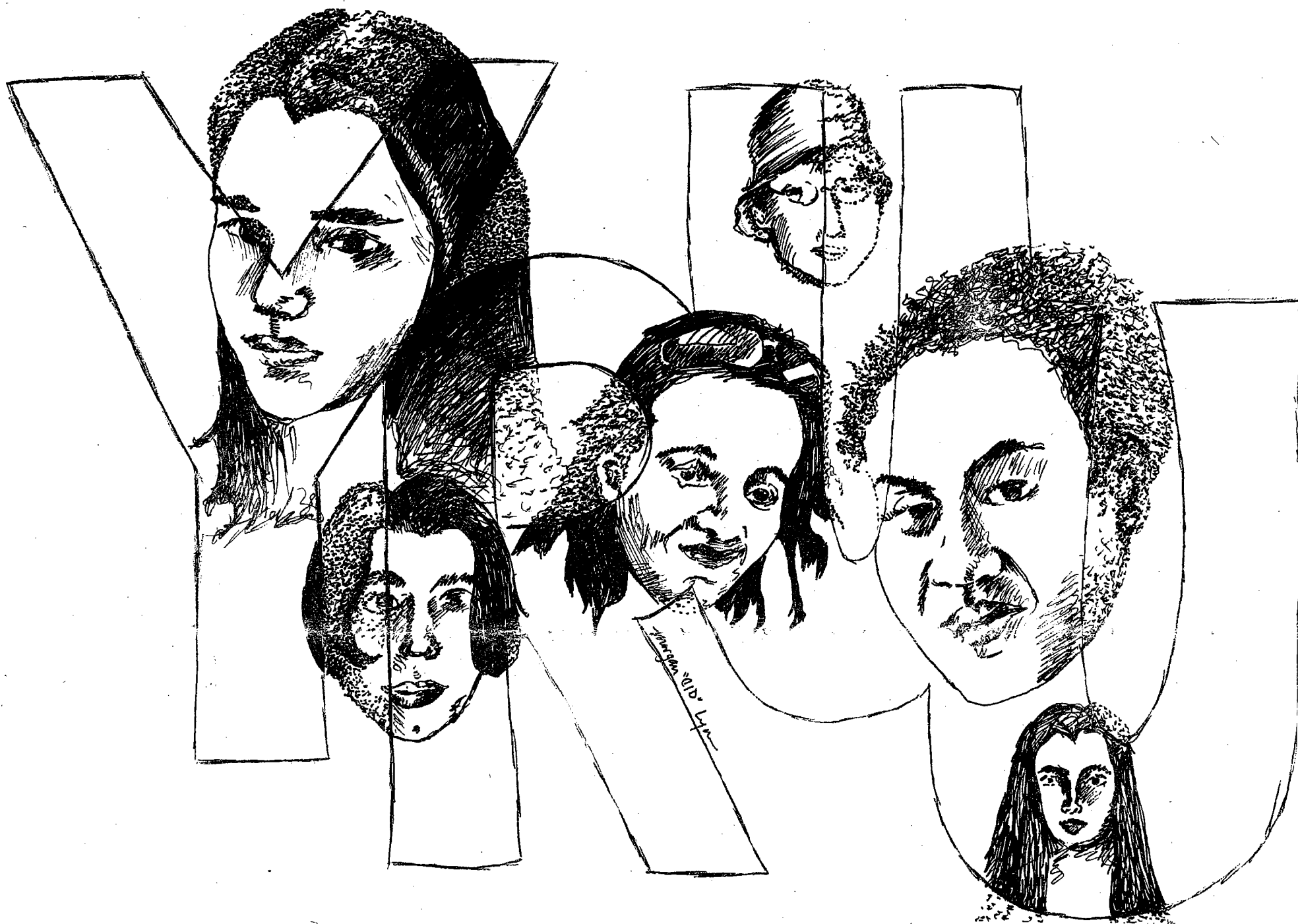


A Point of  
Contact  
Where

# SYNAPSE

Information  
and Energy  
are  
Exchanged

The Continental Newspaper of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists  
Volume XV, Issue I, Spring 1997. 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. Number One, make it so.

#### 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. Blessed Be!

#### I LOVE IT!

Things just couldn't be better. I am mailing this back to you just for the hell of it. Booty!



YRUU at the UUA  
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Boston, MA 02108

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Spring 1997

# Letters to the Editor

Dear Synapse,

You are so cool! Okay, down to business. In the last issue, there was a letter to the editor by Rachel Long who imagines a place where it is "illegal to use women's bodies as sex objects in advertising." I ask you: What about men's bodies? Every day you see pictures of "hot" guys being used to advertise everything from cologne to cars. We must not forget that both sexes face many pressures related to their gender. Also, write to me all you groovin' people out there!

Have a funkadelic day,

Laura Fairham-Wheeler  
3901 S.E. Licynta Ln.  
Milwaukie, OR 97222

Dear Synapse,

As an Episcopalian and sometimes Unitarian, I wanted to say that the article "How I Spent My Summer Vacation" by Elaine Lowe is one of the most moving and hope-inspiring articles I've ever read in this or any other magazine. What I found most inspiring is that a Unitarian from the Northeast was willing to travel to a rural community such as Boligee, Alabama in order to help rebuild a Baptist church. It is indeed groundbreaking to see a member of the Young Religious Unitarian Universalists reaching out to individuals outside the usual constituency of AIDS activists, Inner-City feminists, etc. This is in no way meant to marginalize the needs and concerns of such groups, which are certainly important; however, Ms. Lowe's willingness to help a rural Southern community rebuild its church serves to remind us that activism can be much wider than its current mold.

With sincere regards,

Jay Leary  
1030 Clearview Ave.  
Lakeland, FL 33801

Dear YRUU people,

Let me set the scene. I grew up a U-something-or-other, not really knowing "what religion I was." About four years ago, my very good friend Maggie MacDonald introduced me to her UU church and fledgling youth group. I was hooked from then on and participated in as many UU and YRUU activities as I could. We traveled to GA with our youth group advisors in 1993. Maggie was one of my closest friends.

However, at the end of freshman year in high school, my family and I moved to Scotland. Well, now I'm back in Massa-

chusetts, but between then and now, Maggie has disappeared without a trace! Last I heard, she was living in Rochester, NY. Her family no longer lives in their former house and because of friends going off to college and such, I can't find anyone who has either a phone number or address for her.

I'd desperately like to talk to her, so if anyone happens to know her, please, please, get in touch with me. She was always very active in what she believed and UUism was one of those things. (She also loved/s music.)

Maggie, if you happen to read this I miss you! Call me! Write me!

Thanks a lot for your help, folks,

Laurie Gutierrez  
33 Lamplighter Drive  
Shrewsbury, MA 01545

Dear Synapse,

I have a technical question about being a UU. I've gone to a UU church all my life and have only recently come up with this question. Today in my English class, my teacher was trying to explain what Protestant meant and how broad a term it is (we're doing a bible study right now). She was naming different Christian denominations, asking people to raise their hands if they were that religion. The purpose of this was to tell them they were all Protestant. While doing this she said Unitarian. I raised my hand and was completely blown away to discover that the religion I've belonged to my entire life was Christian. This shocked me because I've never thought of myself or Unitarianism as being Christian. Sure, I thought you could be a Christian and a UU, but I've also thought you could be a Buddhist and a Unitarian. Could you clear this all up?

Sincerely,

Anya Groner

Dear Anya,

*Unitarianism (note: NOT Unitarian Universalism) began as an outgrowth of Christianity. The word "Unitarian" is a reference to our forebears' rejection of the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity of God (God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). Today, Unitarian Universalism (note: NOT Unitarianism) is very different from many other main line Protestant religions. However, because our pasts are intertwined, many confuse our religion as "just another" Protestant denomination. If you want more information about the history of Unitarian Universalism, read A Stream of Light edited by Conrad Wright (Skinner House: 1989). Available from the UUA Bookstore.*  
- the editors

## Everything you wanted to know 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:** Marc Loustau, David Taylor, Jory Agate, and Anne Fleming.

**Mechanicals:** Proof reading, 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 submitter's 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. Unused 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: October 15, 1997.

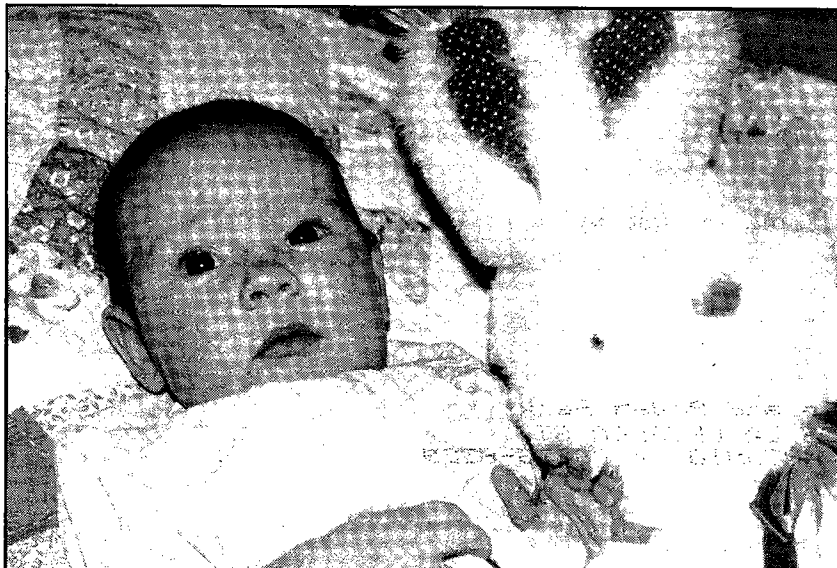
**Send all submissions and advertising to:**

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

## What Do Past Youth Office Staffers Do When They Grow Up?

### They Reproduce!

The adorable baby you see to the left is the child of Jenna Martin (YRUU Programs Specialist from August 1992 - September 1993) and Sean Ramsey (YRUU Programs Specialist from January 1992 -December 1996), these two past Youth Office staffers received into their family a new addition, a baby daughter they named Austen Noel Martin. They make the first family comprised completely of past YRUU Programs Specialists. If tradition serves, we expect to see Austen in the Youth Office sometime in the future. Congratulations, Jenna, Sean, and Austen!



□ YRUU in Action

## THE NOW YOUNG FEMINISTS SUMMIT

By Elizabeth Schoenfeld

How does one become empowered? During the weekend of April 11-13, 1,200 young women and men from all over the United States found the answer in Washington, DC. These young women and men gathered for the third Young Feminists Summit sponsored by NOW, the National Organization for Women.

As young feminists we were joined together by a number of things. We knew that women and men are not treated equally in our society. We realized the importance of fighting for the rights of women, minorities, gays and lesbians, and the poor. Most of all, we realized that each of us, individually, could make a difference.

So what do over a thousand young feminists do when they get together? They learn from one another. A number of informative and thought provoking workshops were presented by both older feminists and by many of the young women and men attending the summit. Among the topics covered were Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in School, Young Women's Abortion Rights, Feminism and Socialism, Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Assault, Self Defense Skills, Eating Disorders/Body Image, The "F" Word: Calling Yourself a Feminist and Acting On It, and Political Organizing in Your Community.

We spent a great deal of time sharing ideas and discussing issues. Often, affirmative action and abortion access were mentioned prominently as issues of great concern, but no more often than gay/lesbian rights and combatting violence against women. We had no problem identifying problems in the world.

Out of this possibly depressing context came the opportunity for us to further our messages. We shared many possible solutions. "The Day of Silence," for example, is a day, designated by a high school or college, for young people to remain perfectly silent. "The Day of Silence" demonstrates the isolation gay and lesbian youth live in every day. Another idea was "Take Back the Night" rallies. These protests let the world know that young women will not continue to

be victims. They proclaim all young women's right to walk around their campuses and cities without fear of physical harm. Lastly, "Biased Bake Sales" where the customer pays according to what his social "group" makes. For instance, white men would pay a dollar, women 72 cents, and minorities less. These are only a few of the many ideas we shared over the duration of the conference.

The empowerment came from the energy generated in the room, energy from over a thousand young people full of ideas, hope, and excitement. Although each had individual goals, pieces of feminism that were most important to her/him, all shared a common goal and belief: equality for all, black or white or other, man or woman, gay or straight, rich or poor.

The energy of these 1,200 young people reached an exciting boiling point on our last day in Washington. At noon on Sunday, April 14th, we took to the streets and marched to the White House with our message. Screaming for equal opportunities, respect, abortion access, and a number of other struggles, the crowd marched in circles in front of the home of the President and his family. Every chant screamed, every sign held, and every person counted empowered us more and more. We said to the world, "For those who thought the women's movement dead, abortion access slowly creeping away, affirmative action dying, and hatred and racism taking rule, think again. Feminism is here, full of energy, and not slowing down until every last battle has been fought and the victors are us." ☺

**Elizabeth is a high school senior in Sharon, MA. She was the official YRUU representative to the NOW Young Feminists Summit**



Elizabeth Schoenfeld (center) and others at the NOW Young Feminists Summit

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## Alison Purcell As You've Never Seen Her: The New YRUU Program Specialist

Hello YRUU!!

My name is Alison Purcell and I am your new YPS, ready to serve and obey. If you've been to a Con Con in the last five years you might have seen me around. I am originally from Oakland, California (Pacific Central District), where

I discovered those great things called conferences that helped me survive my adolescence.

Currently, I am finishing up my second year at the University of Oregon in Eugene, majoring in Environmental Studies. It is a rainy place to live, but I try not to let it ruffle my feathers (quack, quack!). Besides facing loads of school work, I spend my time

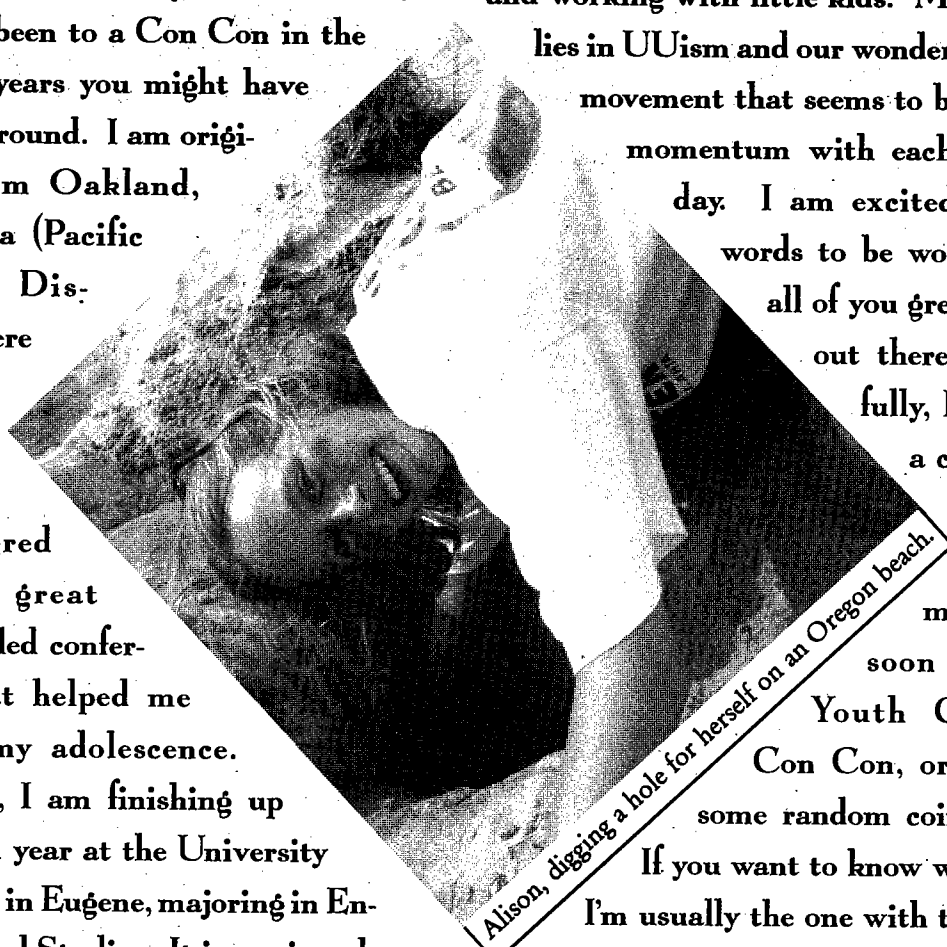
playing Ultimate Frisbee, listening to ska, and working with little kids. My passion lies in UUism and our wonderful youth movement that seems to be gaining momentum with each passing day. I am excited beyond words to be working for all of you great people out there. Hopefully, I will get a chance to

meet you soon at GA, Youth Council, Con Con, or just by some random coincidence.

If you want to know who I am, I'm usually the one with the blond hair, leading a song.

Keep the Faith,

Alison Purcell







# Continental YRUU



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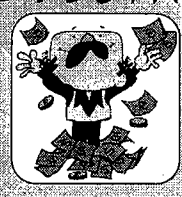
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Oakland, CA 94602  
(510) 482-4179



## NEW RESOURCES FROM THE YOUTH OFFICE.



## Fundraising in YRUU Youth Groups



This resource lists a variety of different methods to raise money in your local or district YRUU group.

TO RECEIVE A COPY CONTACT THE YOUTH OFFICE.

## YRUU Bylaw Changes

This year at Youth Council the following changes to the YRUU bylaws will be voted on. The following resolutions have been passed by the Youth Council and the UUA Board of Trustees. In order for them to take effect, they must pass the Youth Council again this year. If you have any questions or comments about these changes, please contact your Youth Council Representative. If you would like a copy of the bylaws, contact the Youth Office or look them up on the Web at <http://uua.org/YRUU/bylaws.html>

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

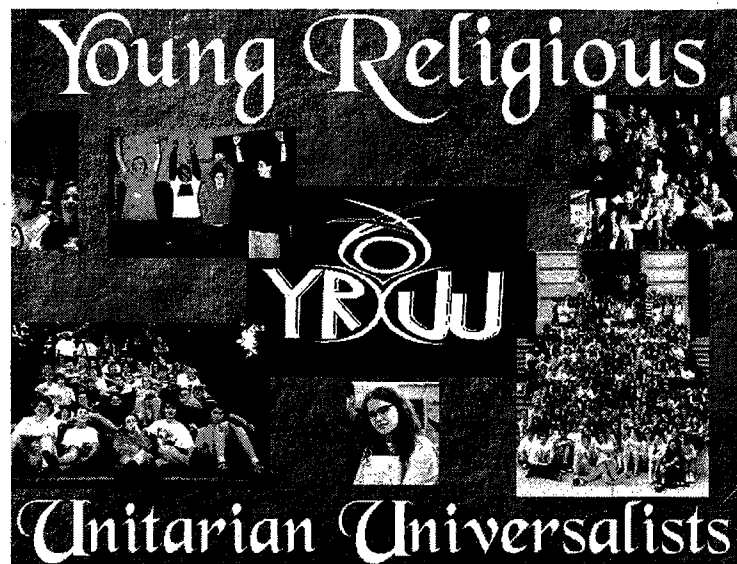
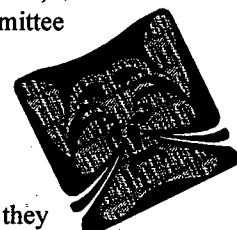
WHEREAS Youth Council is an affiliate of the Unitarian Universalist Association, a continental organization; and  
WHEREAS the UUA recognizes the diversity of two of this continent's countries through inclusion of the Canadian At-Large position on its board; and  
WHEREAS the representation of Canadian YRUUs on Youth Council has been inadequate in recent years; and  
WHEREAS the uniquely Canadian perspective can only be presented by the presence of a Canadian youth;  
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a new At-Large position be created with a specific designation of Canadian Youth At-Large.  
THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that this Canadian At-Large be charged with outreach to the continued continent in attempts to pool more Canadian representation in continental events and district wide events.

### Corresponding Bylaw Change:

Article V, section I  
b) [Three] Four at-large youth. ...as previously determined by Steering Committee. And One Canadian youth shall represent Canadian constituents.  
[text to be deleted] text to be inserted  
Fiscal impact: \$1,000

### Resolution on Changing the Bylaw Pertaining to the Composition of the Steering Committee

WHEREAS the bylaws currently state that the Steering Committee is composed of "five youth and one adult, with at least one youth representing each age group: Jr. High, Senior, and Post;" and  
WHEREAS the original structure was created to ensure representation on Steering Committee from a wide range of ages; and  
WHEREAS these categories pertain to the old age range of 12-22 years; and  
WHEREAS the three categories (Junior, Senior, and Post High) cannot be suitably represented with the new age range of 14-20 years; and  
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Steering Committee selection be based specifically on age; and  
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the categories be:  
one person 14-16  
one person age 16-18  
and one person age 18-20  
youth ages 16-18 must choose which category they want to represent  
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that if two or more people are not in the election for a particular age group, then someone outside a particular age group be allowed to represent that age range.



Cover Page of the YRUU Website

## YRUU on the Internet

YRUU has made the jump onto the information superhighway, and is cruising.

If you are a Web-surfing junkie, you can now get your YRUU fix all over the web. The YRUU Website is the official website of YRUU, and with over 100 different pages it has the most extensive amount of information on YRUU and UU youth programs assembled anywhere outside of the Youth Office. The site includes back issues of *Synapse* and the Youth Advisory, online Con Con registration forms, information on upcoming continental events and leadership opportunities, district information, links to other YRUU related sites, online copies on almost all Youth Office resources,

and a whole lot more.

The official YRUU Website is located at <http://www.uua.org/YRUU>

You can also find a slew of other district and local YRUU webpages in cyberspace. Districts such as Mountain Desert, Mass Bay, Ohio Meadville, Central Midwest, Joseph Priestley, and Southwest all have websites.

Make sure that you check out the fantastic Ohio Meadville District YRUU Website. This district's website contains back issues of the district newsletter, a guest book, conference flyers, a district calendar, and a photo archive. Check it out at:

<http://www.ipu.edu/~kznf/omdyruu>

## Leadership Development Conference Trainers

*Coming To Your District Soon*

Does your district programming need a shot in the arm? Are programs and leadership just not up to the level that they could be? Are the leaders in your local and district YRUU groups going off to college and leaving you high and dry? No need to despair, we have the panacea for all your leadership aches and pains.

The leadership cure does not come in a bottle. It comes in the form of 18 newly trained Leadership Development Conference Trainers. These YRUU leaders from around the continent have been trained to

teach you a wide variety of skills like community building, the consensus process, worship planning, brainstorming, facilitation, and much more.

If you are interested in attending a Leadership Development Conference, contact your Youth Council Representative to find out when one is scheduled in your district.

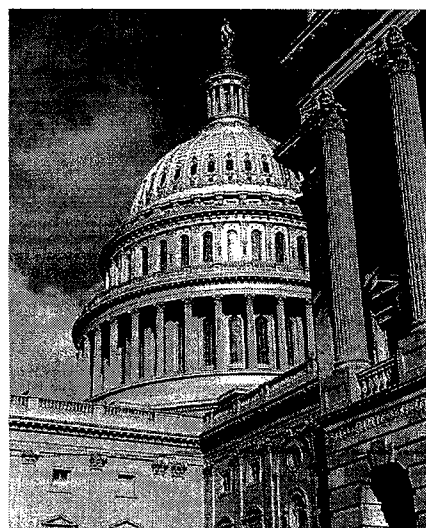
If you are interested in sponsoring a Leadership Development Conference, contact the Youth Office for more information.



**Continental Leadership Development Conference Trainers**  
at the C\*LDCT in Boston, MA.

## Announcing the 2nd Annual YRUU National Social Justice Conference

The YRUU Youth Office, in conjunction with the UUA Washington Office for Social Justice, will cosponsor the 2nd Annual YRUU National Social Justice Conference, from February 24-27, 1998, in Washington, DC. The Youth Office will select a small group of youth from around the country to attend.



The conference will focus on putting our hands and feet on the UU principles by learning about political and social issues, becoming familiar with the US political process, and networking with other youth activists from around the country.

Some of the highlights of the conference include writing a press release, participating in a letter drop to Congressional offices, visiting the sights of Washington, DC, and spending a day lobbying Congress about issues of concern to UU youth.

For more information and an application form, please contact the Youth Office.

## The S.A.T.U.U.R.D.A.Y. Conference

*(Sexually Alternative Teenage UUs Respecting Diversity Among Youth)*

**Northeast Regional Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender (and straight allies) youth empowerment conference open to all UU youth, sponsored by the Metro New York District.**

This first-ever UU youth conference for GLBT youth and their heterosexual allies will focus on leadership development for GLBT activism; making schools, communities, and youth groups safer for GLBT youth; building gay/straight alliances in schools; political activism; and celebrating GLBT identity! Come learn and have fun with us from 7:00 PM, August 10 to 11:00 AM, August 14, 1997, in Princeton, NJ (accessible by public transportation).

*\$125 registration fee includes food and housing.*

**For application, contact:**

Michael Shermanheld  
195 North Ave.  
Westport, CT 06880  
(203) 226-4612

## "In the Spirit" The Continental Spirituality Development Conference

After many years of discussion and debate, the plans are finally solidified. It is here, the first YRUU Continental Spirituality Development Conference. The C\*SDC will take place May 1-3, 1998.

At the 1994 Youth Council, there was a great desire expressed by youth to increase the religious and spiritual aspects of Unitarian Universalism in YRUU. The idea of a Spirituality Development Conference branched from the success of the Continental Leadership Development Conference in promoting leadership within districts.

One youth and one adult, preferably a minister, will be selected from each district to participate in the conference. Conference participants will be trained to co-lead a Spirituality Development Conference in their own districts. The two leaders that receive this training will be expected to hold a SDC in their district after the conclusion of the conference.

The conference will give 23 youth and 23 adults the opportunity to experience and develop the spiritual and religious aspects of YRUU. At the conclusion of the conference, participants will have developed a grasp on ways to foster spirituality, been trained to co-lead Spirituality Conferences, and contributed to a comprehensive Spirituality Resource Packet that will be available from the Youth Office.

The conference will address spirituality within five specific areas: Community, Youth Worship, Personal Spiritual Practice, Bridging (between spirituality within YRUU and spirituality within UUism), and Worship Resources.

Through this conference, we hope to make spirituality a very present element of youth programming. We hope to bring together both youth and adults to share and learn about spirituality and Unitarian Universalism.

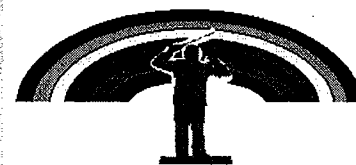
The conference will be held in Briarwood, Texas. The cost will be \$600 per district and will include transportation, room and board, training manual, and all of the resources you will need to host a Spirituality Conference in your district. Start fundraising and publicizing now!

**For an application form, please contact the Youth Office.**

**Applications will be due March 1, 1998.**

**Each district's participant will be selected by their district.**

## Con Con '97 Rainbow Connection:



*Building Rainbows Through  
the Music of Our Lives*

*August 4-10 in Ware, MA*

*75 miles west of Boston*

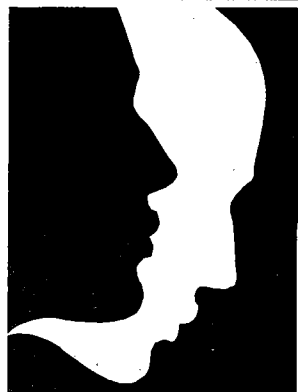
*For Registration Information, Contact  
the Youth Office.*

Or register on-line at <http://uua.org/YRUU/concon.html>

# Events and Information







# YRUU And Racism

## How Welcoming Are We?

By David Taylor

Is YRUU a place where all youth can feel safe and welcome regardless of the color of their skin? Or is YRUU an unintentionally racist organization? Are we as liberals simply closing our eyes to the reality of racism in what we do? Or are we honest about our level of comfort with people of color? When it comes to the issue of racism, there are no easy answers. These are hard questions.

As a denomination made up primarily of white, middle class, suburban liberals we are often ignorant of the realities of racism. We do not have to deal with daily oppression and because we feel that racism is wrong, we assume that we are not part of the problem.

Last year's General Assembly saw the publication of *Journey Toward Wholeness*, the report of the Racial and Cultural Diversity Task Force. The report stated that Unitarian Universalism has a long way to go if it desires to become a religion dedicated to anti-racism and anti-oppression. The report applies not only to the individual congregations, but also to all of the programs of the Unitarian Universalist Association, including YRUU. In response to this report, the YRUU Youth Council passed a series of resolutions that included incorporating anti-racist programming into at least one continental YRUU event a year, the creation of a youth specific anti-racism resource, support of the Journey Toward Wholeness program, and the creation of a liaison between Youth Council and the Black Concerns Working Group.

While these are wonderful first steps toward raising the awareness of racism and inequal-

ity within our organization, YRUU cannot make any serious steps toward being a group dedicated to anti-racism and anti-oppression until we take a long, hard look at ourselves.

The question I want to raise is, "Why are there so few youth of color at YRUU events?" The obvious answer is because there are so few people of color in the UU church, and beyond that, there

YRUU is simply not ready to accept real diversity within its community.

are so few people of color in the middle class neighborhoods where we choose to locate our churches. However, could it be that the issue is a bit more complex? Could it be that YRUU does not welcome youth of color in the same way that YRUU often fails to welcome youth who do not have odd colored hair and strange piercings?

I feel that we as YRUUers are not truly welcoming to youth that have experiences outside of what we are used to. While we are one of the few places where youth who question typical high school stereotypes or who are of a minority sexual orientation can feel safe, we are still a very homogenous group.

We have problems welcoming youth who have grown up in an urban, lower class environment. Unfortunately, the reality is that these youth

are predominately youth of color. People with these experiences are foreign to us and, for the most part, we do not know how to deal with them when they are thrown into our homogenous groups of white, middle class, rebellious youth.

We as Unitarian Universalists have become very comfortable with our racial and economic demographics. This has happened because, as a predominantly white religion, we have the power to let ourselves become comfortable.

We as YRUUers need to stop and examine the subtle racist tendencies that we carry with us. We need to honestly open our youth communities to new cultural influences and experiences. We need to create environments where youth of color can feel welcome and not isolated. We need to change and become open to experiences outside of our own.

As *Journey Toward Wholeness* stated, "Sometimes the faithful response means choosing to accept being uncomfortable. What provides the dominate culture with comfort may be the very thing that assures its continued domination. In this case those in the dominant culture need to feel some discomfort so that others can feel a higher level of comfort. If we can learn to be 'comfortable' with the ambiguity that comes with the struggle to develop a new identity that incorporates those who were previously left out, than comfort is a valid Unitarian Universalist value. But we are not there yet." Until YRUU learns to embrace this level of discomfort, it is simply not ready to accept real diversity within its community.

David is a current YRUU Program Specialist.

## Unitarian Universalism: An Accepting Community

By Aaron Ivner

I find racism in the UU community no worse than what would be found in other churches or in society in general. Yes, there are few minorities in my congregation or the Southwest District, but it seems to me that this ratio of minorities is the same in most any other social gathering of which I am a part. The UU community does a great job when it comes to accepting minorities. I have never once felt excluded from a UU activity because of my race.

I am a Korean-American and was adopted when I was three years old. The only view I have of society places me in the role of the minority, yet I have never felt this reflected in the UU community. I have heard a lot of criticism against Unitarian Universalism for not having "enough" minorities and I believe that something good should be said for its acceptance of minorities already in the community. It is one thing to not have minorities, but it is another not to accept them.

I am not saying I wouldn't like to see more minorities join the UU community. I just feel that there is little that can be done. It is very difficult to attract a group of people solely by race. The best way I see to attract more minorities is to try to get a large group of people to join and hope that some percentage of them are minorities. I, personally, would rather someone say to me, "Why don't you ride bikes more? It is great for your health," as opposed to, "Why don't you ride bikes more? Koreans love to."

I understand that for some minorities there might be a problem with racism in Unitarian Universalism, but from my experience, I think that the UU church would be the last place one would find racism. After all, those who are open-minded to different beliefs should at least be open to different colors of skin.

Aaron is a junior in high school in Jonesburg, Arkansas.



## What is Racism?

By Jared Rehberg

The question of racism is an unpopular question, and the last subject to speak about while waiting at the bar for a drink. But like all problems in this country, the painful issues that are talked about the least are tolerated the most.

What is racism? Without looking at a dictionary, I search my brain for events from my life that I believe, without question, call for the label of racism.

When someone looks at me and verbally communicates:

1. You speak great English.
2. You look unique.
3. Am I speaking too quickly for you?
4. You weren't born in America, huh?
5. I've never hung out with someone like you.
6. Are your parents tan, too?
7. I'm not racist, I'm talking to you.
8. You must like Chinese food.
9. My father died in Vietnam, thanks to you.
10. Play ping-pong much?
11. You must be good at math.
12. Why aren't you getting straight A's?
13. Hey, n\*\*\*\*r!
14. Do you mind if I tell an Asian joke?
15. (no communication)

This is racism.

Jared attends Franklin Pierce College and is from Northborough, MA.

# Where we are and...

# THINGS YOU CAN DO TO COMBAT RACISM

**Recommended Racial Justice Action Projects for 1996-97. Prepared by the 1996 Youth Council Racial Justice Working Group.**

## Creating a dialogue with youth groups of color:

Many UU churches already have African-American sister churches. If this is the case in your congregation, set up an activity with your sister church's youth group. Some ideas for possible activities include a social event, a joint social action project, a joint worship service, or inviting the youth group to participate in a district conference. If you do not have a sister church, think about starting such a relationship.

## Working to support black churches that have been burned in the South:

Already, the UU Service Committee (UUSC) has set up a work camp in Alabama for UUs to participate in rebuilding burned black churches. Youth groups can participate in this process by actually going to the work camp to help or by raising funds and donating them to the UUSC's efforts. For more information on how you can get involved in this UU initiative, contact Rev. Jose Ballester at the UUSC in Cambridge, MA, at (617) 868-6600. For more information, see page 8.

## Get involved in your local community's social action needs:

Look around your community and find out about the ongoing racial justice projects there. Is there an anti-racism, interfaith committee? A team working on consciousness raising? A demonstration that you could participate in?

## Show a video:

Show a video and then have a discussion. Some great video resources are "The Color of Fear," "Free Indeed," "Power of One," or "Brown Eyes/Blue Eyes." Most of these can be found either in your district office or from the UUA Video Loan Library. Call the Video Loan Library at (617) 742-2100 ext. 121.

## Hold a Jubilee World Workshop:

The Black Concerns Working Group sponsors an anti-racism workshop called the Jubilee World workshop. This workshop is available for youth conferences. For more information on possibly holding a Jubilee World workshop in your district, call Christine Murphy in the Faith in Action Department at the UUA at (617) 742-2100 ext. 642.

## Research the racial justice policies of businesses you frequent:

Many businesses have either positive or negative policies regarding racial justice. Know who you are buying from and what they represent.

# Racism and YRUU

## A Lack of Diversity

By Eddie Peppers

Racism in a lot of YRUU groups and UU churches exists, not intentionally, but definitely. The reason for this is that most youth that attend YRUU groups are nine times out of ten friends, and then predominately white.

Now in Chicago the problem is the same: there are not enough black and Hispanic youth in our church. When I attend YRUU conferences, I seldom see black or Hispanic youth. Many of the black or Hispanic youth I try to get to attend YRUU groups usually think that the other youth are weird or gay. The problem is they do not understand YRUU. A lot of people my age (18) are oblivious to the fact that Unitarian Universalist churches exist. This included myself until five years ago when a friend turned me on to the 2nd Unitarian Church in Chicago. When I first started attending this church, I felt all of the same feelings that many black and Hispanic youth deal with when they enter the UU church. But I quickly got attached to my church. YRUU and the UU church need to reach out to black and Hispanic youth. Black and Hispanic youth are often raised in Catholic or Baptist churches and do not know anything else. That is the problem- not enough diversity and too much adversity in their lives that they don't have the option to explore religious alternatives. That is YRUU and racism.

**Eddie is a senior in high school in Chicago, Illinois.**

## Get in touch with cool non-UU anti-racism groups:

There are many groups that do great racial justice work. Check the Web for Anti-Racist Action in Columbus, OH, the Institute for Healing Racism in Chicago, IL, or the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond in New Orleans, LA.

## Get a copy of "Getting Started on the Journey Toward Wholeness:"

The Department for Faith in Action has put out a booklet called "Getting Started." This is a great resource that gives some simple action steps, lists many organizational resources, and has an extensive bibliography. To get a copy, call Christine Murphy in the Faith in Action Department at the UUA at (617) 742-2100 ext. 642.

# Raining Revolution

By Christine Murphy

*Let it rain, let it rain, let  
God's water feed me.  
The water of life  
mentally rinsing me,  
physically  
drenching me, most are  
frowning upon your arrival,  
but I need you for survival.  
And when you fall on my  
community, I run outside to properly greet you.  
Let it rain take my pain,  
I'm glad to meet you.  
Fill my eyes with a colorful rainbow.  
Every Drop that hits me,  
fills me with an  
immeasurable amount of security.  
Knowing my God  
acknowledges me  
as if each drop of rain is  
aimed toward me.  
It's raining revolution  
I feel the rain enhances  
the revolution and reminds us  
Of a spiritual solution,  
And reminds us of a natural, yet unnatural solution.  
It's raining revolution.*

I am always moved by this song, written and performed by Arrested Development off their first album, *Three Years, Five Months and Two Days in the Life Of*. It reminds me that anti-rac-

ism work is internal spiritual work that I must embark on as part of being a Unitarian Universalist. As a white person in this society, I carry with me racist baggage, which then becomes my religious responsibility to dismantle on a daily basis. This is the spiritual revolution that I work toward as a UU.

I think that there are a lot of misconceptions about racists. That they are bad people- not like us. That they are mean and hateful and violent, filled with bad intentions. That they run around down south somewhere wearing sheets and lighting black churches on fire. While I would not argue that such people are racist, this is not the deciding definition. It seems to me that even the most well intentioned, caring, liberal people are racist. In fact, they are you and me. We all carry the baggage of having grown up in a society that values white people over all other races. We all have been indoctrinated in some way. And it is only by seeing and acknowledging this problem that we can really begin to grow and be different.

I think that by continuing to concentrate on the really visible, ultra extremist church burning guys in white sheets as racists, is a form of denial. We can keep the focus off ourselves. Its a lot easier to fight racism when we don't have to look at our selves. For me, working for racial justice is growth within myself, looking at the places where I can learn and be educated. This kind of openness is what our faith embodies.

As Arrested Development's song says, the rain reminds us that spiritually plays a part in all changes. Knowing our many varied conceptions of God acknowledges us through each drop of rain, gives us the hope and the strength for any revolution. Further, the solutions to our problems are natural and yet unnatural: Supernatural if you will, but still part of our essential selves.

The presence of God via the rain enhances the revolution. Like rain, we need the presence of the holy for survival in this racist world. When we take on the challenges of actively changing, looking within ourselves, we need both the divine and each other for survival. The rain reminds us of this. And when the rain falls on our community, we are reminded of how interconnected we are through the web of all existence. If we are of our best selves we run outside to properly greet the spirit in the rain.

Let the rain take our pain, filling our eyes with a colorful rainbow and opening them. My lord thanks for life. We must take responsibility for the solution. We could only hope that it rains revolution.

**Christine is a former YPS who works in the Faith in Action Department of the UUA.**

# Where we are going



# "PUTTING OUR FAITH IN ACTION"

The First Annual YRUU National Social Justice Conference

By Ellen Sale

On February 22-25, thirty youth gathered in Washington, DC to attend the first annual YRUU National Social Justice Conference. This diverse group of conferees represented over twenty states and one Canadian province. These differences were transcended as the gathering embarked on its purpose of inspiring action and making change.

After introductions and a rousing game of "UU and Government Jeopardy," attendees viewed "Ballot Measure 9," a video documenting a recent Oregon citizens' initiative to eradicate all rights (the few that now exist) for gays and lesbians. The film served not only to inspire us, as it detailed the heroic counter-organizing of Oregonians against Measure 9, but also provided a catalyst for discussion about organizing against hate crimes, fear-driven legislation, and homophobia. One of the primary organizers of Oregon's "No On 9" campaign, Donna Red Wing, joined the conference later to answer questions and give advice about grassroots activism.

Sunday's schedule was very full, as was the entire weekend, and included an anti-racism/anti-violence workshop, attending the Sunday service at All Souls Unitarian Universalist church (with a youth focused sermon!), a visit to the Holocaust Museum, and a late night "vehicular tour" of Washington's monuments. Later in the evening, conferees discussed their experiences at the Holocaust Museum, frequently finding parallels in present-day struggles against oppression.

Whereas the first two days of the conference presented attendees with numerous issues and ideas to discuss and process, the final two days fo-

cused on taking action.

Monday began our activities on Capitol Hill. The Methodist Building served as the headquarters for YRUU's lobbying campaign, which ironically also



Youth at the YRUU Social Justice Conference in front of All Souls UU Church

houses Rep. Newt Gingrich's DC pad! Conferees were briefed on current Congressional issues by speakers from NARAL, the Human Rights Campaign, and a welfare reform organization. After-

ward we formed two groups, one to draft a letter about stopping discriminatory legislation, and another to organize a press release stating YRUU's support of funds for the International Family Planning Aid Program, which was scheduled for a Senatorial vote the following day. Conferees then paired off to complete a "letter drop," delivering our letters to the offices of all members of Congress. We faxed our press release to such major media sources as Newsweek and National Public Radio.

The final day of the conference culminated with Congressional lobbying. Each attendee visited the offices of his or her senators and/or representatives to discuss issues of concern to YRUUers. Conferees asked for support for The Employment Non-discrimination Act (ENDA), which would extend legal and civil rights to homosexual men and women. Though not all Congress people were in agreement with our viewpoints, a definite appreciation for our concern and initiative was expressed. The conference concluded with a final sharing circle and lunch with UUA President John Buehrens, who stressed his support of both the National Social Justice Conference and YRUU.

The energy created at the YRUU National Social Justice Conference will no doubt be released across the continent, creating action and manifesting change. It is the hope of all attendees that the gathering becomes an annual event.

Ellen, the YRUU Continental Social Action Coordinator, is a senior in high school in Charleston, WV.

## UUSC Workcamp Opportunities for Youth

# Using Your Hands and Hearts for Change

"Transforming experience." These are the words volunteers use often in describing their experience helping to rebuild burnt churches this past summer. UUSC Just Works volunteers traveled many roads to Boligee, Alabama. They came in response to an inner call, seeking to express their love and concern for those hurt by hatred. They were transformed. The people they met were transformed. The community they helped was transformed. In the end, beautiful new churches welcomed parishioners and volunteers back to celebrate what love had created.

But the job is not finished. Throughout the fall and winter, UUSC Just Works volunteers have joined others in continuing to rebuild the communities shattered by fire and hatred. This summer, workcamp opportunities will be available at a variety of sites. Currently, these sites are available through our project partners:

### 1. Youth Workcamp, St. Mary's County, Maryland, July 6-12.

Members of Barrios Unidos in Washington, DC, and urban and suburban youth will join together and work on rehabilitating the home of an elderly low-income homeowner. After work, there will be time to get to know one another, breaking barriers of race, culture, and background, and learning leadership, conflict resolution, and diversity skill. Participants will stay in the Queen Anne's Dormitory at St. Mary's College. Cost is \$150 for the week.

### 2. Intergenerational Women's Workcamp, St. Mary's County, Maryland, July 13-19.

Women of all ages will work together to rehabilitate the home of an elderly low-income homeowner during the day, and enjoy a beautiful waterfront setting and special activities during off-work hours. Work projects will include general repair work, painting, limited construction, weatherizing, landscaping, and overall cleanup. Participants will live in Queen Anne's Dormitory at St. Mary's College on the banks of the St. Mary's River. Cost is \$150 for the week.

### 3. Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota, July 17-August 11.

This workcamp is being operated in cooperation with UU-Serve and will be on the Rosebud Reservation of the Oglala Sioux nation. The camp will be hosted by Russell Eagle Bear, a leader of the Oglala Sioux people, and the staff will include Alice Winner (Director of UU-Serve), a UU staffer, and a UU minister. The experience will include housing renovation, assistance to a recreation program for Oglala youth, excursions to the Black Hills, and opportunities to learn about Sioux cultural practices and the economic and political challenges facing the Oglala people. The last four days of the camp will be the Sun Dance. Workcampers will help set up for the event and will be allowed to watch, though not participate in, this important part of the Oglala Sioux culture. Workcampers will sleep in tents and some indoor accommodations, with limited access to showers and running water. Cost is \$100 per week or \$300 for the entire camp. Limited scholarships are available.

### 4. Wichita Falls, Texas, June 21-August 23.

This workcamp is tentative, pending signing of agreement with the congregation. Rebuilding the burned (fall 1996) Power House Church of God and Christ, a mixed race but predominantly black church. The nearest city is Lawton, Oklahoma, but Wichita Falls is equidistant from Dallas and Oklahoma City. Cost is \$150 per week.

If you would like to apply for these workcamps, or to receive information on future workcamps, please contact the UUSC. The UUSC will send you an application for the specific workcamps as well as complete instructions. You must arrange your own transportation to and from the workcamps. The workcamps fee includes housing and meals. Please be aware that the workcamps fill up quickly.

**UUSC — Just Works**  
130 Prospect Street  
Cambridge, MA 02139-1813  
(617) 868-6600  
(617) 868-7102 fax



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# ACTION IN YRUU



# Activist Youth Groups: "We're On A Mission!"

By Rev. Greg Stewart

When I was Director of Religious Education at the Second Unitarian Church of Chicago, members of our decidedly activist YRUU group used to say, "We're on a mission from 'To Whom It May Concern!'" For many members, "Whom" equaled God. For others, "Whom" could not be pinned down that specifically. But both subgroups had one thing in common, and that was a sense of mission. They did not meet weekly just for the sake of meeting. They met because they were called to meet. After all, they were Unitarian Universalists. They had a mission that could not be stopped.

Having a mission is what delineates activist, mission-based youth groups from other purely social groups. My experience has determined that there are four essential components for activist, mission-based youth groups. They are cohesion, community, confrontation, and celebration.

Cohesion means that youth group space is a safe space, whether it is in the church building, on a white-water rafting trip, or during a service project at a local housing project. It

is a place where members can hug each other and not have to deal with strange looks or stupid innuendoes. Guys can cry, girls can pound their fists against the wall, gay and lesbian couples can hold hands, and designer labels are less important than the person wearing (or not wearing) them. Attitudes are checked at the door. Being present is the only requirement for membership, and there are no "visitors."

Once a youth group becomes cohesive, the natural response is to share it with others. Anything that gives your own life greater meaning and purpose cannot be hoarded. You've got to get your "good news" out of the pews (or the sagging, moldy, worn sofas and chairs) and into the streets. This usually means inviting non-UU youth to your meetings. This means that you all won't think alike, believe alike, look alike, dream alike, wear the same clothes, or listen to the same music. This tests the

group's cohesion, but when diversity is embraced, cohesion is reinforced. The result is an authentic, vibrant community.

While you may not need a bigger youth group, there is a whole world out there who need Unitarian Universalism! If you don't tell them, then who will?

Community building is like weightlifting. You stretch and tear the tissue that holds you together, yet you get stronger in the process. Once you bulk up, you need to put all that muscle mass to work. That is where the confrontation comes in. A strong, cohesive youth group can take on the world! That is exactly where most youth group activities ought to take place—in the world, not in the church.

What needs confronting in your church? In your community? If it is ageism, join the worship committee, attend board meetings, volunteer for fundraising. If it is racism, work on community projects that will enable you to make friends with youth of another color. If it is homophobia, turn your fellowship hall into a dance hall once in a while. If it is sexism, classism, or any other -ism, there is only one thing to do: slap it in the face and get busy! Youth groups

have to stand for something or they will fall for anything.

I heard a minister once preach, "Don't forget the Alleluias!" Sometimes being a member of an activist youth group—a Unitarian Universalist group, no less—can be hard work, but with that work comes the joy of victory. You have got to party as hard as you work, and celebrate with every fiber of your being every time you do something that makes the world a better place. Every time you hug a sister or a brother in pain. Every time you invite an "outsider" into the group. Yes, you had better put partying at the top of your youth group's agenda because activist, mission-based youth groups have a lot to say "Alleluia!" about!

The next time your youth group sits down to work on its mission statement, tell them to get out of their chairs and into the streets first. Get busy out in the world. Then invite "the world" into the

Yes, you had better put partying at the top of your youth group's agenda.

*And Then There Was Me*

*and then there was me  
and i just couldn't stop  
talking  
taking  
shaking  
shaken up  
up and away  
in way out  
find a way out  
of here no fear  
just stay  
behind the line  
has been drawn  
to you from the moment  
i met you i  
can't help myself  
help yourself to anything  
you like  
what you're like  
you do you like me to  
do this to you  
seem to enjoy  
a worthless connection  
but i have the key  
if only i knew to what  
is that you say  
when we're  
talking*

*by Helda Helen Roys  
Madison, WI*

church. That is when you are ready to define your mission. When you do, don't forget the four C's: cohesion, community, confrontation, and celebration. Come, join us. We are on a mission from "To Whom It May Concern!"

## Unitarian Universalism's Fatal Flaw

By Dylan McConaghy

It's time we faced up to it. We're Unitarian Universalists, and we have a problem. We're afraid of commitment.

To be a successful religion, to satisfy the needs of people searching for enlightenment, there is one question that must be answered: "What do you believe?" Unfortunately, the one question UUs have the most trouble answering is: "What do Unitarian Universalists believe?" This is our greatest flaw.

In trying to answer this question, average Unitarian Universalists will respond with approximately twenty minutes of rhetoric without actually supplying an answer. They might possibly talk about other religions we study to learn what others believe. They would probably talk about the discussions we have to decide what we believe. They would most certainly talk about what we don't believe. But what we do believe? This question is rarely answered.

This seems strange, as there is a definite answer. We all know it. We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We believe in justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. We believe in acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations. We believe in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We believe in the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large. We believe in the goal of a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all. We believe in respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part.

This is an extremely powerful statement of belief. Yes, it leaves an enormous amount of space for personal decisions and interpretations, but it limits them to a certain moral code. We are saying that the majority of beliefs held by Unitarian Universalists are determined by personal choice, are extremely diverse, and even frequently contradictory. However, within that diversity, there is unity, for each and every Unitarian Universalist believes in these seven principles.

So why don't we answer the question of what we believe? "As Unitarian Universalists, we seek out individual belief systems within a given moral code: the seven principles." Where is the problem with that answer?

That's simple: fear. Nearly all of us carry with us some degree of scarring

from experiences with other religions whose statements of belief are much more authoritarian than ours. They give an extremely narrow definition of themselves and confine their members to that definition. Many UUs are opposed to this—not only because of abstract philosophical beliefs, but also because of the mental and emotional pain in their pasts that can be directly traced to that confinement.

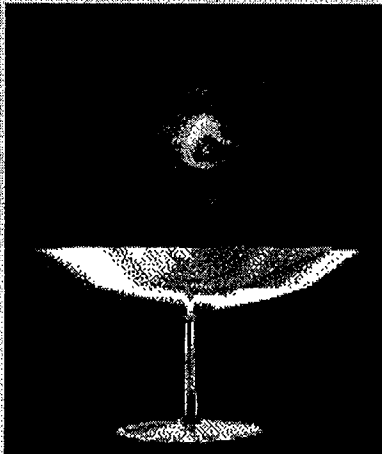
This has an unfortunate side effect. When someone begins to speak of a list of beliefs which we all hold, many UUs fear that list will become a creed—something that tells us what to believe, rather than allowing us to make the decision ourselves. They fear that if we commit to this list of beliefs, then it will overwhelm and overpower us. Because of this, they reject it. They may not reject or even disagree with any of the ideas presented within it, but they reject the list as a definition in favor of saying that Unitarian Universalism is defined by Unitarian Universalists.

Is this true? Yes. Does it get us anywhere? No. As a religion, we need to have common beliefs. They need not be numerous. They need not be detailed. But they must exist. Without them, we aren't a religion, we're a bunch of people who get together on a regular basis. Without them, the only unity within our group is nothing more than coincidental. Without them, we have no common ground on which to relate to each other. Without them, we have no roots from which to grow.

Are the fears we hold invalid? Certainly not. It is extremely important to stress that it is UUs themselves who decide what it is they choose to believe, both in terms of personal beliefs and group beliefs. Hence "a free and responsible search for truth and meaning" and "use of the democratic process within our congregations." The principles are a dynamic entity; they can and do change with time, when appropriate. We have committed to them, but because of how they are written, they are also committed to us.

The principles do not tell anyone what to believe. They are merely a statement of belief. If one agrees with them, one may choose to call oneself a Unitarian Universalist. We force it on no one, but if you choose to join the religion, they are the beliefs we hold. They can be our greatest strong point, our common ground, and our roots. All we have to do is acknowledge them, and commit.

Dylan is a freshman at MIT, who originally hails from Muskege, WI.

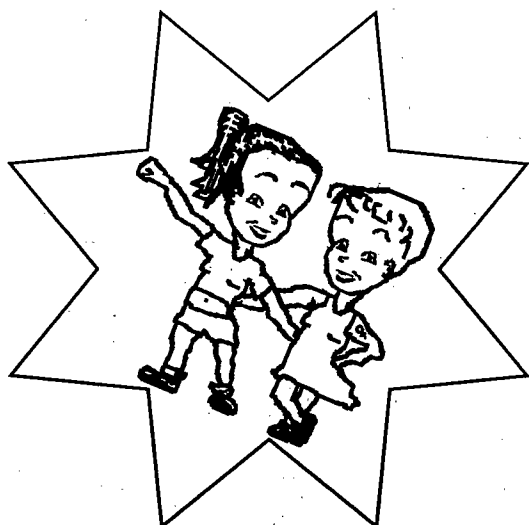


□ Synapse Book Review

# Review of Free Your Mind: The Book for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth- and Their Allies

By Ellen Sale

Last summer, I stood safely under the WOMEN'S STUDIES sign in my local bookstore, using my peripheral vision to comb the nearby shelves of GAY AND LESBIAN books. Not only was this collection small (this store was the first in my town to openly display GLBT material), but I couldn't seem to find anything that suited my needs; I wasn't a "Parent of Gay Children," and though interested in, did not want to research "Images of Lesbians in Film." What I needed was a book specifically for me: a queer youth. I kept searching the shelves, careful not to seem overly interested, when I noticed a chunky white book with red, orange, and purple lettering spelling out the words: *Free Your Mind: The Book for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth - and Their Allies*. The astonishment overwhelmed me. I blew my cover and snatched up the book. I sat down in the corner of the store to read through it, happening upon the chapter entitled "We Are Everywhere." Well, that did it. In a blaze of glory, I staged a one-woman pride march to the front of the store and bought that book!



Co-authored by California counselors Ellen Bass and Kate Kaufman, *Free Your Mind* is the most comprehensive resource for queer youth I have yet seen. With supportive and empowering dialogue, cartoons, photos, and quotes, it addresses a variety of issues, from coming out to yourself and family, to building political, social, and spiritual communities. Most uniquely, it offers advice concerning relationships, love, and sex with respect for their importance in the lives of youth. Bass and Kaufman include special sections with recommendations for parents of queer youth, as well as advice for the adult GLBT community on how to be more youth-accepting and inclusive. Of personal concern to me was the attention *Free Your Mind* gives to bisexual youth, who are often left out of this kind of discussion. Though not well integrated into the text, the needs of transgendered teens are recognized by the listing of two support organizations in the book's reference section, which is very extensive. Overall, the book reads like a casual discussion with a "been there, done that, and I can help you out" kind of friend you can both respect and trust.

I've since returned to my local bookstore and stood proudly and conspicuously at the GAY AND LESBIAN shelf, and have even been so bold as to order other GLBT books. I wholeheartedly recommend *Free Your Mind: The Book for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth - and Their Allies* to any and all who need a little help coming out to themselves, their friends, their family, or to their neighborhood bookseller!

□ YRUU Advisors

# The Adult Experience in YRUU

By Joanne Victoria

The other day, a woman asked me a question that made me think about why I am an adult involved in YRUU. I was attending a meeting for people interested in applying to the elementary school teaching credential program at San Francisco State University. After the workshop, a woman asked me, "What made you realize you wanted to teach kids?" I told her that my experience working with this incredible youth organization inspired me to teach.

I have said many times to adults in our association that working with youth in YRUU is one of the ways I worship. The two things that I expect to get out of a worship service are inspiration and self-reflection that leads to discovery. And, despite my growing fondness for some of the regular Sunday services I go to at church, YRUU is usually the only place that I get both of those things. It didn't happen solely at YRUU workshops either. Seeing the incredible caring that YRUUers have for one another, the energy that they have for life, and their thoughtfulness when they examine our culture's norms and constructions that inspires me more than anything I've ever known before. I am always learning about myself by watching and interacting with youth and adults in YRUU.

Three years ago, it was that sense of hope and inspiration I found in YRUU that made me re-

flect upon my own life. I had felt a need to find a new direction, but didn't know what it was. It was at a YRUU conference that I began to see what I needed to do. At this conference, I spent time hanging out with some of the younger youth, ages 12-14, talking

to them about school and life in general. I was astounded (as usual) with how incredible these youth were, and was lamenting how I'd love to teach middle school if youth this age were all so great. That was the moment when that light lit up in my head. I'd love to teach. Me.



Youth and adults at the closing circle of Youth Council 1996.

photo by Kirsten Amann

Teach.

After some soul-searching, I've finally decided that I want to teach older elementary school. I would like to give those kids some skills that might help them be as incredible as some of the youth I've been blessed to know.

So, the long and the short of it is that YRUU can change not only the lives of the youth, but also the lives of the adults lucky enough to be welcomed into YRUU communities. Adults can learn much from our youth and I encourage adults and youth to cherish each other and this sacred space we share in YRUU.

Joanne Victoria is an advisor in the Pacific Central District.

## Blue

Puddles of the moon  
spill from their surreal heaven  
to dissolve and melt  
into the crevices of the night.

Long, cool shadows they cast  
upon hills and faces and united  
fingers.

Blue—all around us lies a blue  
cool world bathed in irides-  
cence  
settling into itself,

shrouded in sentiments  
which do not glare  
and scorch the eyes  
with a fiery brightness

but twinkle with tranquility  
like the fingers

of an old friend  
curving themselves

about my hand

by Kirsten Amann, Amherst, NH

## Untitled

by Dave Dash, Lincroft, NJ

Tumble, rush under my  
flowing expanse.  
Smooth, moss-covered rocks  
flow beneath me as I move  
quietly, quickly...  
A twig is a thing carried by my body;  
my surface ripples where it touches,  
in a pool of calm glass.  
An incline in the land below  
causes an increase in speed,  
a sharpening of exhilaration,  
as my body covers more ground,  
as I leap over small boulders  
blocking my path.  
And my skin turns white with foam,  
and my muscles, my currents, flow  
in ever-changing complexity.  
Everything flows past me, faster,  
harder.  
I feel my body rushing to a point,  
up ahead, and then  
DOWN, stretching topsy-turvy  
alongside myself.  
And I sink down,  
crashing deeper into myself,  
then surfacing again, again, again.  
Then I flow still faster, faster as my sound  
explodes,  
as I become aware of me,  
of heavy rushes of water slapping water,  
of the thrashing,  
thundering,  
continuous sound.  
I hear nothing except myself.  
I know nothing but me.  
I exist, whole and  
ALIVE.  
Nothing can stop me.





## In the Spirit:

"In the Spirit" is a collection of sermons, homilies, and readings by Unitarian Universalist youth from around the world. This section of Synapse dedicated to the celebration of UU youth spirituality and the religious contributions youth make to UU congregations.

## ETIQUETTE

### A Statement of Belief

By Abi Harper

Because Unitarian Universalists believe what you say isn't half as important as what you do, this is my list of things that I do, rather than things I say. The things that I believe in and do are on a far smaller scale than Truth, Integrity, and Justice. Someone has to take care of the lower case truth, integrity, and justice, I suppose.

**RULE #1:** Don't turn on the lights when you don't really need them. Sometime during my childhood, my dad told me that using electricity kills fish. I still don't understand exactly how it works that way, and I never asked. I figure that not using electricity can't hurt the fish, and I don't believe what they tell me about reading or seeing in dim light being bad for your eyes. I have the best vision in my extended family and I never bother to turn on lights. Turning on lights separates us from the rest of creation in a way that I don't really like. People just need better eyes, that's all.

**RULE #2:** Only wear cotton underwear. Stringy, satiny, and shiny underwear should be abolished. So should underwear with excessive lace of any sort. I don't really have any explanation for this except that non-cotton underwear is itchy and bunchy.

**RULE #3:** No dyeing your hair when it turns gray. Very few people in this culture understand the concept of growing old gracefully. I want to be a beautiful old person who doesn't need to fake a youthful glow in order to feel human. I haven't had much need

for this rule yet, but I am putting it in place now so I have it when I need it later on.

**RULE #4:** Never wear shoes you can't run, wade, or dance in. The day that I get dressed in the morning and have my shoes tell me that I am a big person now who can't run, wade, or dance is the day that I declare myself dead. Shoes, in my opinion, are a direct response to a world that we just happen to live in where

**Rule #4: Never wear shoes you can't run, wade, or dance in.**

there are pebbles and mud puddles and hot pavement, and our bare feet just really aren't up to the challenge by themselves. Wearing things like high heels held to your feet by a few strategically placed straps only makes life more difficult. Most of us need all the help we can get, without our shoes turning on us, too.

**RULE #5:** Root for the underdog. This rule applies to sports, politics, movies, commerce, and anywhere else there is competition. The underdog will appreciate your support far more. Be wary of anyone or anything that isn't the underdog. Try to imagine what they had to do and who they had to step on to get there.

**RULE #6:** Keep stuff in your wallet. I mean besides credit cards and money and ID. Keep your wallet filled with things like pictures of people you love and cou-

pons you plan on using and fortune-cookie fortunes that really seem inspired and Moscow Metro tokens and ratty, folded-up cartoons and business cards from your favorite places and people. That way, if you ever forget who you are, you've got a million scraps in your pocket to remind you.

**RULE #7:** Ask for what you need. It seems like the simplest thing in the world, but people really don't like to do it. Either we don't want others to know that we need help, or we want the world to be perfect enough for help to be there without our asking for it. There are a million little games that we play to get what we need without having to come out and ask for it, but these are often more trouble than they're worth, not to mention highly ineffective.

**RULE #8:** Know the difference between what you want and what you need. You can't always get what you want, and this is how it ought to be. Everyone ought to be able to get what they need, even if they very often can't.

**RULE #9:** Give others what they need. Yes, even if it means giving up something that you want. Especially if they ask for it. People who can ask for what they need deserve encouragement.

**RULE #10:** Give yourself what you need. I am at a loss for how to explain this one. I think it explains itself. Don't rely on the kindness of strangers. Take care of yourself as far as you can. Give yourself a hug and a cup of tea and then tuck yourself into bed and go to sleep. And after you wake up, write your own rules!

**Abi is a high school junior in Princeton, NJ. Abi's homily was delivered at the Unitarian Church of Princeton, NJ, on May 5, 1997.**

## What Does Unitarian Universalism have to Offer Young People?

Rob's homily was delivered during a worship service held at All Soul's Church (Unitarian) in Washington, DC, on February 23, 1997. The service was attended by and addressed to the youth that were present for the first annual YRUU National Social Justice Conference.

By Rob Cavanaugh

At first this broad question stumped me—not because I thought of too little, but because I thought of so much. I needed a way to narrow down my answer, to make a concise statement out of all the thoughts and feelings running through my head. I not only needed a way to summarize, I needed some time. With this and the many other responsibilities on my shoulders, I was physically running as much as I was mentally.

But when the time presented itself at 10:00 PM last night before the service, my answer had become obvious—I only had to look at the group of youth gathered for the conference. Only a few knew each other previously, but all shared a strong connection with Unitarian Universalism. A close-knit community formed almost instantaneously, with all the love, openness, and affirmation of an old group of friends.

Simply bringing young people together is one of Unitarian Universalism's greatest gifts - whether it be in Sunday schools, youth groups, at conferences, in young adult groups, or on college campuses.

Young people - youth, young adults, or what have you - don't just bring the desire to be together. They bring with them an energy - to be together, yes, but also to do

something meaningful. Or, in some cases like mine when I joined the youth group at age 14, young people just bring energy in a general and unfocused form.

That's where the Unitarian Universalist faith enters the picture - not as the focus of energy, but as the focuser. Our religion is the lens, the channel through which unfocused energy flows. It offers young people a spiritually rewarding outlet.

On an individual level, this outlet can turn a group of strangers into a group of friends, as it did this past Saturday night.

On a denominational level, this outlet produces activities such as the Young Adult Focus Day at General Assembly 1995 and the Youth Focus at GA 1996 - events designed to showcase both the needs and many talents of youth and young adults. I was recently reading the article in the *UU World* magazine regarding the Youth Focus in Indianapolis, and phrases kept jumping off the page at me, like: "Largest gathering of UU youth ever," "GA transformed into an intergenerational conference," and "Youth

sponsor first off-site social action project."

On one hand, Unitarian Universalism offers a great gift to its young people by giving us the opportunity to create such things - activities that had never been done before but should have been. Things, for that matter, like the YRUU National Social Justice Conference, a first for 1997, but hopefully just the first of what will become an annual event. On the other hand, the energy and efforts of young people are a great gift to Unitarian Universalism, as they are to all faith traditions and to the world.

Our worship on the first night of the conference centered on our own personal abilities to create change, and we were asked to express our visions of an ideal world on paper. Here are a few things the conferees wrote, a few of the gifts a small group of Unitarian Universalists would like to have - or give:

"I wish the world could be a place where you don't have to be afraid, and a place where you don't have to hide; a place where you

can trust and you can share; a place where genuine respect and dignity do exist for everyone."

"Someday no one will need eyes to decide if a person is trustworthy."

"Please don't look at me.  
Don't survey my clothes,  
Don't look at your records  
For my background.  
Listen to my ideas,  
Listen to my song,  
And decide on the basis  
of my thoughts."

"To evolve is the greatest thing we can ask of society. And to do that requires the hardest work: to live simply, to see not politics but humanity."

This reading, like these statements, is not about one person or group "offering" something to someone else, it is about what we all have to offer all of ourselves, as individuals, as a faith community, and as a world community. And this conclusion does not just ask you to "Go in peace," but also to "Make peace wherever you go." ☺

**Rob, a former YRUU Programs Specialist, is a student at American University.**

**Simply bringing young people together is one of Unitarian Universalism's greatest gifts**

## SUMMER CAMPS FOR UU YOUTH

These events are not sponsored by Continental YRUU (except Con Con).

☉ **Unirondack**, Adirondack Mountains, NY. Contact: P.O. Box 277, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598.

☉ **Star Island**, Isle of the Shoals off the coast of Maine. YRUU Week is June 21 - June 28th. Contact P.O. Box 447, Stratham, NH 03885.

☉ **The Mountain**, Highlands, North Carolina. Sr. High Mountain Camp is July 20 - August 2. Contact: The Mountain, P.O. Box 1299, Highlands, NC 28741; (704) 526-5838; or email: mountain@dnet.net.

☉ **Rowe Camp and Conference Center**, Rowe, Massachusetts. Sr. High Camp is August 3 - 16. Contact: Coleen Murphy Vercooterren, 1027 Faith Ave., Atlanta, GA 30316.

☉ **Ferry Beach**, Saco, Maine. Camp for Youth in grades 10 - 12 is August 17-23. Contact: 5 Morris Ave., Saco, ME 04072; (207) 284-8612.

☉ **deBonneville Pines**, Angeles Pines, CA. Contact (909) 794-2928.

☉ **SWUUSI**, Dallas, TX. July 27 - August 12. Contact Kathy Calhoun, 123 S. Winnetka, Dallas, TX 75208; (214) 943-6738.

☉ **SUUSI**, Radford, VA. July 27 - August 2. Contact Sharon Mayes, 2353 Shade Tree Ln., Clearwater, FL 34619; (813) 797-8244; email: 2073586@mcimail.com.

## THE CARE AND FEEDING OF ADVISORS

- Would you like to get better advisors and keep the great ones you have?

- Would you like to see more support in your district for adult YRUU advisors?

- How about the opportunity to have someone in your district who can pass around the current wisdom on the always changing advising gig?

If all or some of these questions have been nagging you lately, here is the solution: the upcoming Continental Advisor Training, November 21-23 in Boston. Advisors from around the continent will be invited to attend a training of trainers. Districts will nominate and provide transportation for all participants. In turn, participants will be expected to return to their districts and lead two Advisor Trainings, Retreats, and Workshops, and provide consultations for your district. For more information, call or write the Youth Office at:

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

Imagine Yourself As A...

## YRUU PROGRAMS SPECIALIST

## AND BOOBYWZ RECIPIENT



The YRUU Programs Specialist position is a one-year internship in the Youth Office at the Unitarian Universalist Association 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, 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 January 1, 1998.**

**Terms of employment:** This position is a one-year commitment, beginning January 1, 1998, and ending December 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 September 15, 1997.**



Photo by Caitlin Rooney

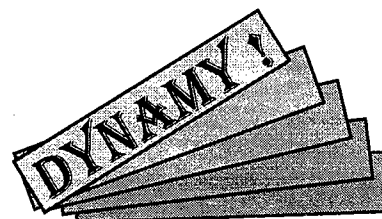
UU Young Adults at Opus 1996

## OPUS '97

*"Wedging the Clay, Kneading the Dough"*

Camp Wilmot, Danbury, New Hampshire  
Sunday, August 10th to Saturday, August 16th  
and the 18-25 Pre-OPUS Overnight

The Continental UU Young Adult Network (C\*UUYAN) invites you to Opus, a weeklong gathering for UUs aged 18 through 35. Each August since 1986, UU young adults from around the continent have gathered for worship, play, and leadership training, as well as to participate in the C\*UUYAN's annual business meeting. Young adults, ages 18 to 25, are invited to gather for the pre-Opus overnight. If you are interested in receiving a registration form or getting more information, please call our Opus Hotline at 1-800-741-7400, box #6787.



**Dynamy is:** A half-year or year-long internship program.

**Dynamy is:** A three-week Outward Bound course.

**Dynamy is:** Three nine-week internships over one year.

**Dynamy is:** An education in life where the real world is your classroom.

**Dynamy internships are for post-high school age youth. Dynamy provides you with an apartment and facilitates your search for internships in organizations that interest you. All living expenses are included in your tuition. You have weekly meetings with both your entire Dynamy class and with your personal advisor. Self-direction is an important prerequisite for the Dynamy program.**

**For more information write:**

Dynamy Internship Year  
John S. Laws Institute  
27 Sever St.  
Worcester, MA 01609

*Dynamy is not a YRUU Sponsored Program*