUA Board
Phyllis Daniel
4329 Dina Ct.
Cypress, CA 90630
(714) 527-7001

M Ballou Channing
Jenn O'Brien
148 Micajah Pond Rd.
Plymouth, MA 02360-
5800
(508) 747-3799

M Central Mass.
Tom Innis
267 Pleasant St.
Paxton, MA 01612
(413) 546-6080
(508) 753-4950

I Central Midwest
Carly Seaberg
2128 Maple
Evanston, IL 60201
(847) 615-4741
(847) 869-4995

T Connecticut Valley
Chris Bosworth
239 Hebron Rd.
Bolton, CT 06043
(860) 649-6534

Desert
Cody Saxton
293 Parmalee Hall
Ft. Collins, CO 80521
(970) 495-5203

Florida
Katie Dow
1630 Cheyenne Trail
Maitland, FL 32751
(407) 645-0250

Joseph Priestley
Amalie Andrew
474 Old Orchard Circle
Millersville, MD 21108
(410) 987-6989

Mass. Bay
Leif Hardison
5 Barnard Ct.
Marblehead, MA 01945
(617) 631-8815

Michigan
Laura Trumbull
24565 S.
Cromwell
Franklin, MI
48025
(810) 855-4258

Mid-South
David Ramsey
6614 Ellwood Ct.
Nashville, TN 37205
(615) 356-6986

Mountain
Duncan Metcalf
13801 Omega Circle
Littleton, CO 80124
(303) 786-0132
(303) 790-1814

Northeast
Jon-Jon Lander
P.O. Box 170
Alfred, ME 04002
(207) 324-3143

Ohio-Meadville
Jarred Forman
5677 Wicliif St. NE
N. Canton, OH 44721
(330) 492-3045

Ohio Valley
Nora Talley
110 Gulfwood Ct.
Dayton, OH 45458
(513) 434-0722

Pacific Northwest
Erica Boberg
10660 SW North Dakota
Tigard, OR 97223
(503) 639-2342

Pacific Southwest
Elena White
1296 East Woodbury Rd.
Pasadena, CA 91104
(818) 798-5304

Prairie Star
Alex Moe
3077 Lydia Ct.
Roseville, MN 55113
(612) 624-6710
(612) 639-1013

Saint Lawrence
Melissa Laferla-
Steel
50 Golfwood Dr.
Hamilton, ONT
CANADA L9C 6W3
(905) 574-8987

Southwest
Robin Griggs
2510 Wheelwright Pl.
Garland, TX 75044
(214) 414-7274

Thomas Jefferson
Emily Dornblazer
6536 Cedar Croft Dr.
Charlotte, NC 28270
(704) 365-0199

Western Canada
Marki Sveen
9308 26th St. SW
Calgary, Alberta
CANADA T2V 4G9
(403) 251-1452

Adult At-Large
Debra Faulk
#9 700 Greenville Ave.
Victoria, B.C.
CANADA V9A 6L6
(604) 380-7267

Adult At-Large
Rev. Ruth Gibson
1st UU Society
900 University Bay
Dr.
Madison, WI 53705
(608) 233-9774 x16

Adult At-Large
Drake Baer
650 Rosedale Rd.
Princeton, NJ 08540
(609) 921-6012

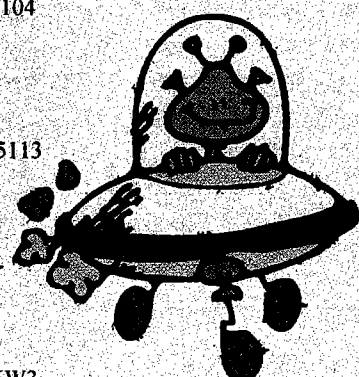
Adult At-Large
Rev. Kathryn Hawbaker
200 West Somers
Eaton, OH 45320
(513) 456-6529

Adult At-Large
Mosch Virshup
P.O. Box 540311
Houston, TX 77254-0311
(713) 522-9550

Adult At-Large
Jerry Winsett
5445 Whisper Creek Ln.
Wilimington, NC 28409-2591
(910) 452-0728

GA Business Manager
Carl Cade
Box 1315
Vassar College
124 Raymond Ave.
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
(914) 451-2602

Transitional Age-Range Rep.
Jessie Eller-Isaacs
4180 Randolph Ave.
Oakland, CA 94602
(510) 482-4179



Con Con 1997

Rainbow Connection: Building Rainbows Through the Music of Our Lives

August 4 - 10, 1997
Ware, MA

Core Staff Positions:

The Energy Coordinator facilitates meetings of the Spirit Committee, which is overall mood of the conference community, and the Energy Committee, which deals he also coordinates wake-up, energizes spirit circle each morning, and leads the rules

responsible for paying attention to the with conference rule infractions. She or discussion at orientation.

The Special Events Coordinator plans and runs all-camp activities, including events such as the Coffee House, the dance, and the Super-Secret All-Camp activity.

The Touch Group Coordinator works directly with the leaders of the conference's touch groups. She or he facilitates daily meetings of all touch group leaders to disseminate and gather information and ideas for the facilitation of touch groups.

The Worship Coordinator leads the Worship Workshop, which is responsible for planning and running nightly all-camp worship services.

The Workshop Coordinator works with the workshop leaders. He or she coordinates the week-long workshops' location and registration, coordinates and publicizes daily "one-shot" workshops led by members of the conference community, and organizes secret buddies.

Adult Positions:

The Adult Coordinator looks out for the adults at Con Con, helping to keep them healthy, happy, and well-adjusted through facilitating daily adult meetings and representing adults' concerns at staff meetings. This person should have a clear understanding of youth-led programming, and a knowledge of the role of adults as advisors.

The Chaplain is a spiritual resource for the conference community. This person does not need to be an ordained UU minister, but should have an understanding of youth's spiritual needs. He or she works with the Worship Coordinators to plan nightly workshops for the community. In the past, the Chaplain has led small gatherings such as early morning workshops, dream sharing, and reflective discussion times. The Chaplain should be a good listener available to individuals who seek counseling, and is asked to attend meetings of the Spirit Committee.

The Logistics Coordinator is preferably from the local area, i.e. Boston. This person is responsible for coordinating transportation between the airport and the site, arranging any home hospitality needed before Con Con, setting up a bank account in the local area, and handling Con Con's finances (with the help of the Youth Office). This person will be responsible for recruiting and coordinating the Gopher.

Support Staff Positions:

The Mug Book Editor is responsible for photographing each conference participant, photographing conference events, and editing and laying out the Mug Book, which is similar to a "yearbook" of the conference. The Mug Book is distributed to conferees on the final day of Con Con. This year the Mug Book Editor will lead a small week-long workshop. The participants of the workshop will be the Mug Book Editor's staff and will assist the Mug Book Editor in completing the Mug Book.

The Lifeguard is responsible for coordinating swimming times for the conference community, and being present and watchful during those times. This person must be certified in lifeguarding and CPR.

The Gopher is a position for an adult or youth, 18 or older, from the local area. The gopher makes daily runs to the nearest town for supplies, medical needs, and snacks to sell. This person should have a car, or should be able to use a rental car (one must be over age 25 to rent cars).

The Nurse (an adult position) is responsible for creating, monitoring, and enforcing health and safety standards during Con Con. She or he must be a registered nurse, and must be willing to be available whenever needed during the conference. Before Con Con, the nurse purchases and transports needed supplies for the infirmary, which he or she will staff during Con Con.

Workshop Leaders (Youth or Adults):

Each week-long workshop is composed of four two-hour meeting times, and will have approximately 20-25 participants each. YRUU Steering Committee is looking for youth and adults to lead week-long workshops that relate to the theme "Rainbow Connection: Building Rainbows Through the Music of Our Lives."

Core staff, the Nurse, and the Mug Book Editor will have their travel and registration expenses covered. Other Support Staff and all Workshop Leaders have their registration covered, with some funds available for transportation scholarships. Please state your financial needs in your application. Core staff members will attend a pre-site planning meeting in Boston and/or Ware, MA, March 7-9, for which all expenses will be paid. All staff will arrive at Con Con one night early for final planning.

To Apply:

Send a *letter of intent*, specifying the position(s) you are interested in, and describing your ideas, visions, skills, and related experience to the YRUU Steering Committee. If you have any questions, call the Youth Office at (617) 742-2100 x351 or x352.

YRUU Steering Committee

c/o The Youth Office

25 Beacon St.

Boston, MA 02108

fax (617) 523-4123; email yruu@uua.org

Applications must be postmarked or received no later than January 5, 1997.

Gender Justice

Male _____ or Female _____
(check only one)

I want to explain why I chose Gender Justice as the theme for this issue of *Synapse*. At the very least, I'd like to be able to define what I was thinking when I made my decision.

I primarily thought of women. I thought of the same things that have troubled me since high school. Not just the media portrayal of women, but how school attention, or inattention, to girls affects them permanently. I thought of Title IX and how girls' activities and sports get shafted not just financially, but in the times they are slotted. Maybe girls' basketball or volleyball would see a bigger crowd if they got to play the occasional Friday night instead of Wednesday afternoon.

I thought about all the studies I had read about teachers, even female teachers, who call on boys more, praise them more, and encourage them more than girls. Even when they know they're being observed. I thought about all my girl friends who had been told they couldn't succeed in medicine, engineering, or the armed forces by male teachers.

And then I thought of my college boy-

friend, who used his cigarette to burn holes in the article I was reading about a new feminist group on campus.

"Ball-busting Nazis," he said.

And I thought of what I should have said then. That feminism is not about castration. It's about equality. It's about reclaiming a word that has been painted black by someone afraid. It's about ensuring a future where no one has to act according to gender type. No blue for boys and certainly no more sickly pink for girls.

And then I thought more. I thought that Gender Justice should really be about liberating ourselves (all of our selves) from the confining roles defined by society (by which I mean schools, government, religion, family, and the media). Not only are these definitions narrow, but they are exclusionary. "Sex" is a biological classification, while "gender" is a societal one. There are people who are female, but do not identify with the gender "woman." Gender excludes transgender people. It typecasts others. Gender Justice comes when we are allowed to express ourselves and be understood as we want to be. *By Kathy Daneman, Jan. - Dec. 1996*

My gender expression rarely matches the biological gender I was assigned at birth. While my birth certificate will tell you that I am a female, my appearance leads most people to make the assumption that I am a male. I didn't all of a sudden decide to be gender ambiguous. As far back as I can remember people have asked me if I was a boy or a girl. And as far back as I can remember I have struggled to answer this question.

Gender is not as simple as biological genitalia (which can be altered, thanks to modern medicine). Nor is gender as simple as female or male. And for many, gender appearance changes as they go through life. My physical appearance has changed throughout my life. And yet, despite long or short hair, masculine or feminine dress, I have been asked to label myself as either male or female. I can't. I won't.

My refusal to answer this question has led me into some interesting situations. Take for example, the Myers-Briggs personality type test. When I went to fill in my answer sheet I noticed that the only mandatory question in the identification section was the one asking "male or female." I skipped the question and wrote a brief note explaining why I had done so. Shortly after I sent my answer sheet to the tester I received a call from her. She wanted to know if it was ok for her to fill in female, as my name is female. She explained that some of the scoring of the test is based off of socialization with different adjustments made for females and males. I'm not sure these adjustments take transgender people into account. While society was socializing me as a female, I was taking

Female circumcision, also referred to as female genital mutilation, is a rite performed on girls primarily in Africa and Middle Eastern countries. The degree of circumcision performed, the methods used, and the ritual involved vary based on several factors like geography, local tradition, and class. The age at which the surgery takes place ranges from infancy to puberty. There are several ways to view this ritual; in my poem I struggle with combining my feminist ideals and anthropological study. How do I react to female circumcision as a woman looking at it through a culturally relative lens?

cutting

1.

my skin and bones girl drags a razor across her wrist
she likes the way the skin pulls
she likes the way the blood rises
she likes to decorate herself like this
my skin and bones girl will make red lines and tribal designs
she thinks she is finding pain
she thinks this is a sacrifice

2.

this is the way it is done:
the girl's limbs are held back
her legs and vulva are wide apart
there is praying and shouting
the woman steadies her razor
she removes the clitoris and the labia minora
she removes the inner layers of the labia majora
the edges are joined together by rows of thorns
this is the way it is done in some parts

3.

am i a woman cut or cutting
am i a woman praying or crying

By Phoebe Hanshaw, Bronxville, NY

males as my role models. Where in our judgment system are we accounting for the inner turmoil that this dichotomy creates?

So, in answer to the question "are you female or male?" I answer this: I am neither and I am both.

By Barb Greve, Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Concerns, Faith in Action Department

GENDER: THE LAST BOX?

Right/wrong; good/bad; female/male--opposites. After all, our Western world--our American culture--is based on a binary concept. And standing outside of and over it all is god...male of course. The ultimate judge is male. He is not part of the world, but superior to it. What does this do to our thinking? Don't worry, I am limited to 500 words! But I work for UU Women's Federation which has the best track record in UU land for dealing with gender issues, as the last paragraph will show.

Let's just talk about this idea of gender--a relatively new word for me. I'm 56. When I grew up, there were two: male and female. The male wore pants and the female wore dresses. Males did things 'right' and if females imitated their way of hitting a baseball or managing a company or driving a car, they were given some honorary and very temporary membership into the club of the elite.

It took me some time to look at the way things were, really, and determine that many males could not hit the ball as hard as I could and that putting "female" or "male" down on application forms did not mean anything quite as clear as society would like for us to believe. Unfortunately it took me longer to believe that the way women did things could be equally as 'good' as the way men did them. Patriarchy dies hard.

The process has taken me into some wonderfully liberating places. Some children haven't had to start where I did. Take my friend Linda Carol. She told her children something like this: Look, our sexual identity is not 100 percent male or 100 percent female. Sexual attraction is also something that is fluid. Think of both as a scale with M on one end and F on the other if you wish, but just know that everyone is all over the scale in a lifetime. At times you are attracted to people of the same sex; at times those of the opposite sex. Some people

always are. Some are attracted to one or the other, exclusively, most or all of their lives. Some people act in some narrow definition of 'female' for a lifetime; some act in some narrow definition of 'male' for a lifetime. Some do not. The important thing is to behave as you feel and to accept others as they do the same. If it doesn't feel right, don't fake it.

What a wonderful concept. Allow yourself to feel and then act on those feelings. Get out of the box. Be yourself. Accept yourself. Is that what youth is doing? I hope so. Imagine a world in which we used our energy to do something besides trying to put our wonderfully fluid and complex selves into little boxes so that society can avoid dealing with the person and just deal with the stereotype. And imagine what a dangerous concept this is to a frightened society unaccustomed to thinking.

The organization for which I work, the UU Women's Federation, has always had a strong organizational commitment to anti-oppression work. Focusing first on gender oppression, it worked on pay equity, the Women and Religion Resolution, sexism audits, reproductive freedom, ERA, older women's issues, and leadership training for women. Subsequently, as its leaders recognized the linkage of oppressions, the organization's commitment expanded to include sexual orientation, race, and age. UUWF's 1983 Biennial meeting passed a motion to create outreach to lesbian women, and the organization subsequently provided program and newsletter space to the issues of lesbian women. Before Welcoming Congregations and Interweave, it also developed a program planner that is still one of the best around. And we encourage *Synapse* readers to contact us at uuwf@uua.org or call (617) 742-2100 x 691.

By Kate Griffin, Director of Membership and Communications, UUWF

Sexism can affect anyone: An egalitarian perspective to gender justice

"Hello, Rape Crisis Center, how can I help you?"

"I was raped a couple of nights ago and..."

"Is this some kind of sick joke?"

"No, I'm telling the truth. I was raped."

"Yes, of course you were. Get off the phone, creep."

"But I'm..."

Click.

Could this ever really happen? A rape crisis center refusing to help a person in need of guidance? The answer, unfortunately, is yes and it has. Why? Because the caller was a man. This did happen to a friend of mine and it made the recovery process all the more difficult for him. Whether my friend was raped by a man or a woman doesn't matter. The inability for the person at the rape crisis center to believe him does. What does this say about our society? I have thought about this a lot and my conclusion basically comes down to our society is not equal. "Wow, she's quick," you must be thinking. I know this concept is decades old, but the focus on social equality has been on women's fight for equality. I'm not saying that women haven't gotten the short end of the stick for generations, but while fighting for social equality, we have, in one respect, succeeded in creating a new type of discrimination.

You are probably thinking right about now that I'm some egotistical guy who thinks a woman's main purpose in life is to sort the lights from the darks and the boxers from the briefs, but this is not the case. I'm a 15-year-old female, who has recently been shown the other side of the discrimination coin. I once considered myself a feminist, but now I consider myself an "equalist."

What is the difference? I fight for men's rights as well as women's. "What? Men's rights? They've never not had them." Is this what you are thinking? If you are, you are totally correct. Caucasian men have had legal rights since Eden. But, in a very ironic way, the same thing that women have been fighting against has also given them many advantages: society and its messages.

Not the messages that tell us to be super models, be young, have fun, drink Pepsi, and don't forget to do the laundry. I'm thinking of the messages that say women should be in touch with their emotions, that they should know themselves, and not be afraid to ask for directions. These aren't posted on billboards, but they are still very apparent in society. From my personal experience, talking about my feelings and expressing them has never been looked down upon. For example, let's say that little Judy gets hit in the face by a snowball and cried. It's all right. She doesn't have to worry about being called a sissy. It hurts, and that is all the justification needed, at least for a girl.

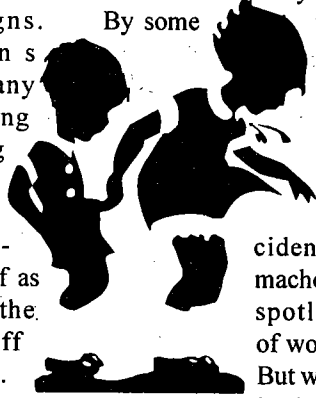
At the same time, Billy is smacked in the face by an ice ball, and stands there, stifling his tears, for a boy crying means that you are weak and men can't be weak. This is just the blossoming bud for Billy to grow into a "young, strapping, real man."

As I mentioned earlier, women, by being in the spotlight of the many issues of social equality, have created a new discrimination of which many people might not even be aware. Some of the men I have talked to have expressed some hostility towards feminist campaigns.

By some women's campaigns, many men feel that if up any issues of discriminated such as issues the Rape Crisis Center incident, they will be macho and sexist just spotlight might be of women's issues for But what many people don't realize is that many of the issues facing men and women are almost identical. Men want to roam the city streets freely just as much as women do. And men don't want to be raped any more than women do. True, the number of rapes against men are significantly fewer than women, but take into consideration men are much less likely to report being raped for the reason that people are even less inclined to believe them. It is a cycle that will never end, until every man and woman who is oppressed or repressed in some way will come out and work together. Everyone should feel and have the right, be it legal or just societal, to express opinions and emotions openly and still be respected, even if that means Mr. Big Man Macho himself cries over Mufasa's death.

Society has affected both men and women negatively and positively, and everyone needs to remember that. Just because some cases of oppression are less apparent than others, it doesn't mean that they don't exist and in higher numbers than one would think. Not every man has or will be subjected to discrimination or oppression, just as not every woman has or will. Men and women both have advantages and disadvantages by being a man or a woman. This shouldn't be the case, but it is, and there are things we can do to change this. Everyone can start by knowing, understanding, and respecting themselves as best as they possibly can. Though I risk sounding even more like a cheesy advice column, I will end with these words of wisdom: every human, every belief, every action, and every emotion comes in a different color, shade, shape, size, and flavor. You yourself can decide on which is your favorite, but don't forget the wide variety of toppings.

By Darcy Baxter, Ithaca, NY



Very Good Girl

Molly was wearing jeans pulled around her ass so tight that the zipper growled into view. She had on red lipstick and black heeled boots. She was walking up the stairs towards me, "Hi Sweetie, how are you?"

"Molly, I don't think I make a very good girl."

This was not an abrupt decision made because Molly looked like something out of *Mademoiselle* and I was decked out in pajama bottoms. This was a feeling that had been developing for months. I had moved to New York to attend Fordham University at the end of August and had made several close male friends, but by December I was beginning to question why I failed to spend time with women.

All around me I saw, I heard about girl-shopping for T-shirts, fake nails, Victoria's Secret catalogues, fat-free, Calvin "kiddie porn" Klein, "she was in the bathroom of the bar with him," "need help carrying that?," "that's a great (fill in the blank), you look so pretty." What I began to realize is that the role of "girl" within my new community was one that I didn't feel anywhere near comfortable with. Furthermore, I was not secure enough with myself to live my perception of "girl" around people with a contrasting interpretation.

When I became conscious that the reason I lacked female friends was because of my aversion to the way that most of the females around me expressed themselves as women, I could begin to deal with it.

Now let's jump to feminists. Kathy called me up, asking me to write a feminist essay so that women's issues might be addressed within the focus of gender justice. No one sent anything in on the one in four college women who are raped. No articles about abortion or sexual harassment—nothing, *nada*. Does this mean that no one cares about these issues? Or perhaps they were finally resolved within our culture? Ha.

(continued on pg. 10)

Gender Boxing

What is gender justice for men? It's not an easy question to answer. In fact, I've spent most of my life being confused about it. I certainly knew when I was in high school that, for me, being a man didn't mean I had to play football, lift weights, go hunting, or sit around with other guys, talk about girls, and drink beer. All this seemed kind of offensive to me, really. But I also didn't think being a man was stripping down naked, chanting, beating drums and realizing the ancient warrior in me, either. I was stuck in between these two, equally unexciting, visions of manhood and there seemed to be no other ways to think about what gender and, more importantly, gender justice meant for me.

I went along like this for a while, never really coming up with anything convincing, until last year. One of the highlights of my first week at college was a workshop led by a group of upperclassmen about gender. The people who led the workshop were a mixed group of really funky people who had obviously been doing much thinking about this stuff in their own lives. They talked about the way

sex and gender work by illustrating these things called gender boxes. As I sat there and heard what they had to say, I finally figured out a coherent way of thinking and talking about what sex, gender, and gender justice means for men.

I think before understanding how sex, gender, and gender justice apply to anyone's life, we have to define the words "gender" and "sex."

If you wanted to describe both words all in one phrase, I think it would go something like this: we are all born with a sex; we acquire a gender. This is a true statement because it differentiates gender from sex. Our sex is the body we are born into. Every human being is biologically predetermined to be female or male by genes. And although our sex may affect many things about our lives, we really have no control over it in this sense.

Where does that leave gender? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, gender is, "in modern usage, a name for the sex of a human being, often intended to emphasize the social and cultural, as opposed to the biological, distinction between the sexes." So gender means the vague, unwritten societal and cultural rules of conduct that are accorded with the traditional guidelines of acting feminine or acting masculine. The word gender doesn't talk about what we are

biologically, but who we are as people, the aspects of ourselves that are entirely under our own power.

How does gender work in our daily lives? Well, I think probably the best way to illustrate this is to draw a picture. So grab a piece of paper and draw a box. This is what is called a "gender box." Then think of all the cultural and societal gender associated rules that society has for your gender. For men, some of these are acting aggressive, dominating, rigid, opinionated, in control, strong-willed, logical, distant, unemotional, and so on. Anything that comes to mind when you think of traditional societal roles can be put inside the box. After this, on the outside write all the things you think of when you picture how society teaches men NOT to act. These are things that are outside the male gender box. A few that come to mind on this side are emotionally unstable, weak, flexible, nurturing, and affectionate. When you finish, step back a moment and look at the attributes you put outside the gender box. Frequently, the attributes that society uses to criticize people who don't fit into their gender box are also associated with the traditional conception of the opposite sex. Hence, society regards men that aren't "manly" as "womanly" and women who don't act like "real women" are "butch" or "manly."

(continued on pg. 10)





General Assembly 1996 Youth Focus



The Youth Focus at General Assembly featured over 30 workshops, worships, and special events for the unprecedented 348 youth participants and the 3,145 GA attendees. 100 scholarships were given to youth who might not otherwise have been able to attend. And, youth were seen at GA as never before. The Youth Focus Task Force made a 5-10 minute presentation at each plenary session. Youth were featured reading their own homilies, extinguishing the chalice with their own credo statements, and leading workshops about one of the five components of balanced youth group programming.

On staff this year was the first official Youth Worship Coordinator, Chanti Smith, who led the youth in amazing nightly worships. Additionally, Chanti worked with a volunteer group of youth to plan the Youth Caucus worship for all GA participants Sunday night.

The Youth Focus Task Force planned two other worships. The first night worship, "Singing the Generations," was an intergenerational event featuring a youth homily by Laura Moriarty. The second Task Force worship was held in a non-competitive time slot Saturday afternoon. "The

Future is Now: GA 1996 Worship Service," was heard by 1,800 UUs, all summarily impressed by three more youth homilies by Karina Kramer-Schevers, Layla Jamila Rivera, and Rob Cavanaugh.

The Youth Focus Task Force also



The Task Force worked hard to provide programming that went beyond worship and workshops. The Task Force created a number of social action projects that specialized in giving something back to our host city, Indianapolis. Most notably was the all day project with the Gleaners food bank. Youth and adults rode buses to Gleaners where they helped package and process food for distribution to shelters and other food banks in Indiana. An estimated 150 conferees participated in this event. A social action booth in the display area also featured different hands-on projects each day. GA attendees had the opportunity to do a variety of things ranging from making awareness ribbons to packing lunches for school children.

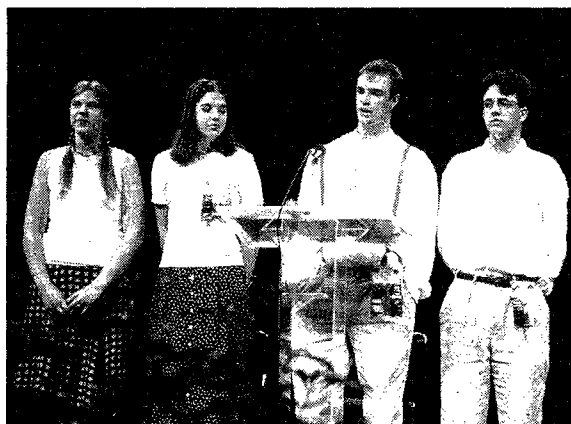
The Youth Focus at General Assembly 1996 was a magnanimous event. It appears that this year's youth presence may have changed the face of General Assembly for years to come. Already, the effects of the Youth Focus are being seen. Youth empowerment is becoming a fact. Youth are attending continental events in increasing numbers. Youth are applying for continental committee positions traditionally held by "adults." Things will only get better.



Paul Chaikin and Rachel Cole voting during a plenary session.

General Assembly 1996 Youth Caucus

sponsored over 25 workshops on Youth Programming. The workshops were generally co-led by youth and adults, while some workshops were run strictly by youth. With titles of workshops like "Youth are from Mars, Adults are from Uranus," "From Cheese Balls to Chocolate Souffle: Youth on the Congregational Buffet," and "Condom Arts and Crafts," the youth programming was a dynamic mix of fun, humor, and education. The Youth Focus workshops covered a diverse range of topics like racism, homophobia, leadership development, social action, spirituality, youth adult relations, and violence. The programs were designed to be interesting not just to youth, but also to adults.



Laura Trumball, Sara Schnaar, Geoff Woodman, and Devon Glass presenting their advisor, Tom Cranston, with the Advisor of the Year award during a plenary session.

UU Youth Recognized at General Assembly for Confronting Racism

Last October, a news story was displayed in the computer lab of Belmont High School in Belmont, MA. The story came down from the "Philadelphia Fish and Wildlife Department," propagating the hunting of black people. Apparently, it was a joke.

Noah Bullock, then a junior, discovered the joke.

"The fact that someone would advocate killing black people sent shock waves down my spine," Bullock said.

For bringing this racist act to light, Bullock was nominated and won the Unsung UU Youth Award at General Assembly 1996 in Indianapolis, IN.

After his discovery, Bullock spoke with the computer lab monitor to compile a list of possible suspects. Later, he approached a fellow student who he thought might have written the racist joke and suggested to the student that he also found the joke amusing. The student admitted to Bullock that he had authored the joke.

Armed with this information, Bullock went to talk to the principal.

"Rather than ignoring or dismissing the situ-

ation, he proceeded to report it to school authorities," wrote Rev. Dr. Victor Carpenter, Bullock's minister, "Such action requires courage. Noah was prepared to risk the possibility of social ostracism that is so often the lot of a whistle blower."

The incident went on to a special Belmont School Committee meeting. Representatives of the school and town were present to hear Bullock speak against racist literature.

"I think the root of their problem is insensitivity," Bullock said, "We certainly need to denounce racism, but I don't think we need to use the backs of these kids as a soapbox."

A candlelight vigil was organized by another UU, Caitlin McGaw. Over 1,000 people attended to show they would not tolerate this kind of intolerance and hatred in their school or community.

For upholding the First Principle of the UUA, Bullock was commended by Rev. Carpenter, by the Reverends Alfa Radford and Cathy Bowers, and by Rev. Bill Sinkford, Director of the Department for Congregational, District, and Extension Services at the UUA.

He received notice of his commendation the day before the presentation of the award at the Awards Breakfast at GA.

"This whole experience reaffirms that people care about these issues and will band together to fight racism and hatred," Bullock said.



Noah Bullock receiving the "Unsung UU Youth" Award at GA

HOW DOES FEMININITY TRAINING AFFECT TEENAGE GIRLS IN TODAY'S SOCIETY?

"I'm a perfectly good carrot that everyone is trying to turn into a rose. As a carrot, I have good color and a nice leafy top. When I'm carved into a rose, I turn brown and wither."

The concerns expressed by this teenage girl echo the emotions of adolescent girls throughout the United States. She describes her feelings concerning society's attempt to force her into a role of femininity. This phenomenon occurs in every teenage girl as cultural pressures to conform into feminine roles exist throughout our society. Shaping girls into society's mold creates an inner struggle: the girls can acquiesce to cultural pressures and gain acceptance, or they can maintain their true selves, risking abandonment. The "feminization" of girls has taken place for generations; the added stresses of the 1990s, however, heighten the effects of this occurrence. Cultural stresses influence girls to lose sight of their needs and desires and conform to roles that others define. In addition, eating disorders and casual sex in teenage girls has increased, but girls continue to lack the sufficient attention and care needed to aid them in their struggles. Possessing no other options, adolescent girls must weather the storm alone.

In adolescence, teenage girls encounter confusion and identity struggles in reference to their femininity, and they have struggled for generations. To the mothers of today's adolescents, those women who grew up and matured during the 1950s to 1960s, femininity training existed as a major influential force. The culture of that time communicated to girls such ideas as "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all," and "It's not smart to be smart." Furthermore, society did not value girls' achievements when interfering with the girls' social attractiveness; if a girl acquired "too much" education, society judged her as unfeminine.

In the 1990s, girls encounter all these pressures in addition to more complex influences. They face more divorced families, more chemical addictions, more sexual violence, more degrading pornography, and more brutal sexual harassment. According to United States Attorney General Janet Reno, juveniles 12 to 18 years of age encounter violent crime as the most common victims. Youth participate in crime also, for more guns appear in schools, more gangs exist, and teenage drug use and alcoholism have increased significantly. Adults do not recognize the difference in their generations; as a result, they cannot fully grasp the seriousness of the problems adolescent girls face. Femininity training entails adopting the characteristics of "femininity" by cultural and media-induced force-feeding. Dependence, weakness, passivity, and irrationality compose the stereotypical characteristics of femininity. Olive Shreiner captured the essence of femininity training when she wrote in *The Story of an*

African Farm, "The world tells us what we are to be and shapes us by the ends it sets for us. To men, it says, work. To us, it says, seem. The less a woman has in her head the lighter she is for carrying."

A set of unspoken rules emerge in the lives of girls; they must strictly follow these rules which include the following: personify femininity, appeal to others physically, please others' needs and wants before thinking of self, make relationships successful, perform tasks sufficiently without complaint, and behave and speak pleasantly rather than honestly. Further enforcing these rules, our society punishes girls who possess intelligence, strength, or character, while rewarding those girls who encompass popularity, attractiveness, and sex appeal. Negative portrayals of women in the media, in motion pictures, song lyrics, jokes, and criticisms add other influences to develop feminine characteristics and abandon personal goals

"Girls, once possessing vibrancy and confidence, exit adolescence as shy, doubting women. The talents of phenomenal women perish undiscovered; voices, bearing brilliance, are silent."

for the goals and wants of others. Because of the emphasis placed upon developing established personality traits, femininity training emerges as synonymous with "false self-training."

When girls choose, or society forces them rather, to follow these rules, society does not clarify their wants from women. Within these rules materialize mixed messages, hurling the girls into confusion. Our culture and media express several inconsistent expectations like be attractive, while inner beauty matters most; exhibit sexiness, but nice girls do not participate in intimate relationships; preserve honesty, but protect others' feelings; display a mannerly disposition, but sustain sincerity; be feminine while maintaining maturity; and gain knowledge, but not so much that others are threatened. Ultimately, adolescent girls face the choice of upholding authenticity and honesty, or receiving acceptance and love from others. If today's teenage girl chose to maintain their "whole selves," they risk abandonment and the wrath of peers. With the choice of love and acceptance, girls lose sight of their true personalities. Because these girls rely solely on others for validation, they cease to behave in unacceptable manners and only express welcome thoughts. With the loss of the true and real person, the false, acceptable person expands, making the girl content momentarily. Despair may ensue, however, because the validation comes from external influences, leaving girls no control over their individual self-worth. With this path chosen, these girls, as Simone De

Beauvoir said, "stop being and start seeming."

Repercussions of this intense struggle vary in every adolescent girl in several different sectors of her life. Drastic personality changes, dramatic losses of self-esteem, extreme eating habits, and/or indiscriminate romantic intimacy result from this process. Girls, once possessing vibrancy and confidence, exit adolescence as shy, doubting women. The talents of phenomenal women perish undiscovered; voices, bearing brilliance, are silent. Furthermore, studies indicate in early adolescence girls' IQ scores plummet, and math and science scores descend. Losing the optimism and resiliency they once possessed, the girls emerge from adolescence as self-critical and depressed. Denis Diderot noticed this phenomenon, and boldly stated to a young girl, "You will die at 15."

In a universal practice, harassment of girls by other girls expresses the unhappiness each one endures in her struggle to gain acceptance. Mary Pipher, author of *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Lost Selves of Adolescent Girls*, states the reason for harassment as, "many girls become good haters of those who do not conform sufficiently to our cultures' ideas about femininity." Socially, girls cannot directly express anger; physically fighting their enemies happens only with the "bad" girls. To display anger, girls rely on cattiness, teasing, and harassing in different manners. Other girls quickly label intelligent, assertive girls as a "bitch," while unattractive girls encounter teasing and scorn. Victims of harassment range from the most intelligent and beautiful girls to the most unattractive girls in school.

Ultimately, through femininity training, adolescent girls lose their sense of self-worth. Through the cultural pressures to become a being apart from themselves, girls cannot feel whole as their true selves. The culture's attempt to recreate girls, vulnerable from other pressures in adolescence, expresses a total lack of respect for adolescent girls, and for the women they will become. No one should ever have to choose between acceptance of others and respecting themselves, yet our culture continues to force girls to do so. The results of cultural pressures exist in dramatic numbers, yet they continue to lack attention. Girls lose their sense of self, their innocence, and sometimes their lives; possessing a society of "feminized" women costs too much. Our culture communicates to girls that the civilization will not love them unless they acquire certain traits; feeling loved with such an ultimatum cannot realistically occur. Madame de Staël expressed the unfortunate conclusion adolescent girls in the 1990s reach when she wrote, "We cease loving ourselves when no one loves us."

By Anna Sale
Charleston, WV

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's "Justice for Burma Campaign"

As part of UUSC's "Justice for Burma" campaign to promote respect for human rights and the peaceful transition to democracy in Burma, Thet Thet Lwin and Ohmar Khin, two Burmese human rights activists, are visiting ten cities across the United States, speaking to Unitarian Universalist congregations, human rights groups, and to student groups interested in Burma. UUSC hopes to raise awareness on the human rights violations faced by the Burmese people under a brutal military regime: arbitrary arrest with prison terms of seven to fourteen for political activity, forced labor on infrastructure projects, women and children being used as human minesweepers, and trafficked into prostitution when they try to flee across the borders into Thailand.

Thet Thet Lwin escaped from Burma on her release from arrest for mobilizing people to press for democracy, and now lives and works on the

Thai-Burma border with women who have fled Burma. Ohmar Khin was one of the first political refugees to enter the United States after the 1988 crackdown on pro-democracy activists by the military. They bear eloquent witness to the critical issues facing Burma today, and in particular to the egregious violations of human rights that the people of Burma suffer.

The UUSC-sponsored tour started in New York on Oct. 9, and the two women will visit Providence, RI, Portsmouth, NH, churches in the Boston and Cambridge area, Seattle and Bellingham, WA, San Francisco and Los Angeles, CA, and Washington, D.C. On Oct. 28, Thet Thet will go on to four countries in Europe—that part of the tour being coordinated by the International Fellow-

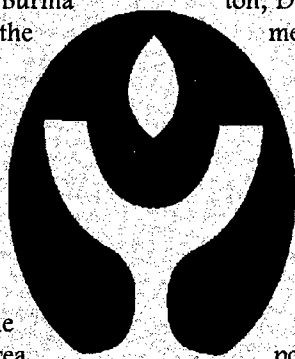
ship of Reconciliation in collaboration with UUSC. In addition to UU churches, they have spoken at the Human Rights Programs of Columbia and Harvard Universities, will brief congressional aides and policy-makers in Washington, D.C., and mobilize the Burmese community in the U.S.

UUSC works with Burmese groups exiled in Thailand and India on human rights issues and to empower Burmese women who have fled the terror and oppression within Burma. UUSC also closely monitors foreign policy at the federal level in Washington, D.C., and works to shape policies that respect human rights and help our partners in their struggle for democracy and freedom.

Through sponsoring this speaking tour, UUSC hopes to engage

UUs in direct action to promote justice and human rights and to support the Burmese struggle. Grassroots activism has already led to selective purchasing laws, modeled on similar legislation during the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, being introduced in several cities across the U.S. In July of this year, Massachusetts becomes the first state to pass such a law, banning the state from doing business with corporations in collaboration with the illegal military junta in Burma. Concerned individuals are also encouraged to write their congresspersons and senators, urging them to support strong U.S. action to pressure the Burmese military junta to hand over power to the pro-democracy forces led by Aung San Suu Kyi, who was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize for her nonviolent efforts to bring peace and justice to Burma.

By Shalini Nataraj, UUSC's Program Associate for Asia

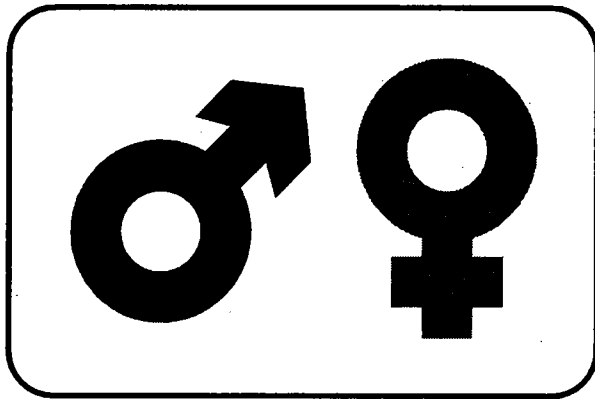


Gender Story

I like stories. I like them for their interesting plots and their flow. But once in a while I hear one that dislodges my thinking and conceptual patterns. This is one such story:

My friend Jane received word that her good friends' new baby had just arrived. Mother and father and child were doing well. Jane told her friend Kathy the exciting news, and Kathy said: "What did they have?"

"A baby."
"I mean was it a boy or a girl?"
"I don't know."
"How come?"
"They didn't say."
"Didn't you ask?"



"No."
"Why not?"
"It doesn't matter to me. Boy, girl, a baby's a baby."

Now I think one of the questions here is how many of us are like Kathy—we want to know whether a person is male or female. And then what? Do we begin a naming process by which we put into existence assumptions which place that child into certain behavior

patterns? If we didn't know, then what? Will we ever get the chance to find out?

By Shirley Kitchen, UUWF Board member, Selkirk, Manitoba, Canada.

Haiku for Her

i see her standing
naked in my mirrored mind
she is beautiful

is it love i'm in?
or could it be her in me
feeling softly, sweet

i can taste tangled
her round lips and my warm
tongue
she can taste wet salt

she knows my body
i can trace her with closed eyes
i know this is real

*By an anonymous female,
Central Midwest District*

Very Good Girl

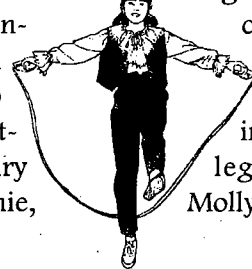
(cont'd from pg. 7)

I see the same problem I had with the conflicting interpretations of the role of "girl" come up in feminism. It's impossible to find an accurate definition of feminism because each definition is unique to the individual. Yet the media and other groups define feminism and fight over what feminists believe. Gloria Steinem and Rush Limbaugh come head-to-head. My impression of the conversations that I've had with young women in my classes is many of them have the stereo-



typical feminist view on issues that affect them: they don't want to be called a feminist because they think "feminist" means "man-hater." However, my father taught me to respect myself as a woman and still my best friend is a guy. Man hater?

Perhaps there is a need to include as many women and men as possible when interpreting feminism and to allow people to identify themselves in a role that is not constricting, but liberating. And now I see, I hear "girl"—hairsty legs in skirts, my mother, Phoebe holding Munchie, Molly's lips glaring red, my pajama bottoms, my laugh.

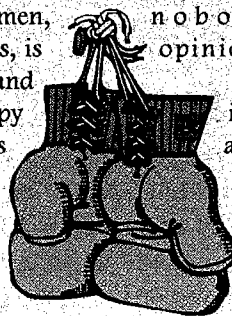


By Karina Kramer-Schevers, NYC, NY



Gender Boxing

(cont'd from pg. 7) Take a look at the things that are on the inside of the gender box you drew. They probably present a portrait of a person that couldn't possibly exist. In terms of men, who hides their emotions, is nobody opinionated, distant, aggressive, and rigid can be a truly happy individual. These behaviors are contrary to happiness. If truly wanted to be happy, we wouldn't behave that way. In fact, society forces these roles on us. Many people react to this realization by becoming a gender warrior, intentionally breaking the gender roles set out for us and working to rid the world of these gender boxes that limit our freedom. Gender warriors are women in the workplace, men raising children at home, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and all kinds of regular people who every day challenge society to justify the existence of gender boxes by being proud to live outside them.



For a majority of people in this world, gender boxes don't seem so abhorrent that they are forced to react violently to them. It is true that all those traditionally male attributes aren't necessarily completely bad. Acting strong-willed or logical can be helpful and good in many situations. Gender boxes affect people negatively when they are wielded against people to make them fit a socially-acceptable persona. It is also true that no one can totally fit into their gender box. Gender boxes are rigid and uncompromising. People are flexible and constantly changing. The two descriptions do not fit together. So even if you don't feel the need to be a gender warrior fighting for gender justice, I think that the most important thing to realize here is that no matter who you are and no matter how hard you try fitting completely into your gender box, there will always be a part of you that sticks out.

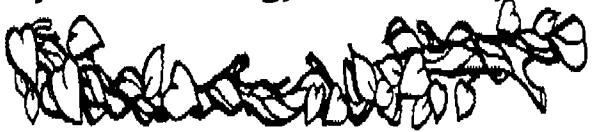
No matter how small it is, ignoring the part or hiding it away will not make you any happier. It may make an easier life for you, but it will not make you any happier. Gender boxes are not reality and treating yourself as anything less than beautiful because you don't fit into them deprives you of the happiness that you have a right to as a human being.

This is where I think YRUU provides miracles for so many of us. YRUU not only provides a place where we can actively rebel against gender boxes, but it is also a place where we can be inside our gender boxes without having to be under their control. YRUU definitely provided me with a community where I didn't have to fit my own gender box, where I could dress in drag for a coffee house skit. But it also provided me with a community where if I wanted to play basketball in the church driveway I could realize that I was doing something traditionally male, and not care. I am not claiming YRUU is a gender-less community, though. There is no place on earth where it is possible to be truly gender-less. But I think YRUUers appreciate gender for what it truly is, not the rules of how to act, but the possibilities of how to act and I think this is what gender justice for both men and women comes down to in the end.

I think I've probably said enough now. I tried not to come across as too militant or too intellectual about this whole thing, but I do feel this is a truly important thing to think about. I want to hear everyone's thoughts about gender justice because in every way it is too important to just ignore and let pass. Oh, and one last thing, if you still have them, take the gender boxes you drew, find the nearest combustible substance, say a match or a candle or a roaring fire, and make an offering to the gods of ambiguity by burning your gender box.

By Marc Loustau, Portland, OR

By Jennie Seeg, Marshfield, MA



In the Spirit

The following homilies by Karina Kravers-Schevers and Layla Rivera were presented at the General Assembly 1996 Youth Focus Task Force Worship Service: "The Future is Now." Layla and Karina's homilies were two of four homilies that were selected from a large pool of submissions to be read at General Assembly.

When I was nine years old, my parents took me to a toaster-shaped concrete building that had teal slit windows, like jewel tone eels, on the larger walls and floor-to-ceiling glass as the other two. Hanging down like the hem of a great mother's skirt were earth-colored banners, and in back of the podium hung an art piece of stretched wool that looked like pale distant mountains. The building was not ugly, it was distinctly unusual. "This is a church?" I asked my mom.

About a year later, I remember having a pep talk with God. I don't remember the problem, but I hurried to the secret hang-out next to my house, behind the big climbing pine, and pressed my dirtied child palms on the brick wall and had a fairly rational one-on-one with what I thought was God; somebody who could see the whole thing and was, of course, on my side.

Very soon after that I gave up the idea of God. I think I had wanted the feeling of comfort and understanding that others seem to possess when they said they believe in God, but already I was questioning the system, seeing blind followers come up short of satisfying answers, and begging to swim upstream. I was eccentric and creative, and whether it was painful and lonely at times or not, I was an individual. In fifth grade when I expressed my views on God, I was called a Satan worshiper on the school steps. I turned to the little punk that called me that and said, "NO, I'm a Unitarian."

Yet it was because my parents made me that I attended Sunday School. Church wasn't cool. The cool kids didn't like Sunday School. Why did I have to go to school on the weekends? But secretly, hidden deep in my consciousness, like pennies lost in the sofa cushion cracks, I liked Sunday School, or at least began to, because when my church mentor asked me if AYS was any better, I almost slipped and told him I kind of liked it. My feeling about church became a mild love-hate relationship. I enjoyed most of the stuff we were doing, but it didn't seem like I should like it. I loved the Boston Bound trip, but I didn't want to tell people at school who I had gone with. At least in my head, I was a hip kid, I wasn't a Kumba-ya-singin', prim and proper church girl. And though I knew that I was a Unitarian Universalist, I didn't know what that meant.

My Sunday School class was the first Coming of Age group at the Unitarian Church of Evanston. I admit, we had little idea of what an honor this is; being educated and asked to define our UU beliefs through our actions, then being welcomed into the congregation as voting members. There was a packet listing requirements, offering choices on how to complete the needed work. One of the choices was Spin YRUU conference at the North Shore Church in Deerfield.

What I distinctly remember about the conference is the sting of vinegar from the cuts on my hands when I set the color of my tie-dyed shirt, being little and girlishly skinny, playing wink and almost losing my elastic waist pants, laying down on the chapel floor to create a human peace sign. It was an experience full of energy and pulse, drastic highs and lows, honesty and intensity, hugging with my entire body, smiling with my whole face. I was immediately addicted to YRUU.

I spent my high school years growing up and coming out of myself and

into the world with the support and guidance of YRUU. A conference was a brilliant shining weekend like an eclipse, anxiously anticipated, full of meaning, too bright to stare directly at the significance of what was happening at the time, and recalled and replayed long after. Every conference burned an after image of compassion and friendship, love and community into the backs of my eyes until I wanted to be someone who maintained and assisted the rituals. I worked to become a leader in my youth group and I ran for YAC. I was the District Newsletter Editor for two years and the YAC Vice President for a year. I also served as the Youth Representative of the Religious Education Board for my church for four years. It was a blessed endless circle; when I established myself as a leader, I gave back to the community. When I worked to better YRUU, I felt better about myself.

When my time in the Central Midwest District ended, I wasn't finished with YRUU. I traveled to my second Con Con and located the nearest church to the college I now attend. When I showed up at the Fourth Universalist Society in Manhattan, I was like a wet paper towel about to shred and disintegrate. Having lived in New York City for only two weeks, I was already lonely and impatient for good friendships to form. After the first service, I found someone who would begin a college age group with me. I really needed my UU fix.

But what does it all mean? Have I learned what a Unitarian Universalist is? What do I get out of this now that I rarely get to conferences? Somewhere along the way I figured out that I feel so wonderfully comfortable being with Unitarian Universalists because we have the same morals, and though our spirituality may differ, we can respect and learn from each other. I discovered that the God I spoke to as a child was me, that I was calling my darkness within to help me help myself, that I believe the Great Spirit, the Directions, the Goddess is within every person, but also that someone who does believe in God still has my respect, prayers, and blessings. Unitarian Universalism is accepting people as they are, giving basic respect to all beings, and being able to consider others' beliefs to broaden perspective. It is strengthening the individual in order that many empowered individuals can form a loving and compassionate community.

What I received from Sunday School and YRUU was courage to break my pin feathers in order that they could strengthen, so I could fly higher, viewing through the eyes of an eagle, striving to act in wisdom and beauty, learning to see what is essential and what will give me worry for nothing, setting my priorities morally, realizing that people are the most important thing and that we are all related, learning to be able to soar into myself in clear introspection, to be able to heal myself, to love myself, and to carry in my cradling claws, like the newly-birthing sun being set in the heavens, my dark glinting splinter of spirituality.

Blessed be.

By Karina Kramer-Schevers
NYC, NY



Karina Kramer-Schevers
at GA '96

The Beautiful Dark Flowing River

Good morning. For those of you who do not know me, my name is Layla Jamila Rivera. An Arabic name for a Puerto Rican born in Okinawa, Japan. Also a young woman who is determined to go to college and enter the field of science. This new adventure of leaving home and entering the world is quite a gamble, especially when I am planning to go to the east coast for school. I am not alone in this process. My mother is also returning to school. I am so proud of her. My mother is a perfect example of the women of my family, strong. At 40 she is continuing along a new path. I see the excitement in her eyes because of all that she is learning.

Who would have ever thought that four years ago we were not thinking about the far off future, but hoping that my mother's health would hold at least until I graduated from school. Recently we were given an improved prognosis on her rare leukemia; for the time being everything is under control. I love my mother and owe her so much, it is nice to have her back. She has taught me to reach for the stars for I'm bound to come down with a few in hand.

I feel that it is because of experience with hospitals and disease that I found my passion for science. Maybe I will find the cure to save many from suffering. I plan to major in neuroscience, an amazing science of



Layla Rivera delivering her
homily at GA '96

nerves, electricity, movement and the center of our being. Where we feel emotions, where thoughts evolve, and where we store memories. Quite a paradox, our brains wanting to know about themselves. Science is curiosity never fully fulfilled. This is my plan, at least for now!

The process of applying to schools has been hard and mentally draining. All too many times I have heard people questioning my choices, be it of

fields of study or colleges. It is not a time when I need to be questioned about my decisions, but supported in all my endeavors. I do not need doubter but firmer at this time in my life. A helping hand to remind me that I can reach my goal, I can get into a good college, that I can follow my dream and enter the demanding field of science. I will soon forget those who doubted and remember those who believed in me.

I entered this church over a year ago and during that time have traveled a road of self-discovery. I found a warm and caring community not only within Young Religious Unitarian Universalist youth programs, but within the church as a whole. I now have a forum in which I can be a leader and dedicated to social change. Through this church I found Art & Soul: Teens Beyond Racism, I was youth co-dean for the San Diego youth conference last May, and found a wonderful escape at deBenniville Pines where I was on staff and a camper.

I came to this church searching for a home away from home. After being raised in a home of Pentecostal Fundamentalist beliefs, I never imagined that I would find escape in another church. When I discovered what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist, I knew that I would no longer have to worry about the horrors I remember as a child when the book of Revelations was a bedtime story. Unitarian Universalism is a place where I can believe in my own religion and be supported regardless of my belief in God or lack thereof.

Love is the doctrine of this church. Hardships have molded me into the person I am today. This church has taught me leadership and has helped me find my spirituality, shaping me into who you see before you today. I thank you.

I began with my name and I want to come back to my name and share with you a little of what it means. Layla means of the night, the darkness of skin. Jamila means beautiful and handsome one. Rivera is one of the river. A beautiful dark flowing river. If I can live my name I will be fulfilled. I am at the point that I am becoming my name.

By Layla Jamila Rivera
San Diego, CA

We Want Youth

...to contribute to a new UUA pamphlet

The UUA Pamphlet Commission is producing a pamphlet by youth (age 12-18), and for youth, about the seven Unitarian Universalist Principles.

Are you particularly passionate about the interdependent web? Have you had an experience which caused you to act in the name of justice, equity and compassion in human relations? Please tell us, in about 250 words, what one of the seven Principles means to you, or how you live out one of these Principles in your life.

We will select one essay about each Principle to include in this pamphlet.

Please send submissions to

Julie Parker Amery
UUA Pamphlet Commission
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108

Deadline for submissions: March 30, 1997

Questions? Contact the Pamphlet Commission at 617-742-2100 x103

Announcing The Journey Toward Wholeness

The Journey Toward Wholeness is the report and recommendations of the Racial and Cultural Diversity Task Force. The Task Force wrote this report in response to the 1992 GA resolution on racial and cultural diversity. The report looks at racism and oppression in our denomination and gives recommendations on how we can become an anti-racist denomination. This year the Youth Council passed a resolution in support of the report and encourages all YRUUs to look



into the ideas that are expressed with in its cover. The Youth Council encourages all YRUUs to participate in the Reflection and Action process of the program as well as any trainings offered by your district or the Faith in Action Department of the UUA. If one is not being offered in your congregation we encourage you to lobby your church board to bring one there. This program is your chance to take the first step toward ending racism and oppression in this denomination and the world. The Journey Toward Wholeness is available from the UUA bookstore or your congregation. For more information about the report contact Christine Murphy at (617) 742-2100 x 642 or Jacqui James at (617) 742-2100 x 460.

We Need Your Help

Are you a youth leader or an adult advisor who has developed a dynamic youth program on the local level or led an incredible workshop at a district conference?

Would you be interested in sharing your expertise with youth groups around the country?

The Youth Office and the RE Department are looking for developed curriculums for local youth groups. We are looking for one-shot, short term and long term curriculums or programs that youth and advisors can lead in their church. If you have created an original program for your youth group and think that it would be of interest to YRUU groups around the denomination, write up exactly what you did and send it to the Youth Office.

We are also looking for successful, detailed workshop outlines that have been held at district youth conferences.

Send all submissions to:

The Youth Office at the UUA
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108

Deadline for submissions is March 1, 1997.

If you have any questions, contact David Taylor at:
(617) 742-2100 x351

COME TO THE YOUTH OFFICE!

The YRUU Programs Specialist position is a one-year internship in the Youth Office at the Unitarian Universalist Association's headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts.

Responsibilities include: Working with the Youth Programs Director and the other YRUU Programs Specialist to manage the business of the Youth Office; editing and laying-out the newspaper *Synapse*; helping to plan and administer conferences and youth gatherings including Con Con, Youth Council, YRUU Steering Committee meetings, and Youth Caucus at General Assembly; interacting with other employees of the UUA; participating in business meetings; implementing decisions of the YRUU Youth Council and Steering Committee; and traveling to events all over the continent.

Qualifications: Ability to relate well with youth and adults, past YRUU experience, leadership experience, good organizational skills, the ability to communicate well through speaking and writing, a sense of humor, and a strong commitment to YRUU and the principles upon which it is based. **The applicant must be between the ages of 16 and 22, inclusively, on September 1, 1997.**

Terms of employment: This position is a one-year commitment, beginning September 1, 1997 and ending August 31, 1998. The salary is \$21,500. Moving expenses to and from Boston are paid, and medical insurance is provided. Other benefits include paid vacations and holidays. The new intern is expected to find her or his own living accommodations and pay for all living expenses while in Boston.

For an application: Write to The Youth Office, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108; call (617) 742-2100, x350, 351, 352; or email yruu@uua.org

Applications must be postmarked or received by March 15, 1997.



Resources Available from the Youth Office:

Creating Rules in Unitarian Universalist Youth Communities is a pamphlet designed to assist youth and adults in setting boundaries in various youth communities. This resource was drafted by Carl Cade, 1995-96 Steering Committee, to help local and district YRUU groups facilitate the process of creating rules which they own.

Recommended Racial Justice Action Projects for 1996-97 is a list of social action project ideas that complement the '96-97 Social Action theme of Racial Justice. The Youth Council Racial Justice Working Group composed this list of process-oriented programs for congregations and youth groups.

The District Youth Newsletter Handbook is a guide for district YRUU newsletter editors. The Handbook details the process of creating, publishing, and distributing a district newsletter.

1996-97 YRUU Policy and Procedure Manual is a complete listing of continental YRUU's policies and procedures based on the decisions of Youth Council and Steering Committee. This newly compiled 56-page manual is designed to complement the YRUU by-laws and is available from the Youth Office for a \$10 copy and mailing fee. All other listed resources are free upon request.

The Advisor-L is an e-mail listserv for YRUU advisors and advisor issues. If you would like to subscribe to the Advisor-L send a message to listproc@uua.org with no subject and the message SUBSCRIBE ADVISOR-L First Name Last Name. For example: subscribe Advisor-L Suzy Taco.

Have you ever written
a credo statement for a worship
service or Coming of Age ceremony?

Can you describe why you are a UU,
or what it means to you?

Skinner House Books and the Youth Office are looking for Essays and Homilies by Youth about Spirituality, Personal Theologies, and Journeys of Faith.

If accepted, these essays may appear in an anthology to be published by Skinner House.

Submissions should be 500-1500 words in length.

Send submissions to:
Kathy-Daneman
c/o the Youth Office
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108

Deadline is March 1, 1997.

Questions?

Call the Youth Office at (617) 742-2100 x352 or x351.