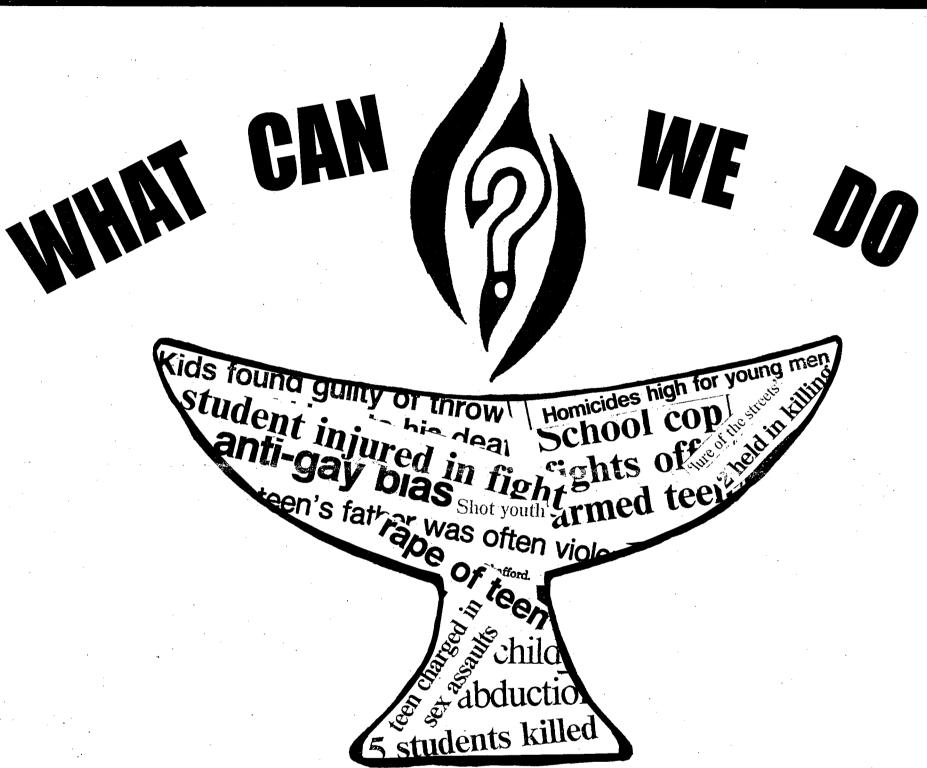
A Point of Contact Where Information and Energy are Exchanged

The Continental Newspaper of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists. Volume XIII, Issue II, Fall 1995. Printed in the USA.



What's Up? Use this handy form to ensure your Synapse satisfaction. FYI: We give names and Woah! I don't need two copies of addresses from the Synapse list UU-affiliated groups upon request.

TRIM IT!

YRUU at the UUA

25 Beacon Street

Boston, MA 02708

ADD IT!

Why, yes, I would like to receive Synapse. Here's my name, ad-

dress, 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!

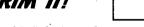
Bye, bye Synapse. I no longer wish to receive this wonderful publication. Please remove me from your mailing list.

Change It!

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

I LOVE IT!

Things just couldn't be better. I have mailed this back to you just for the hell of it. Have a nice



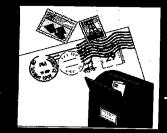
Synapse! Please send my one copy to the address below. Thanks.

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



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Fall 1995



_etters the Editors

Yay, we love email letters, too! Just send them to I believe that everyone has something to vruu@uua.org anytime.

Date: Sun, 2 Jul 1995 09:37:09

To: yruu@uua.org Re: Violence & Intolerance

Dear Wonderful Synapse People,

I live in New Zealand, where there isn't a great number of Unitarian youths, and its FANTAS-TIC to see so many dedicated people. Anyway, I just wanted to say Hi and submit something for the Violence and Intolerance issue. (see p.6 for Jennifer's submission)

From, Jennifer Moss Auckland, New Zealand

Dear Jennifer,

We are glad you like us! And you aren't our only international reader. Synapse currently has subscribers in countries as diverse as Germany, Iran. and the Phillipines. For a little F.Y.I. about our international readership, see "Synapse Goes Global," page ten. Thanks for writing, we are always glad to hear from our readers. Carry On, Mate!

To Whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter for two reasons:

- I have been receiving Synapse for two years illegally now and I can no longer live with the guilt.
- I have also been out of YRUU for two years now and I think that, no matter how important it had once been to me, I must move on with my life. I can no longer live my YRUU experiences through the articles in your lovely paper.

I am resigning my YRUUer status. but I would like to take this last minute to extrapolate quickly on the submission topic for the Fall/Winteredition of Synapse. What I firmly believe is that YRUU taught me to be a tolerant person, but these tolerances only became important after I left YRUU. For example, my Sophomore year of high school, I went to New York for the UU/ UNO conference, which was probably the single greatest YRUU experience of my life. However, the day we left for NYC, I had to go to school early in order to take a chemistry test. My teacher asked me if I planned to take the subway while I was in New York. I said, "No, Are you crazy? They're dangerous." His answer was simple - "Travis, my dear boy (he didn't actually say 'my dear boy,' but it would have been more dramatic if he had), the subway is amazing because you get to see every facet of life. Wall Street guys in \$5000 suits next to homeless people - it's the only place in the world where you can do that." As a sixteen-year-old I had no idea what he was getting at, but I'm at Columbia University in New York now. I observe these types of social polarities every day and I can appreciate them for what they are. This might not sound like a success story, but it is. YRUÚ is more than a social or religious group, it is a state of mind. YRUU teaches young people how to learn from everyone-

offer the world that is positive. YRUU taught me this and it is more valuable than anything I have learned to date. I look on my YRUU experiences as nothing but positive and consider myself forever in debt to the Young Religious Unitarian Universalist organization for starting me out in life on the "straight and narrow" as my grandmother would say. Good Luck to you and your work.

Forever in Your Service,

Travis Ketner New York

Hi Synapse.

My name is Seth-Anson Foster, but my friends call me Anson. I like the artwork, stories, and pictures in Synapse very much. I'm 13, and I'd like to be your friend. My folks are more of the Fundamentalist Religious Right types, if you know what I mean. At heart and in spirit, I'm a YRUUer. A UU auv that I know brings me Synapse to read every time he can, but now I'd like to get my own copy, please.

If anyone out there would like to write to me, I would love to hear from other UUs or have some UU penpals. As you may expect, I'm not allowed to attend a UU group; my folks think it is some kind of cult or something. I like all kinds of music, drawing, Ham/SW radio and both model and real railroads.

Please write back to me Your Friend,

S. Anson Foster

5 Crandall Street

Binghamton, NY 13905

/Eds. note: The following letter was sent to the UUA and forwarded to us. Do any of you have ideas for them? If so, send them to the below address, and while you're at it, send us a copy, too -- What a coincidence that the theme for the next issue of Synapse is Back to the Earth: UU Youth and the Environment!/

To whom it may concern:

We the European Student Organization in Colombia, MO - are organizing a Panel Discussion on Ecology and Religion looking for ways to integrate nature conservation and religion. We are looking for information on this topic, especially applied examples throughout the world. Our goal is to not just talk about ways to find a more effective method of nature conservation, but to give concrete suggestions backed up by examples - of how we could "use" religion in nature conservation. It would be a very big help if you could send us any information you have on that topic as soon as possible.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Maihen Winter

European Student Organization University of Missouri-Columbia 105 Tucker Hall Columbia, MO 65211

The First Parish Meeting House was rebuilt in 1902, after a fire. The originalbuilding was the site of the Pre-Revolutionary Provincal Congress. Dear Youth Office types I'm not sure exactly whoss there night now, but I want to Say to anyone who can read this is

SOME ISSUE OF SYNAPSE! O.K. NOW I'M &

done. Hope to. A. was cool! lovetencouragement, Rachil Cole, MNY

POST-CARD TO: YRUU at the UUA 25 Beacon St. Boston, MA 02108

Dear Synapse,

I have been receiving Synapse for a few years now, and I've always wanted to write to say hello. My purpose for writing now is deeper than just that. I've reached a point in my life where my connection to Unitarian Universalism is at an all time low. My only real connection is the chalice necklace I still wear; it was given to me when I graduated from high school. The last UU youth conference I went to was in 1993 and I want so much to feel that connection. that warmth again. When people used to ask me what religion I was, I never just said "Unitarian." Most people have no clue as to what UUism is, and besides, my spirituality was really set within my youth group and at confer-

ences. I drew my strength from that group of people. My success and happiness was celebrated within that group. I felt a great sadness and void when I was finally too old to participate. I guess my point is that I regret having drifted so far from the people Ilove and need most. I was inspired to write this after reading Tara Aiesi's work in the Spring issue of Synapse. Especially the parts about escape from the real world to become your true self, and this line from her poem: "I remove my spirit, leave a little piece of me and say goodbye." I miss you all.

Thank you,

Danielle Dindorf Detroit, MI

About

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

Rachel Reed. Rob Cavenaugh, 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 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 accepted. When submitting photographs, please include the name of the person who took the photo to provide proper credit. The following submission limits apply:

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

Poetry: One poem per issue

Synapse...

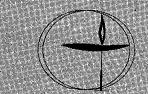
Graphics / Photographs: No

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 selfaddressed envelope.

Advertisina: 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 are not endorsed 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.

Submission and Advertising Due Date for Next Issue:

April 15, 1996.



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

LDCs Take the country by storm!

What the heck is an LDC?

Don't worry - you aren't the only one who doesn't know!

LDC stands for Leadership Development Conference.

An LDC is a structured weekend conference where conti-

nentally-trained leaders (usually one youth and one adult)

will come to your district to help teach UU youth and adults

leadership and community-building skills. LDC leaders

follow a successful model schedule which is flexible enough

to adjust to various districts' needs. LDCs are usually

sponsored by one of the 23 districts of the UUA. The

sponsoring district pays a travel equalization fee and small

honorarium for the Leaders. The Youth Office encourages

districts to have an LDC every other year, to ensure that it's

leadership has continuity and positive, empowering skills.

Leadership Development Conferences (LDCs) are one of the most valuable services that the UUA Youth Office provides. LDCs help to encourage youth and adults to get active in the leadership of their districts and local congregations. Historically, the interns and director of the Youth Office were the leaders for all of the LDCs, but demand for

the conferences was too high for the Youth Office to handle. As was noted in the last issue of *Synapse*, a Continental Leadership Development Training was held last year to train youth and adults from around the country to be LDC leaders. In the past year, these continentally-trained youth and adults have led nine LDCs in seven different districts.

There are many reasons why districts decide to sponsor an LDC. Some districts have an LDC after there has been some kind of problem or breakdown of commu-

nication in the district — as a way of bringing people back together and clarifying their goals. Other districts have an LDC because they want to encourage younger and newer YRUU members to get involved in district or local leadership. And still other districts have an LDC because there is no active youth leadership on the district level, and they would like to see people get inspired to do something about it. Most districts have confronted some or all of these issues at one time or another, and LDCs can often help in the process.

The responses to recent LDCs have been overwhelmingly positive, with the few complaints coming from participants who didn't realize that LDCs have a very structured format. On the LDC evaluations, participants have listed the following as some of their favorite activities: learning new skills (such as brainstorming and how to run an effective meeting), role-playing potential problems and finding solutions, community-building games and exercises, and participating in worship. LDCs encourage participants to put their new skills into action. "I hope to show my

youth group the new games I learned," said a youth at the end of a recent LDC, "I can't wait to use my improved leadership skills successfully."

An LDC gives youth and adults a great opportunity to gain new skills together, and to learn from youth and adult co-leaders. Steve Buccieri, one of the adult LDC leaders, says: "I like leading LDCs because I meet the NICEST people, and I learn new things every time I lead them. LDCs are a great opportunity to work side-by-side with youth, as

equals — I especially like modeling youth/adult co-leadership to other adults."

An LDC can be a useful tool in promoting youth empowerment in your district. For more information, or an LDC Planning Guide, call the Youth Office in Boston. Buccieri sums it up when he says, "I believe in the future of YRUU, and I can meet it at LDCs."

If you would like to attend an LDC, get in touch with your district youth organization (often called the Youth Adult Committee or a District Youth Council). If you don't know what a YAC is or whether or not your district has one, call the friendly Youth Council Representative for your district listed on page four of this very publication. They should be able to tell you what UU youth programming is going on in your neck of the woods.



A New YPS!



Hi, I'm Kathy Daneman and I'm the newest YPS. I have absolutely no idea what I'm doing, so everyone is going to have just bear with me. I'm a junior at the University of Kansas where I'm majoring in magazine journalism. I've lived in Kansas for nine years and I've heard all the Ozjokes. Be forewarned, I will not dignify Toto jokes with a response.

These kinds of introductions are awkward and make me feel like I'm placing an ad in the personals! As it were, my perks are books, films, Sylvia Plath, and the Throwing Muses. My turn-offs are Kansas jokes, narrow-minded individuals without a sense of humor, vegetables that bounce (After a near-fatal experience in the supermarket, I am heartily convinced that eggplants are mass-produced by rubber companies), and not being able to see who I'm writing to.

This should be a great year and I'm looking forward to meeting as many UU youth as care to shake my hand!

In Memory of Yitzhak Rabin 1922 - 1995

This Issue of Synapse, with a theme of Violence and Intolerance, is dedicated to the late prime minister of Israel who was assasinated November 4, 1995 while Synapse was in production. His death ironically followed a rally for peace attended by over 100,000 people. Though Yitzhak Rabin was a soldier and military leader for most of his life, he was sincerely committed to making peace between Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East. May we all learn from his example and continue to work for greater peace in our lives and with each other.



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BOOK REVIEW



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1502 Hampton Rd.

If you want information, contact these people!

About Youth Council...

Youth Council (YC) is the governing body of YRUU. It is made up of youth representatives from all the districts, three at-large youth, seven at-large adults, and the YRUU Steering Committee. For one week each summer, YC reviews and sets the annual goals and priorities for continental YRUU.

Youth Council met at Oglethorpe University, located on one of the 13 Peachtree Roads in Atlanta. YC '95 was greeted by the Mid-South District's President and Executive, Rev. Joan Armstrong and Roger Comstock, respectively. Later in the week, YC was also graced with the presence of Denny Davidoff, the UUA Moderator. In her short time at Oglethorpe, she managed to give an inspiring talk and co-lead two workshops.

Sean Ramsey, former YRUU Programs Specialist, served as this year's Youth Council Moderator. Sean deserves several hundred rounds of applause for keeping YC moving despite obscenely high temperatures, broken air-conditioning, and meals that all seemed very similar to one another.

The highlight of the trip for many Youth Council members, depending on how much they consumed, was a visit to the Coca-Cola Museum. After

Old/New Steering Committee (New in wedstingt) Left as side. But Death

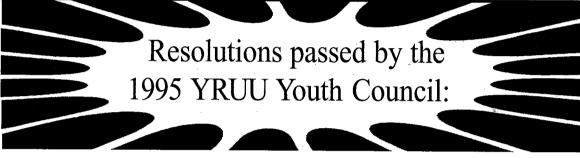
Old/New Steering Committee (New is underlined), left to right, **Back Row:**<u>Phyllis Daniel</u>, <u>Drake Baer</u>, Paul Wardlow, <u>Ben Wellemeyer</u>, Ashley Sveen,

<u>Alison Purcell</u>, Jonah Eller-Isaacs, Derek McTaggert, Rachel Reed (Youth

Office). Front Row: Marc Loustau, <u>Eva Owens</u>, <u>Carl Cade</u>, Michaela Agate
Mays (baby), <u>Lexie Aliotti</u>, <u>Phoebe Hanshew</u>, and Jory Agate (Youth Office).

walking through the world's most highly concentrated collection of propaganda and memorabilia, tourists are able to drink their fill (and then some) of Coke products from all around the world

With enough caffeine to last for weeks, Youth Council passed 13 resolutions! Short explanations of each appear below. For complete copies of the resolutions, contact your YCR (at left). If you're interested in being on Youth Council, see the At-Large Application on the back page!



Second Year Bylaw Amendment

O Resolution Raising the Maximum age of a YRUU Programs Specialist

After being passed by YC '94, this resolution need to be passed by the UUA Board of Trustees and YC '95 to take effect. Having done so, the upper age range of a YRUU Programs Specialist has changed from 20 to 22.

First Year Bylaw Amendment

O Resolution on the Creation of a Canadian Youth At-Large Position

Requests that a new position be added to Youth Council with the specific designation of Canadian Youth At-Large. This resolution must be passed by the UUA Board of Trustees and YC '96 to take effect.

Resolutions

O Resolution on the Acceptance of Youth as Individuals in Congregations

Encourages congregations to welcome all youth, regardless of their parents' religious affiliation.

O Resolution on YRUU Involvement with Interweave

Asks Steering Committee to investigate ways to get involved with Interweave, the UU grass-roots organization for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual people.

O Resolution to Make a Social Action Coordinator Packet

Mandates the Continental SAC to develop a packet containing social action activities, ideas, and other relevant materials. The packet shall be distributed to all district SACs and updated by each successive C*SAC.

O Resolution to Develop a Resource to Aid Compromise in Dealing with Smoking Issues

Commissions Steering Committee to develop a resource packet, containing tactics and suggestions, that addresses cigarette smoking at district YRUU events. The packet shall be brought to YC 96 for approval and thereafter be available through the Youth Office.

O Resolution to Create a Spiritual Youth Anthology

Mandates that the Youth Office begin collecting and organizing items that could eventually be placed in a Spiritual Youth Anthology.

O Resolution for Support of Incoming Youth Council Representatives

Mandates YCRs to recommend, in their districts, a mentorship process between retiring and incoming YCRs to facilitate the succession of leadership. This resolution is also to be placed on the YC agenda annually.

O Resolution for Local Action towards Social Action

Encourages local youth groups to work with neighboring youth groups for the purpose of social action. YCRs and SACs are encouraged to support this networking.

O Resolution to Update The Post-High Survival Kit

Mandates the Youth Office to update the kit, with help from the Young Adult Ministries Office and C*UUYAN (Continental UU Young Adult Network). Also requires that (A) the contact listings in the kit be updated annually, and (B) that the kit be advertised in various publications.

O Resolution on Continental Conference Site Selection

Mandates the Youth Office to seek sites which will accommodate the projected number of applicants. Estimates are to be made based on the number of applicants is prior years.

O Resolution for Social Action Coordinator Information

Mandates that all future YC pre-packets include a list of available adults involved in social action and youth SACs, and a the contacts for the UUSC (Service Committee) and UU-UNO (United Nations Office). All YCRs are charged to submit their SAC information.

O Resolution to add Social Action Emphasis to Youth Council

Mandates that each Youth Council have either a workshop or working group focused on social action. Additionally, there shall be adequate time during the C*SAC's report for feedback and suggestions from YCRs. The Youth Office is mandated to add the time allotment to the YC agenda after consulting with the C*SAC.



IULY 25-30, ATLANTA, GA



0

CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE



Con Con was held this year at The Mountain in North Carolina. This is the third time Con Con has been held at the Mountain, and they loved us! The staff and conferees all did a wonderful job of acting responsibly while having a good time.

The site had a big effect on the energy of the conference. The Mountain is one of the higher points on the Highland Plateau, which happens to be a temperate rainforest. The vegetation and ecology are very delicate and command a great deal of respect and care from Mountain staff and its visitors.

Meditation Rock, one of The Mountain's highlights, offers an incredible view of the North Carolina wilderness. (A crowd of thirty Con Conners was awake to see the sunrise on the final day. It's almost worth going to The Mountain just for the sunrise!)

Other highlights of the week included: sweat lodge ceremonies, folk dancing, a tremendously fun game called Bombers, hikes, beautiful worships, lots of singing, very, very good food, coffeehouse, and a LARGE amount of rain.

Con (Con '96 to the Carth August 12-18 Arrah Wanna Near Portland, OR Applications forms will be available in late March/ early April. Contact the Youth Office to receive

one.

About Con Con...

Con Con is the Continental Conference of YRUU. It usually occurs sometime in early August, and the site rotates around the USA and Canada. Con Conners have the opportunity to participate in weeklong workshops, one-shot workshops, worships, coffeehouse, and other great activities.

Con registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Only fifteen youth are admitted from any one district prior to the registration deadline.



CoreStaffPositions:

The Energy Coordinator facilitates meetings of the Spirit Committee, which is responsible for paying attention to the overall mood of the conference community, and the Energy Committee, which deals with conference rule infractions. She or he also coordinates wake-up, energizes spirit circle each morning, and leads the rules 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, and also coordinates and publicizes daily "one-shot" workshops led by members of the conference community.

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 worships for the community. In the past, the Chaplain has lead small gatherings such as early morning worships, 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 (The Camp is 45 miles East of Portland; someone from Portland would be fine). This person is responsible for coordinating transportation between the airport and the site, arranging any home hospitality needed before 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 MugBook Editor is responsible for photographing each conference participant, photographing conference events, and editing and laying out the MugBook, which is similar to a "yearbook" of the conference. The MugBook is distributed to conferees on the final day of Con Con.

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.

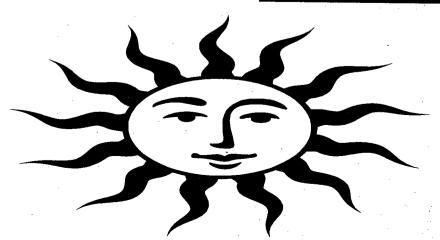
The **Gopher** is a position for an adult or youth, 18 or older, from the local area. The gopher makes daily runs to the nearest town for supplies, medical needs, and snacks to sell. This person should have a car, or should be able to use a rental car (one must be over age 25 to rent cars).

The **Nurse** 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:

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 "Back to the Earth".

Core staff, the nurse, and the mugbook 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-conference planning meeting at Camp Arrah Wanna March 8-10, 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 352.

YRUUSteering Committee c/o The Youth Office 25 Beacon St. Boston, MA 02108 fax (617) 523-4123 yruu@uua.org

Applications must be postmarked or received no later than January 5, 1996.

VIOLENCE AU Intolerance:

Violence: I hear about it everyday. I see it on the news, and in the papers, and on the T.V. I see the violence, the murders, but I never really see it. I'm not sheltered, but I'm just never really affected by it. On the street or anywhere else. Violence was not started by my generation, but is carried on by the one before. We try to stop the fighting of our elders. They are the people we should be learning from ... but they don't know the answers. We've been told, and have seen ourselves from the day we were born, that violence is not gone. And so we respect it. And stop it.

— Jennifer Moss

No diversity training is going

to automatically get at the root of

what makes bored youth feel the

need to bombard passersby

with unripe vegetables.

A Message From Your Friendly C*SAC:

Hi, my name is Ellen Sale, and I am your Continental Social Action Coordinator. My job is to help coordinate social action ideas and information between local churches, districts, and continental YRUU.

This year, the social action focus for both the UUA and YRUU is Violence. We, being youth, are focusing on violence against and committed by teenagers; how to counteract it and prevent it. By doing so, we will personify our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every human. Mary McCarthy, author of *On the Contrary*, once said that "in violence, we forget who we are." This year, we as Unitarian Universalist youth, must strive to help ourselves and others find those lost souls.

December 3, 1995 is YRUU's Social Action Day. On this day, I think all of us should take action, in our districts, churches, or communities. We can hold vigils, toy-gun buy-backs, marches, discussions...WHATEVER OUR HEARTS' DESIRE! Because that friends, is what it is all about: acting in love. December 3 is also a Sunday, why not organize a service about youth and violence? We have the resources, desire, and energy to make the most out of this year. I have seen remarkable things come about when we UUs put our heads together. Let's go to work!

If you needs social action literature, I have tons that those crazy loons at the Youth Office are always sending me. If you are your district's Social Action Contact, I can also send you the SAC-Packet that contains lots of great information. Please don't hesitate to write or call me:

Ellen "Bake" Sale 1502 Hampton Rd. Charleston, WV 25314 (304) 344-3701 email: Gafiltaphz@aol.com



"She's a sad Tomato..." - R.E.M., from Crush With Eyeliner.

by Rachel Reed

I don't consider myself a violent or intolerant person. I don't think that I could ever attack someone with the intention to do real harm, except perhaps if my own life was threatened. I despise guns of any sort, and intend never to have one in my home. Yet, violence and intolerance have entered my life in many different ways.

Growing up in Arizona, I knew people who often used guns for hunting or "sportsman-ship." Unfortunately, I also saw guns used as status symbols and scare tactics. My high school was in an area with a mix of wealthy upper- and middle-class white students and predominately lower-income Mexican-Americans. Guns and gang violence were not a huge problem, nor were they completely unseen. There were gang members at my school who were involved in violent altercations, but drive-by shootings were not a daily occurance. I knew of students, mostly wealthier males, who brought guns to school in the trunks of their cars to show off to the rest of "the guys."

I saw guns at parties used as a threat to scare off unwanted guests. I witnessed a few major fist-fights (even *one* was too many). Despite these incidents, violence was not something that I thought about every day.

Intolerance is another matter entirely. Intolerance was and still is daily fare in the public school system. I don't know if people are just ignorant, or if they feel the need to belittle others in order to make themselves feel more important. In any case, I have witnessed discrimination among youth because of race, sex, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, and political or religious convictions. Intolerance at my high school revealed itself most often through verbal harassment and the exclusivity of cliques, but was also

the impetus behind acts of violence. Intolerance of any kind, taken to its extreme, can result in an act of violence. I have directly experienced intolerance, but it's expression as physical violence against me was not always a tangible concern.

Up until I started college, I had the privilege of not worrying too much about how violence might directly affect me. When I began attending a women's college two years ago, I became more aware of the ways sexism and racism are inherent in the systems of violence and "justice" in this country. When I chose to cut off all my hair, I realized that I was more likely to find myself in violent situations because of how I looked. My first concern was that people might think that I was a skinhead and try to start a fight with me. My other concern was that because I had extremely short hair, I was more likely to become a victim of gay-bashing due to stereotyped assumptions about my sexual orientation. However, these were still somewhat abstract concerns over how other people's intolerance might become violence against me. My most recent encounter with violence had nothing to do with intolerance. It had to do with a tomato.

Yep, a tomato! A very large, very green, very hard tomato. A tomato which recently flew through the air at a very high speed and connected with the side of my head. I was the victim of

a random act of violence. Ok, so it was a somewhat humorous act of violence -- it's not every day you're struck with a Flying Green Tomato (ugh, that was bad). Even if it *did* seem funny, it still resulted in physical pain and a swollen-shut eye. That was the only time that I have ever been physically hurt, on purpose, by another human being - and it wasn't even because they didn't like me! It was just some neighborhood kids that I don't even know, being stupid and mean.

Unfortunately, many youth are the perpetrators or recipients of this kind of random violence. It's the classic time-waster: bully is bored, bully sees innocent wimpy bystander, bully beats on wimp. Incidents between youth can be seriously hurtful, but they are often laughed off by either or both parties involved. I think that random violence is motivated by something different than violence initiated by intolerance. When taken to the extreme, random violence is embodied by the kinds of horrible crimes whose motivation is hard to explain: stranger rape, serial killings, and drive-

by shootings of innocent people as a "test" for entrance into a gang. This type of random violence is harder to fight because there doesn't seem to be a concrete reason for it. No amount of diversity training is going to automatically get at the root of what makes your average bored youth feel the need to bombard passersby with unripe vegetables — or to shoot out the windshield of every third car on the highway, for that matter.

So, what can we do? I think that the motivation for random violence grows out of living in a society that no longer values the golden rule. American youth are bombarded with the ideas, images, and daily realities of a society which says, "It's a dog-eat-dog world out there. Shit happens. You are only responsible for yourself." I think people are losing the ability to walk in one another's

shoes. We all need to ask ourselves some tough questions: Have I ever committed violence, even in jest, against another person? Your answer is probably yes. Have I ever stood by as another person was a victim, and done nothing? I unfortunately know that I have, even if it was as seemingly harmless as being a silent passenger in a car when a friend launched a full Slurpee out the window at an innocent pedestrian. Have I ever been the victim of violence? I hope the answer for most of you is "no," but I suspect otherwise.

Part of the solution to violence is for us, within reason and safety, to take a stand against violence and intolerance whenever we can. The turn our country has taken has led to valuing rugged individualism over any concern for social inequities. This political climate has contributed to rampant apathy, especially among youth. If we're not part of the solution, are we part of the problem? Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes state that we promote justice, equity and compassion in human relations. Where is the justice in violence? As UUs, we say that we value the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We need back up our words with our actions. We need remember how to love our neighbors as ourselves. You never know when the next bullet (or tomato) will come flying towards you.

The only way to effectively respond

to abuse is to take responsibility

for our individual actions. We have

to learn to listen, accept our weak-

nesses, celebrate our strengths, and

confront violence.

We Have Met the Enemy, and It Is Us.

by Evan Manvel

Violence is under attack; media and politicians everywhere are drawing attention to violent crime and crying for solutions. We are increasingly tough on criminals, with longer mandatory sentences, more policing, and increased use of the death penalty. We erronously presume we are being tough on crime and violence. The question of whether it is right to be "tough" on toughness still remains unresolved. However, a larger problem is why the focus of anti-violence efforts is

against a small segment of society that is often stereotyped as poor, young, and black, rather than trying to heal society as a whole.

I spiritually believe retribution has no place in civilized society. Forcing someone to feel pain simply does not contribute to justice. On a practical level, as well, revenge is only marginally successful at deterring crime. For example, in the past fifteen years, our prison population and spending on prisons has tripled, but violent crime rates have remained level. Furthermore, imprisonment creates more crime thousands of men are raped every day in prison. Assault and verbal or psychological abuse are even more prevalent. Our corrections system takes abusive people and abuses them. This, more than the lack of mandatory sentences, would seem to lead to recidivism (committing more offenses upon release).

We could all learn from the story of a young runaway, Evan Cutler. Cutler ran away from home at fifteen, into a life of prostitution, drug use, molestation, abuse, and rape. He has since written and self-published an account of his experiences. As he began his work to recount his experiences, he received a smattering of offers to publish his book or convert it into a TV-movie. The offers had but one restriction: he would have to explain why he ran away. Cutler refused.

What the editors wanted, what those pushing mandatory-sentence legislation want, what

all of us want, is a villain: someone to blame for all the bad things happening in our cities, our towns, our lives. Yet abuse and violence cannot be blamed on one person, or even a small segment of our society. Abuse and violence are integral to our society, and have become part of our everyday routine, from name-calling to rape, screaming to murder, door slamming to racism. We abuse our minds, our bodies, our environment, and, eventually, our fellow humans. We learn to abuse in a

variety of complex ways, just as our society's "criminals" learn to be physically violent.

Violence and abuse are cultural. Our society has yet to treat most forms of violence and abuse seriously, as we are usually survivors, perpetrators, or both. Acquaintance rape is far more prevalent than stranger rape, plutocratic and hierarchical power abuse far more prevalent than drug wars. Identifying a trend as cultural does not mean that it is any less an issue of personal responsibility. Einstein once estimated it would only take six percent of the population actively working for peace to transform society. Each of us who commits to moving beyond violence, intolerance, and abuse can touch hundreds of lives, inspire others, and create a real solution to violence. Other attempts are hollow and ineffective in comparison.

The only way to effectively respond to abuse is to take responsibility for our individual actions. We have to learn to listen, to accept our weaknesses, celebrate our strengths, and to confront violence. We have to learn not to abuse our power, not to hit, not to abuse ourselves. We have to stop yearning for a villain and become heroes. Quiet heroes whose peace speaks volumes.

 $Cutler's \, book, Runaway \, Me: A \, Survivor's \, Story \, (ISBN \, 1-884607-15-2) \, is \, available from \, A \, Blooming \, Press \, Co. \, at \, 1-800-210-TEEN. \, Co.$

Let us labor in hope
for the dawning of a new day
without hatred, violence, and injustice. Let us nuture
the growth in our own lives of the love that has shone
in the lives of the greatest of men and women,
the rays of whose lamps still illumine our way.

--from a prayer by Phillip Hewett



I don't subscribe to the idea that non-violence is cowardice. When people are involved in something constructive, trying to bring about change, they tend to be less violent than those who are not engaged in rebuilding or in anything creative. Non-violence forces one to be creative; it forces any leader to go to the people and get them involved so that they can come forth with new ideas. I think that once people understand the strength of non-violence -- the force it generates, the love it creates, the response that it brings from the total community -- they will not be willing to abandon it easily.

The YWCA Week Without Violence

A world without Violence -

begins with **imagining** a place. A place where loved ones, friends, neighbors and co-workers are free to live their lives without violence. A place where differences are cause for **celebration**, not focal points of hate. A place where your race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age and religion would invoke appreciation, curiosity and **re-spect** - not fear and spite.

Write your political leaders and let them know how violence has had an effect on your life and what your world without violence would be like. You can identify your congressperson by calling (202) 225-3121. You can write President Clinton at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20500

Think about how you spend your money. Do you support games, movies, videos, or cd's that promote violence? Do you support companies that profit from violence, like gun manufacturers? Write them and tell them why you will not be giving them your business any longer. And better yet, give your business to companies that actively support non-violence.

This information was modified from the publicity provided by the YWCA of the U.S.A. For more information about their program, call (212) 614-2747 or write the YWCA at 726 Broadway, New York, New York 10003. They can be reached by e-mail at: HN2062@handsnet.org

The YWCA of the United States initiated a Week Without Violence October 15-21, 1995. Each day of the week had a different theme: A Day of Rememberance, Protecting Our Children, Making Our Schools Safe, Confronting Violence Against Women, Facing Violence Among Men, Eliminating Racism and Hate Crime, and Replacing Violence with Sports and Fitness.

If you've got five minutes, a couple of hours, a week -- or the rest of your life -- there is something YOU can do to end violence:

Talk with family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers about how different our world would be if the threat of violence was gone from our lives. Children can draw pictures of a world without violence and send them to local crime reporters and newspaper editorial boards.

Learn about conflict resolution. It puts punches, slaps, and kicks back in the gym. and teaches men and women how to talk about problems, not fight. If you are involved in activities that promote alternatives to violence, tell reporters what you are doing to make your community safer.

Challenge the government to do more to prevent drug and alcohol abuse. Many acts of violence are committed when people are drunk or high.

Create safe places in your community for kids to play and gather. Identify a vacant lot in your neighborhood and organize a clean-up. Keep your porch light on. Let neighbors and children know that your home is a safe home.

Remember loved ones lost to violence. Honor their spirit, memory and families. Organize or attend a memorial service to pay tribute to all those murdered in your community.

GA 1995 Youth Caucus and the Young Adult Focus Day

YOUTH CAUCUS REPORT

Youth Caucus 1995 had 76 participants, including Youth Caucus staff. Jory Agate, Sarah Gibb, Rob Cavenaugh, and Rachel Reed attended from the Youth Office; Lisa Rubin (a DRE from Burlington, VT), was the Youth Caucus adult for the third year; Carl Cade acted as this year's General Assembly Youth Caucus Business Manager and Liaison to Youth Council.

The Youth Caucus Business meetings were very productive this year and each participant should be commended for their contributions. The Caucus endorsed a resolution to allow District Presidents to vote in General Assembly, and offered amendments to and then endorsed a resolution supporting the right to "A Job, A Home, A Hope." Youth Caucus also submitted a substitute resolution dealing with the radical right and honest campaigning.

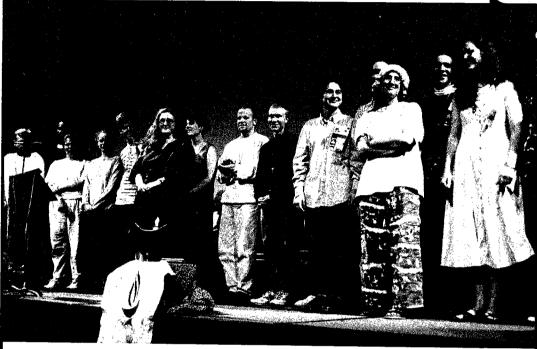
About Youth Caucus...

Youth Caucus is a service provided by the Youth Office at every General Assembly. Youth Caucus meets to discuss regular GA business, with emphasis on resolutions. In past years Youth Caucus has successfully amended and even sponsored resolutions.

The Youth Office offers youth housing at a reduced rate so that youth can stay in the same location and afford to do so. Youth Caucus will occur at GA '96 as usual.

About General Assembly itself... GA is the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. Each congregation is invited to send a certain number of delegates based on their total membership size. Total attendance of delegates and nondelegates is around 2,500.

GA business, including bylaw changes and resolutions, is discussed in plenary sessions. The afternoons and evenings feature workshops, dances, banquets and barbecues.



From left to right are: Cory Andser, Joe Green, Mara Vanderslice, Justice Waidner, Matt Johnson, Kate Oakley, Rachel Reed, Rob Cavenaugh, Marc Loustau, Sarah Gibb, David Taylor, Aurora Stowell, Derek McTaggert, and Kerry Mead.

The Bridging Ceremony was sponsored by the 1995 General Assembly

Young Adult Focus Day Task Force. The basic idea of the service was developed by young adults in the Pacific Northwest District about four years ago, as a way for congregations to recognize and honor youth who were making the transition to young adult. It was the first time such a service was done at General Assembly.

The service was meant to be an inspiration to congregations across the country, motivating them to hold a special service each year to honor and celebrate the transition of their youth. Though many congregations sponsor a "farewell" service for graduating seniors, a Bridging Ceremony is also a "welcome". Hopefully, this celebration of the cycles of life will become a GA Tradition as well.

Just over 20 youth took part in the ceremony, though altogether close to 85 names were read and recognized. UUA President John Buehrens, UUA Moderator Denny Davidoff, Young Adult Ministries Coordinator Donna DiSciullo and Youth Programs Director Jory Agate all participated in the ceremony.

Cransitions

Kevin McCulloch, a young adult and former YRUUer, spoke during the Young Adult Focus Day Program at GA 95. This is an adapted version of his speech.

A sense of loss—

a sudden and irretrievable wrenching

you whole-

was common among my friends as they

graduated from YRUU.

I was raised in the same Unitarian Universalist congregation where my parents were married in 1969. It was there, in preschool, that I learned to think of myself as a Unitarian Universalist. As an eighth grader, I experienced the About Your Sexuality Curriculum. As a self-doubting adolescent, I discovered a community of peers who lived their humanitarian values to an almost unbelievable extent.

In the spring of 1990, my name was

listed among the graduating seniors in our congregation's annual away from the community that makes Service of the Living Tradition. Often, graduating seniors had to be firmly reminded that the

high school program was no longer for them. A sense of loss—a sudden and irretrievable wrenching away from the community that makes you whole—was common among my friends as they graduated from YRUU. Nonetheless, I was ready to leave. I would be attending the college of my choice and all I cared about were the new horizons to explore. My congregation sang my praises, gave me a hug and a flower and sent me on my way. I was filled with faith in human potential and the desire to do right, and my congregation knew it was sending forth the most promising of creatures: one who was raised Unitarian Universalist.

I held my UU values dearly and didn't want to abandon them, but in my first year of college I changed faster than those values would allow. By the next summer I knew that a return to youth group would be useless, yet adult services seemed equally as useless: ministers continued to preach the same sermons I heard when I was six. I discovered, to my horror, that although I still believed in the Principles and Purposes of our Association, they had ceased to capture my imagination. These values are central to under-

> standing ourselves as UUs, and they were a fundamental part of my childhood. But I cannot be nourished in the present while living in the past. If all our move-

ment can offer me is the incessant celebration of values I accepted and lived as a youth, then all it can offer me by way of religious experience is nostalgia—a hollow, useless thing. I need to test my values, to have them challenged and learn their limitations, to reject them and discover them all over again.

Many of the people raised Unitarian Universalist like me seek deeper religious experience by studying for the ministry. I suspect that I would make a decent seminarian, but I hate the thought that I might become a professional minister not because of my desire to minister to others, but because my chosen faith failed to minister to me. There is a place here for me-I can feel it-but I have not yet found it.

Young Adults & General Assembly

Adapted from a sermon entitled "Dreams and Goals," given by young adult John Benford to the first Unitarian Church of Oakland, CA.

At age fourteen, I participated in the Affirmation Program at my church, which was a coming-of-

age program designed to help the young people think about and articulate our beliefs. I selected a mentor from the congregation, who went through the program with me. There was a service held that spring where the young people each read a credo statement we had written. It was a powerful experience to be able to tell a group of people my beliefs about the world. After the service, I signed the membership book.

After joining the church I grew up in, my relationship with the UU church grew proaressively more difficult for me. Sunday morning worship services were more like a lecture and concert series than the worship I was used to at UU youth events. Youth worship is usually done in a circle. Everyone is an active participant in the worship, not a passive recipient of it. Songs sometimes took on a life of their own, and went on almost without end. We would dance and play and use our bodies. People shared their thoughts and feelings with the group, deepening our connection to each other. This was no longer my experience of the church.

I continued to be involved with my congregation until I moved to California to go to college. Then for six years, I avoided going to church and remained involved in the denomination only through district youth and young adult activities. I often questioned my affiliation with Unitarian Universalism. Falmost became one of the statistics of young adults who leave the church, never to return.

However, a year and a half ago, I decided that I was giving up too easily. The church had been too important to me growing up to let go without a fight. Instead of continuing to act on my feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness, I decided to make it my church. So I joined the Oakland church and got myself elected to the Pacific Central District Board of Trustees. While my experiences in both those places have generally been positive. I continued to feel deeply divided over whether I really wanted to make the long term commitment necessary to actually make it my church. My

feelings ranged from wanting to become a minister to wanting to leave the church forever.

Then, I went to General Assembly for the first time this year. It was like coming home. It was very clear to me that the people who are shaping our denomination have the same vision I do of the purpose of religion and are moving ours in that direction. There was a Young Adult Focus Day this year, where the denomination began to examine the contradictions between youth and adult experiences of our religion. UUA Moderator Denny Davidoff facilitated the daily three hour business sessions of over 1100 delegates with grace and humor. She is transforming these business sessions from grueling debates on punctuation and other trivial matters into a forum for Unitarian Universalists to collectively assert ourselves in the world. Norman Lear, television producer and founder of People for the American Way, delivered the Ware lecture. He spoke movingly of his personal spiritual struggles and of finding the essence of religion in ordinary human qualities. The Young Adult Caucus turned three years old. It is rapidly developing into a significant denominational voice for young adults. Racial Justice programming at GA entered its third year, and the conversation is moving through white guilt and defensiveness into constructive dialogue. And perhaps most importantly, our worship is becoming more spiritual, more passionate, and more central to our gatherings.

I felt a sense of pride in what we have done as a religion, and hope for what we can do that I have never felt before. especially not as an adult. I once again experienced Unitarian Universalism as a force for human liberation. Our principles and purposes, passionately felt and powerfully acted upon, represent a formidable weapon against hopelessness and injustice in the world. My faith was restored, and I remembered why religion, and ours in particular, is important to me. Love is the most powerful force in the

General Assembly 1996 has a Youth Focus!

With the help of the Youth Office, the GA Planning Committee, and several other The Youth Focus Task Force drafted these goals for the Youth Focus and supporting groups, the Youth Focus Task Force will sponsor over 25 events, workshops, and worships all relating to youth. Though past Focus programs have taken place on a single day, the Youth Focus will occur throughout General Assembly.

It is estimated that between 200 and 300 youth will attend GA this year. Please note, however, that neither the Youth Focus programming nor Youth Caucus are YRUU sponsored events. All youth are expected to participate fully in General Assembly. See if your congregation will make you a delegate!

If you're interested in attending General Assembly, now is a good time to start "campaigning" for both delegate status and financial support. The more involved you are in your congregation, the better your chances will be. Many congregations have money set aside to help delegates attend GA. The Youth Focus has also prompted some congregations and districts to set aside money specifically for youth. If yours has not, try asking them to do so!

The Youth Office will be distributing some scholarship money in the spring. No specific information regarding the amount or number of scholarships is available yet. There is one great way to improve your chances of getting a scholarship, and that is to GET INVOLVED! There are many opportunities on this very page to help out with the Youth Focus. The opportunities are there for you!

Every youth under the age of 18 participating in General Assembly must have a parent or sponsor who is also attending G.A. Parents and sponsors are responsible for youth attending GA. One adult may sponsor up to three youth.

Neither the Youth Focus nor the Youth Caucus is a YRUU conference. The Youth Office and Youth Focus Task Force do not provide supervision for any youth attending GA.

its participants:

fun!

- 2. To feel good about youth; to understand and appreciate that youth are an important part of our denomination with many gifts to share.
 - 3. To put "hands and feet" on our principles; to leave with concrete materials and specific action plans.
 - 4. To model a safe and inclusive community that fosters trust, respect, communication, and understanding between youth and adults.

5. To understand the nature of ministry with youth and the necessity of

consistent, ongoing adult support. 6. To understand and appreciate youth empowerment.

7. To leave General Assembly with a "Hey, I can and will!" attitude.

Here's some ways YOU can get involved!

In your proposal, please include: (1) A short list of your qualifications; (2) A title and summary of your workshop; (3) A description of your workshop for the GA program in fifty words or less; and (4) What you will need financially to attend General Assembly. It must be postmarked or received by the Youth Focus Task Force no later than January 1, 1996. We will review them and contact you by the end of the month.

CONSIDERATIONS: Your proposal should relate to youth, youth programming, youth issues, etc. It is very important that Youth Focus Programs model shared leadership between youth and adults. Therefore, we encourage youth and adults to co-lead workshops. If you have an idea, try and find someone to help you out!

The following is a list of possibilities for workshops. It is not complete or binding in any way; we welcome submissions on all topics.

A day in the life of a youth conference. Advisor recruitment and support. AYS and the youth experience. Building a YAC. Consensus model of conducting meetings. Continental YRUU. Developing rules (district and/or local). Fund-raising/Finances. Games for youth (groups). History of LRY/YRUU. Hosting a conference (how and why). Inclusion of youth with non-UU parents. Les/Bi/Gay/Trans youth. Outreach to non-YRUU youth. Parents of teens. Relations between youth groups and M/DREs and Ministers. Sexuality: Its role in YPUIII. Social action and YRUU. Starting/maintaining a local Starting a gay/straight alliance in your high school. Transitions: Into YRUU, Out of YRUU. Youth and stereotypes: what fits and what doesn't. Youth considering the ministry.

Remember: Submissions on any topic are welcomed!

Consider these positions:



A COFFEEHOUSE MC is needed to select acts and run the

show. This individual should be appreciative of creative talent. This individual should also like audiences and spotlights.

A GA REPORTER is needed to write about the

activities of the youth focus. These writings will be used in the daily GA newsletter and in other publications too numerous to mention. This individual should have excellent writing skills. Journalistic and/or newspaper experience is a plus.

Your application must be postmarked or received by the Task Force no later than January 1, 1996. It should include: (1) A cover letter from you stating your visions for the position and your qualifications; (2) A recommendation letter from a youth; and (3) A recommendation letter from an adult.

The applicants selected for these positions will have their GA housing and registration paid. Depending on the needs of the individual, additional funds are available to offset travel expenses.

Send All Applications to:

The Youth Focus Task Force c/o The Youth Office 25 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02108 (617) 742-2100 fax (617) 523-4123 Email: yruu@uua.org

The Youth Focus is funded in part by the Fund for Unitarian Universalism.

WANT TO SHARE YOUR BELIEFS WITH 3,000 OTHER UUs? Consider these questions:

What do you really think it means to be a Unitarian Universalist? What role has YRUU played in your life? How has being UU nurtured you, changed you, or helped you to grow?

Then write a HOMILY! (A homily is a short sermon, usually about 8 minutes.) It can be based on the above questions or any other youth-related topic.

If you are interested, submit a copy of the Homily to the Youth Focus Task Force. All submissions must be postmarked or received no later than January 1, 1996. Please include the following: (1) Your congregation and district; (2) Your experiences with YRUU, if any; and (3) What you would need financially to attend GA.

Youth who have their Homily selected for use in the Youth Focus at General Assembly will have their GA Housing and registration paid. Depending on the needs of the individual, additional funds are available to offset travel expenses.

Or write a SERMON! It should be related to youth or youth issues, and it must have been delivered to a congregation between April 1, 1995 and April 1, 1996.

If you're interested, submit a copy of the sermon to the Youth Focus Task Force. Your submission must be postmarked or received no later than April 5, 1996. Please include the following:

(1) A cover letter including a short bio describing which society and district you are from, and your position there:

(2) Where the sermon was preached and on what date.

(3) The order of service or other related materials that were used in the worship service.

The winner will receive \$250 to be used for General Assembly registration, housing, and travel.

GA 1996 is June 20-25, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

More GA 1996 Information!

The GA YOUTH FOCUS TASK FORCE is now accepting nominations for:

THE BEST YOUTH ADVISOR IN THE WORLD!

(OK, OK, so maybe just in the UUA.)

But really - do you know of (or are you) a fantabulastic advisor or amazing adult who works with Unitarian Universalist youth?

If so, we invite you to nominate that person (or yourself) for the

OUTSTANDING ADVISOR AWARD

Simply submit a nomination to the The GA Youth Focus Task Force BY APRIL 1, 1996.

We will review them and contact the Outstanding Advisor by the end of the month.

The Advisor selected will be presented with the Outstanding Advisor Award as part of the Youth Focus programming at General Assembly in Indianapolis, June 20-25, 1996. The Outstanding Advisor will receive \$250 towards his or her attendance at GA, in addition to much-overdue recognition, celebrity status, and undying love and support of youth everywhere.

Adivisor nominations must include:
(1) A brief bio which also lists the Advi-

sor's experience with youth and his or her qualifications; (2) TWO letters of recommendation

from YOUTH the advisor has worked with;
(3) ONE letter of recommendation from

(3) ONE letter of recommendation from an ADULT in the congregation or district with which the advisor has been affiliated.

Send Nominations to:

The GA Youth Focus Task Force c/o The Youth Office 25 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02:108
(6:17) 742-2:100 ext. 351, 352, 350, 355 FAX (6:17) 523-4:123 yruu@uua.org
The Youth Focus project is funded in part by the Fund for Unitarian Universalism.

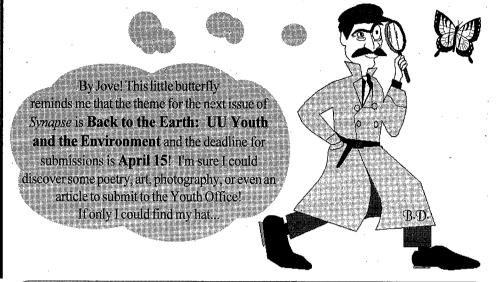
Synapse Goes Global!

Did you know that Synapse has over 300 subscribers in more than 10 countries all over the World?

The Synapse database has the names of UU youth in the following countries: Canada (of course over 200 subscribers, eh!), China, Costa Rica, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, India, Iran (wow! 31 subscribers - 2nd place after Canada!), Mexico, Phillipines, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Even more international youth may receive Synapse through Church of the Larger Fellowship or other UU organizations.



We are everywhere!



Now Showing ...

There is some great NEW stuff available at the Youth Office and the UUA Bookstore!

YACs to SACs is an essential resource for developing and supporting district youth programs. It is a book chock-full of exciting and useful information for UU youth everywhere! It can be purchased through the UUA Bookstore for \$12, plus \$3 shipping and handling. The UUA Bookstore can be reached at 1(800) 215-9076.



The First-time Attendee Packet was created to help youth who are attending their first conference to get a feel for what a UU youth "Con" is all about. It is a two-page packet that is available free from the youth office. Great for new YRUUers!

Coming soon ...

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The Youth Office is working on writing and updating the following publications:

- The Youth Advisor's Handbook is an excellent guide for any YRUU adult or advisor. It is currently out of print, but the brand-new edition will be available by General Assembly in June 1996.
- An LBGT Youth Packet is in the planning stages for Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgendered Youth in YRUU. This packet will be a resource and a way for LBGT youth to network and find support.

ARE YOU LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDERED OR A STRAIGHT ALLY? WHAT EXPERIENCES HAVE YOU HAD IN YRUU?

DO YOU HAVE INFORMATION THAT YOU WISH SOMEONE WOULD HAVE SHARED WITH YOU?

IF YOU ARE OF ANY SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND ARE INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH THE CREATION

OF THIS PACKET, PLEASE SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS TO RACHEL REED AT THE YOUTH OFFICE.

SHE WILL KEEP YOUR NAME AND INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL IF YOU WANT HER TO.

The Post-High Survival Kit is a resource for youth making the transition to young adulthood. It is a packet that is out-dated and is being revised.

ARE YOU OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL OR ABOUT TO GRADUATE?

ARE YOU WONDERING WHAT'S OUT THERE FOR YOUNG ADULT UUS?

DO YOU KNOW OF EXCITING YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMS THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE STORIES ABOUT?

If so, please write, call, or email the Youth Office because we'd like your advice

AND INPUT ON REVISING THE POST-HIGH SURVIVAL KIT.

For more information on these or any other YRUU publications, please call the Youth Office (617) 742-2100 ext.#355, 351, 352, 350 or email us at: yruu@uua.org

In the Far Corner

by Karina Kramer-Schevers

At the Village Discount

you show off your finds

an AIDS Walk T-shirt and broken-down

dress up shoes

spinning off to dig through the racks

once more

picking through more men's clothes

discarded on hangers

like overcooked pasta

limp and disintegrating

I am shoveling through women's blouses

in the far corner

when an older man drifts to me

the whites of his eyes

the same brownish yellow

as his nicotine-stained teeth

his mouth cracked open slightly

mumbling words in Spanish

bonita muy bonita

I struggle to catch and translate

with two years' trivial high school language class

battling to grasp and respond

comprehend and answer

I'm sorry I'm sorry I don't understand please please please

let me go

I feel vulnerable and naked

unable to speak for myself defend myself

the unwashed clothing heaped around me

seems to peel back

exposing me

like a wound half healed and pink raw
I feel his presence like inhaling smoke

choking

I am too young and stupid

too innacent too female

this is too familiar

I can't breathe

I'm shaking

I have to walk away

numb feet on linoleum

pacing from loss of control

to you

as if you are a street-lamp in the dangerous dark as if you mean sofety

ou mean saret and you

hearing my fragmented story

rummage through the men's jeans

and laugh.

And now, for the Daily Double --

What is Unitarian Universalism?

One of our most basic

beliefs is that learning

and love are the keys to

finding ourselves.

Unitarian Universalism is not a well-known religion. It is never an answer on Jeopardy under the catagory "World Religions" and it probably never will be. And you know what? I'm glad. Of course I'd also like people all over the world to know about us, and I'd love to not have to answer everyone's question when asked my religion: "What did you say?"

I said "Unitarian Universalism." In this liberal, educated, predominately

pro-choice religion, there are seven main principles that our congregations agree to uphold. They are basic, simple guidelines that anyone could live with.

The inherent worth and dignity of every person. That is basic enough. Just believe that everyone deserves respect; we do not believe that we are better than anyone else. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. Really listen to people and don't take their words for granted. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations. Accept the fact that we are not all alike, and that we can all make our own decisions, spiritually and physically. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning. Be your own person -- find out what you want in life and what makes you, as an individual, happy. The right of con-

by Amelia Rose science and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large. This means that we believe in the fairness of group participation in selecting our ministers and voting for our political representatives. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all. Given the chance, we would wish for and work towards world peace. Wouldn't anyone? Respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part. When

> you think about it, there is much more to this world than just humans. There are fish, trees, chimps, flowers, cows; there is an environment that we have to take care of. Just like we have

to take care of one another.

Just because we don't neccessarily believe in Christ as our Savior, or in any specific human God, does not mean that we believe in Satan. Our beliefs should be respected. We learn about religions other than our own. Our roots are from all over the world -- why not learn about all our cultural diversity: religious, spiritual, and physical? One of our most basic beliefs is that learning and love are the keys to finding ourselves.

So now when someone says that they are Unitarian Universalist, you'll know who we are and what we stand for.



your very own New and Updated UUA Principles to & CLIP and SAVE!

THE MEMBER CONGREGATIONS

of the Unitarian Universalist Association covenant to affirm and promote:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part.

The living tradition we share draws from many sources:

Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compasssion and the transforming power of love;

Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual

Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;

Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against the idolatries of the mind and spirit.

Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and enobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

YRUU at UN Forum on Women in Beijing

Governmental Organizations World Forum on Women held in Beijing this past August 30th through Star district as well as continental YRUU events. I am currently studying in China, so I offered to be the observe. Our American outlook is known throughout the world, so I decided to try to understand how other Unitarian Universalists" but by the end of the conference I was still unclear as to what my role as a YRUU for me when I decided to really listen. Women such as Laura Flanders, Sally Field, Maria Suarez, Nighat representative meant. I attended the YRUU United Nations Confer-

ence 4 years ago, but I was still vague about the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) at the UN. I expected big meetings and lobbying, like the pictures I had seen from the UN Environmental Conference in Rio. The actual function of the NGO conference was to influence and pressure the conference of UN member governments that were meeting at the same time in Beijing. The NGO conference was also a place for women from around the world to share ideas and support for each other in our common

Living in China, I'm a little unsure about what the "free world" heard about the conference. I am under the impression that a lot of press coverage criticized the Chinese government for moving the NGO conference to an inadequate site, the rain, and harassment by the Chinese police. My experience was at times negative, but not for those reasons. Power and water shortages are a part of life for the Chinese people. These complaints undermine the achievements of the conference, and ignore the fact that 1.3 billion Chinese people put up with these problems for a lifetime. I was also frustrated by the

reconstruction for the conference, and while the BBC and AP reporters have lived here for years and surely colleges and friends and multiplied. noted the changes, I heard no media reports about the absence of beggars. Entire street markets -- essential to the livelihood of Beijing residents -- were closed for two months. The city of Huai Rou was almost entirely I have few opportunities to be involved with activism in Beijing, the conference has given me many ideas rebuilt just before the the NGO conference was held there. Thousands of new apartments in Huai Rou are now uninhabited, while Beijing itself still has a drastic housing shortage. All of this went unnoticed by foreign participants at the conference.

My impression of the NGO Forum had less to do with the endless workshops and plenary sessions with enlightening women speakers from all over the world, than with the series of emotional revelations I went through. At the beginning of the conference, I was homesick and frustrated with China's xenophobia and all-around identity crisis as a country. I was sad to find that this negative attitude towards people who are "foreign" didn't always stop at the conference. Adding to my frustration was my commute home by bus revolution. I know also that a personal revolution can cause hundreds of other personal revolutions, until to my all-Chinese school each evening. There was no way the students there could understand my entire countries, religions, and economies are altered. I can already see a great change in China from only experiences alongside women with so many different nationalities, skin colors, hairstyles, and religions. a year ago, and the change within me is no less remarkable.

These experiences made me a believer in the "melting pot" description of the United States. Perhaps because of our multicultural population, we are more accepting (or maybe just less surprised) by people's differences.

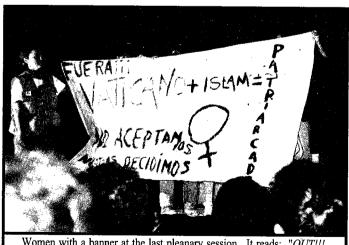
Early in the week, I found a floor to sleep on which saved me from the grueling daily commute My name is Laura Peterson and I was YRUU's official representative to the United Nations Non-home to face my less than understanding Chinese classmates. I met other youth and began to find a niche for myself. I had come to the conference with big expectations, thinking that I was going take a leadership September 8. I am a life-long UU, born in Massachusetts. While living in Iowa, I got involved with Prairie role, get involved with organizations, and meet lots of people. In the end, I found it more useful to simply YRUU representative. The official title on my pass at the Women's Conference said, "Young Religious" women define feminism, work for change, deal with pain, and celebrate life. The conference got much better

> Said Khan, Frances Kissling, Sweet Honey in the Rock, and Hillary Clinton spoke about women's global involvement in media, art, and politics. I watched an Australian activist women's circus troupe and a great French lesbian band who are sure to be famous. I went to workshops about women who fight back in film, women with HIV, the rise of fundamentalism, women's self-defense, cancer rates among third-world farm workers, Chinese propaganda regarding Tibet, and genital mutilation of young women. I used my language skills to meet more of the Chinese participants. I explained to the manager of the McDonalds' stand why some hostile Americans destroyed the plastic Ronald McDonald during a sudden lunch-time protest. The most difficult test of my education, however, was trying to explain to two Chinese women the safer-sex purpose of dental dams. They took some as souvenirs. I also realized that the presence of thousands of Chinese college students interpreting at the conference was a revolutionary event. Even though they spent most of their time collecting buttons and taking pictures, the students were changed and had their eyes opened in ways that the Chinese

government has been terrified of in the past. Their curiosity and ignorance and misunderstanding of Americans and the media in general. Beijing underwent a massive excitement, which was sometimes frustrating to us more "worldly" participants, will be brought back to their

Changes happened in me, too. I found a renewed commitment to social change. Even though for how to use what I have learned here in my plans for the rest of my life. Perhaps after I graduate, I willfind another opportunity to come to China and be in a position where I can cause change. During the conference, I was reading the book Ain't I a Woman by bell hooks. Reading that book in the context of the world conference made me re-evaluate my definition of feminism. I know that I am a woman and a feminist deep inside of me; in all my deeds and choices I am a feminist. I feel committed and proud of my visions for my education, careers, and future.

This is what representing YRUU at the UN-NGO Forum on Women caused: a personal



Women with a banner at the last pleanary session. It reads: Vatican + Islam = Patriarchy. We will not accept; We will decide."

JOB OPENING IN 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, upon September 1, 1996. THE AGE RANGE HAS BEEN RAISED!

Terms of employment: This position is a one-year commitment, beginning September 1 1996 and ending August 31, 1997 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: 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, 1996.

Do You Want to Make a Difference in the World? Are You Trying to Find the Right College?



If you are, then take a look at this!

The Making a Difference College Guide profiles the best colleges and programs for young people who want to help make the world a better place. Making a Difference features colleges with an ethic of service; unique state universities; environmentally focused colleges, and colleges with historic concerns for peace and social justice. These institutions provide the highly engaging, relevant, ethical education that our society urgently needs. Take a look at the great comments it has received:

"Commitment to community and caring about both our human and physical environments should be critical components of a student's educational experience. We feel fortunate to be considered with other colleges that emphasize consciousness about and responsibility for the future of our world." -R. Shaw Jr., Dean of Admissions, Yale University

"I highly recommend this guide for students who care about the Earth" -David Brower, President of Earth Island Institute, Former President of The Sierra Club

"This book is great. If going to college and making a difference in the world are important to you, get this book. If I had it when I was in high school, I probably would have chosen a different, better, school for my needs." -Rob Cavenaugh, YRUU Programs Specialist

The Editor, Miriam Weinstein, is a mother of four who describes herself as "an educated tree hugging vegetarian who recycles conscientiously." A graduate of New College of California, she has been active in social and environmental causes since her youth. For more information on the Making a Difference College Guide: Outstanding Colleges to Help You Make A Better World, call/fax Miriam Weinstein at (415) 258-9924. The guide may be ordered directly from the publisher by calling (800) 218-4242, or by sending \$18.75 SageWorks Press PO Box 150488 San Rafael, CA 94915-0488



YPS Wedding Bells!

Sean Ramsey and Jennifer Martin

(two former Youth Office Interns)

will be married in Dallas, Texas, on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1995.

Both Sean and Jen served as YRUU Programs Specialists -- Jen from September '92 to August '93, and Sean from January.-December '92. Sean also served as Moderator for Youth Council 1995. The ceremony will be performed by the Rev. Meg Riley, who served as Youth Programs Director from 1989-1992.

Congratulations, Sean and Jen!



Here's how to get involved in Continental YRUU!

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

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.

Continental Social Action Coordinator (C*SAC):

Duties include disseminating and gathering information from district Social Action Contacts, developing a SAC packet and representing the social action concerns of YRUU.

Youth Caucus Business Manager/General Assembly Liaison:

Duties include managing the business of and attending the 1996 General Assembly Youth Caucus, and facilitating communication between Youth Council and Youth Caucus.

Transitional Age Range Representative; Representing the Junior High Age Range: Represents the needs of an often under-represented age group on Youth Council.

Adult At-Large: 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.

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 visions 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 YRUU Steering Committee, c/o the Youth Office, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108. Call the Youth Office at (617) 742-2100 x351 or 352 if you have any questions.





DAK

DISCOVERING THE DARE

by Devin Haas

Dare to find the boundary and leap from it.

What good are unbroken boundaries? Dare to do the impossible

For nothing is

Dare to fulfill your dreams

They are what life is made of.

Dare to explore the unknown That is where the knowledge is.

Dare to record the truth not the want.

The truth is what we need.

Dare to believe what the insane say. Who said they were insane?

Dare to define something, then dash that definition asunder. The important things cannot be defined

Dare to tell the believer they are wrong

They too often are.

Dare to be wrong yourself.

No one's perfect.

Dare to change the unchangeable, stop the unstoppable. Nothing can be "un" anything.

Dare to believe the unbelievable

Then it is no longer.

Dare to forget the word of logic

It is without feeling. Date to live by the word of chaos-

It is of love, and hate, and emotion

All you need to be

Dare to take logic and chaos, then find balance

There is the path to your beliefs.

Dare to look at who you are

You need to know Dare to believe what you will be

It will light the way.

Dare to walk past scornful eyes

Scorn is often jealousy Do all of this and you will discover,

What you are.