

SYNAPSE

THE MAGAZINE OF YOUNG RELIGIOUS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS

WHITE PRIVILEGE

guilt

fear

liberation

struggle

Journey

wholeness

hurt

prejudice

Oppression

A point of contact where information
and energy are exchanged...

Anti-Racism

VOLUME XXII ISSUE II · FALL 2004

WINK FROM THE YOUTH OFFICE

Commenting on a theme as crucial and complex as Anti-Racism may be my most daunting task yet as a YRUU Programs Specialist. I've been thinking about all the people reading this; people who have worked night and day doing Anti-racism work, and people who are just beginning to grasp how racism affects them and their communities, people who have been taught that racism is a thing of the past, and folks who point out again and again how our society continues to oppress People of Color, youth who have been involved with YRUU for years, and youth who, as they read this, are asking the question: "YRUU? What the heck is that?"

I am sharply aware that my own White privilege informs not only how I experience the world as a whole, but also how I approach this editorial. I am also conscious of the fact that it was my experience in YRUU that first pushed me to examine this privilege, and my understandings of race and racism. YRUU's commitment to Anti-Racism impacted me greatly as a Unitarian Universalist youth, and supported me in a challenging, rewarding, and incredibly important process of becoming an Anti-Racist White Ally.

As I debated what to write, I read copy after copy of past issues of *Synapse* and "People Soup" (the magazine of Liberal Religious Youth, YRUU's predecessor). It's amazing to read about all the amazing work that UU youth have been doing over the past five, ten, even twenty or thirty years, yet I'm also struck by the fact that YRUU has been dealing with many of the same issues for years and years — connecting to youth in congregations, empowering youth leadership within the Unitarian Universalist Association and Canadian Unitarian Council, challenging oppressions such as racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, and sexism in all their forms, and making YRUU's Youth Council an effective, anti-oppressive model of governance that supports and reaches all its constituents. One of the big reasons these same issues keep coming up is that youth only stay youth for so long — the turnover rate in YRUU leadership is tremendous, and it's one of the many reasons we have to stay at the table when it comes to creating an Anti-Racist YRUU.

In this issue, you'll find an amazing timeline of YRUU Anti-Racism work (compiled by Jennifer Dunmore, one of my role models). We have so much to celebrate, but we also need to be honest about what we *haven't* been doing well. Racism continues to be a huge issue in YRUU, as the voices and contributions of People of Color are being tokenized, ignored, and underrepresented in our faith. Yet we still hear that racism is "not an issue," that Anti-Racism work is unnecessary, or not worth it.

As I helped put together this issue of *Synapse*, it was brought to my attention how much emotion, pain and struggle is reflected in its content. While some of the writings may be difficult to read and comprehend, I am humbled by — and extremely grateful for — the honesty and generosity of the authors, as well as so many other leaders in our Anti-Racism movement. Many of them have taken great risks to share their experiences with us. I urge you all to honor their contributions and take seriously what they have to say.

I am so inspired by Unitarian Universalist youth — past, present, and future — and it is an honor to support and work for you. You continue to demonstrate an incredible commitment to justice, and give me great hope for what our faith can be. Keep rocking your youth groups, congregations, schools, workplaces, and communities. Explore this issue of *Synapse*, and consider submitting something yourself. Check out the Anti-Racism resources we listed, and remember that there are so many more available to you. Don't forget to tell us about it - the Youth Office is here for you. We are inspired by you every day.

In faith,

Betty Jeanne

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Young Religious Unitarian Universalists

The governing of continental YRUU meets once a year during the summer at Youth Council (YC), a week-long business meeting, and is made up of many people either representing their districts/regions or at-large communities. This body sets YRUU policies and meets to network among districts/regions. The Steering Committee (SC) is elected at Youth Council, and they enact policies set by Youth Councils past and present. We encourage you to see what is going on in continental YRUU, and to meet with these cool people as they are the folks you can bring many comments, concerns, and questions about YRUU to. To find your district/regional representative or to be in contact with anyone else on YC or SC go to <http://www.uua.org/YRUU/governance>.

If you are not able to access the web you can contact the Youth Office at yruu@uua.org, (617) 948-4350, or write to:

The Youth Office
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Siri Larsen

Dear Editor,

My name is Siri Larsen, and I am writing to share an excellent website with all the Synapse readers out there. I came across www.nomoretests.com when reading the SWAT PoAT [see page 16 for details]. I'm not one to usually be able to sit in front of a computer screen for hours, but when I went to www.nomoretests.com, I couldn't stop reading about all the amazing information I found there. I highly recommend a visit there if you're interested in education reform (or if you're not), or if you think that standardized testing is messed up (or not), or if you just want to read about something awesome and different. After exploring the website for a while, I decided to start planning a class to teach this semester on SAT (Students Against Testing). I already have so many ideas for it, including trying to get universities to stop requiring SAT scores for admission and other fun actions and stuff.

I encourage everyone to check out www.nomoretests.com.

Thanks for listening/reading!

Peace,
Siri

SUBMIT TO SYNAPSE

If you are a writer, poet, artist, youth, or just feel very strongly about something, then you might want to consider submitting your work to Synapse. We accept articles, poetry, song lyrics, paintings, and drawings year round. We want to see the creative, opinionated, strong, articulate and beautiful work that YRUUers are creating. Share an amazing project your youth group did, tell us about your experience at General Assembly or another conference, or just send us your great youth empowerment stories from your community.

SEND SUBMISSIONS TO:

Synapse Editor
UUA Youth Office
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

Submissions are due January 1, 2005

Youth Office Bios

The Youth Office, or YO for short, is part of the Lifespan Faith Development staff group at the Unitarian Universalist Association in Boston, MA. Aside from arguing who gets to ride shotgun in rental cars and having dance parties in the hall, we serve all of YRUU and Unitarian Universalist Youth Programming. Just a small task for four dedicated folks.



Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward serves as the June YRUU Program Specialist (YPS) and focuses on Youth Office trainings, social justice organizing (like the YRUU Social Justice Conference), and supporting queer and questioning UU youth. She also collaborates with other UUA staff and volunteers on all the Anti-Racism work going on in our communities. Originally from Arlington, Massachusetts, she graduated from Ithaca College and enjoys such fine things as eating, sleeping, and subjecting her office-mates to the "Love Actually" soundtrack over and over. Contrary to rumors you may have heard, she is not vegan, though she may well be in the future...



Brian Kuzma, the September YRUU Programs Specialist (YPS), focuses on Anti-Racism programming, supporting Youth of Color, coordinating the YRUU Continental Conference, and helping plan General Assembly. He hails from outside Ann Arbor, Michigan, was active in Heartland District

Sexuality

We are specifically looking for submissions regarding sexuality in YRUU and UU communities for our Spring 2005 issue: How has sexuality affected you and your identity? What experiences have you had with sexuality education in your school, family, or religious community? How do you understand gender identity? What is sexual oppression and how have you witnessed/experienced it? How do sexuality and spirituality relate to each other?

The views expressed in letters/submissions to Synapse do not necessarily reflect the policies of the UUA



YRUU programming, and is currently taking time off from studying at Earlham College in Indiana. Curious about chaplain trainings? Talk to Brian! When he's not in the office you can find him climbing rocks and hanging from ropes (intentionally).



Jesse Jaeger, who hails from Madison, WI, is the Youth Programs Director. He is just starting his third year in the office and is having tons of fun. Feel free to contact him if you have any question or need help with your youth program.

His son Lorn is just starting to walk which is good because Jesse and his wife Natalie just bought a house so he has all sorts of new places to explore. Give Jesse a call or email him. He would love to hear from you!



Ethan Field, the Youth Office Assistant is the mysterious voice on the Youth Office answering machine, and the main person behind yruu@uua.org. Originally from the Ohio Meadville District, Ethan

has been active in youth and young adult communities for years. He is hyped to have finally seen the Beastie Boys live, and is responsible for conference registrations, all sorts of logistical and administrative support and providing the Youth Office with funky and groovy tunes. Fun fact: Ethan lived and worked in Tanzania for three years.



Chuck Sokol is temporarily playing the role of Youth Office Intern. Filling the role of Synapse Layout/Typography Editor, his term will be ending upon the release of this issue. Originally from the green

hills of Vermont, he now attends Berklee School of Music in Boston, MA. Chuck became involved in YRUU in his late teens, and as such has made it his goal to ease the bridge between youth and young adulthood for everyone in YRUU.

The Youth Office would love to hear from you!!! Contact us at yruu@uua.org or 617-948-4350. And visit our website at www.uua.org/YRUU!

Trivia question: Which two members of the Youth Office staff graduated high school the same year as the gang on "Saved by the Bell"?

CONTINENTAL CALENDAR Fall 2004

For details, see page 27, check out the YRUU website or contact the Youth Office

- Jan. 13–16 Steering Committee Meeting: Boston, MA
- Jan. 14–16 Chaplain Training: Atlanta, GA
- Jan. 14 Advanced Advisor/Spirituality Development Conference Training of Trainers Applications Due
- Feb. 4–6 Anti Racism Development Conference (ARADC): Bloomington, IN
- Feb. 11–13 ARADC: Portland, OR
- Feb. 15 September YPS applications due
- Feb. 18–20 ARADC: Cambridge, MA
- March 11 Youth Council — At-Large / People of Color Caucus / Position on Appraisal Applications Due
- March 25 General Assembly (GA) Scholarship Deadline
- March 31 – Steering Committee Meeting: Boston, MA
- April 3 Youth Advisor of the Year applications due
- April 1 GA Registration Deadline
- April 15–17 Chaplain Training: San Diego, CA
- May 12–14 Advanced Advisor/Spirituality Development Conference Training of Trainers: Murray Grove, NJ
- June 23–27 General Assembly: Ft. Worth, TX
- July 11 GA 2006 HUUPER Deadline
- July 23–30 Con Con: Boone, IA
- August 1–7 Youth Council: Buena Vista University, IA

POINT

Sam Trumbull

As a lifelong Unitarian Universalist, I have worked with many different communities of UUs. My home church (Bull Run UUs, Manassas, VA) was founded by a group of humanists, and has often been home to those in loathing of their Christian and Catholic upbringing.

Over the years I have noticed a tendency of UUs to put down Christian faiths (many of you may have noticed that the words in our hymnals have been changed to suit the humanist UUs). You also may have noticed that YRUU has taken a stand against cultural appropriation.

As YRUUers we try to educate ourselves about oppression and how it perpetuates itself. I have heard many workshop leaders speak on appropriation of tribal cultures, Cultures of Color, and many others, but never of appropriation of Christian culture. It's hard for me to go out and tell others about my religion of "respect" and "dignity," because inevitably when I bring someone to a UU church, there is Christian-bashing. It is particularly worse for me at youth conferences.

The biggest offense that I've seen so far was when YRUU started selling a t-shirt this year at General Assembly which mocked a religious symbol used by Christians and others for thousands of years. Some of you may have purchased a green "YRUU-fish" t-shirt.

To my current shame, I did too, and I liked it. I liked until I really thought about it and did some research.

The Christian fish symbol come from the Greek Acrostic "ΙΧΘΥΣ" which translates into English as "ichthys," the Greek word for fish, and which to many Christians means "Jesus Christ, Son and Savior."

Acrostics were used by religions to identify themselves. In times of Christian oppression (such as during the early Roman Empire), Christians used the fish symbol to designate safe places. Upon meeting one another, com-

mon folk who were Christians would first draw one arc in the dirt, and if the other person did so as well (and formed the basic fish shape) they knew this meant they were safe. Beyond that, there are many more symbolic meanings involved with Christianity and the fish (water baptism, etc.); however, it was used by pagans as a fertility symbol centuries before. Some even suggest that the evolution of the Christian fish was from an Egyptian god.

Whatever the case, the fish is not a symbol that Unitarian Universalists as a denomination have any attachment to. The fish that we all see on the backs of cars today, sporting "Darwin" or "Evolution" only serve to degrade a religion's way of expression.

Last time I checked, "respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people" included Christians too. I want to be able to bring my Christian friends to church, and I want the Christian UUs not to feel like they are excluded from our churches. If YRUU is ever going to help end cultural misappropriation, we need to start with one of our biggest problems--anti-Christian sentiment. Remember, religions do not hurt people; people hurt people. And not all people of a group are the same.

Sam Trumbull, a bridging youth from Dale City, VA, was a member of the 2002-2003 YRUU Steering Committee.

COUNTER-POINT

Annie Powell

As a lifelong Unitarian Universalist, I've always been aware of my faith's Christian roots, despite how I might feel about contemporary Christianity. Growing up, I was reluctant to explain what UUism was, because I would invariably come to the line, "It used to be two Christian denominations, but it isn't Christian anymore! We don't believe in God or anything." I always made it clear to my friends that UUs aren't evangelists, don't have a dogma, and aren't brainwashed — all of the things that I thought defined modern Christianity. From my peers, and even elders, I



learned a sense of repugnant distaste for the words and rituals of strictly theist religions. Many of the adults in my church are former Catholics and Protestants, and they object vehemently to the use of words like "God" and "holy," to the point that Christian symbols and terms have become merely things that we "enlightened" UUs poke fun at.

In my later years of high school — and now in college — I have found a new appreciation for the residual Christianity of our traditions. It's true that many, such as the chalice, flower and water communions, and our open attitude toward sex education are uniquely Unitarian Universalist, but many are based either in the Christian faiths of the people who wrote them or on concrete Christian traditions like bread-and-wine communion. Try as I might in my younger years, it is impossible to deny that Unitarianism and Universalism grew from Protestant Christian roots. We have always been a revolutionary group — the fledgling Unitarians in 19th century America are partially responsible for the Second Great Awakening — and are apt at exploring other paths of faith and holding very different interpretations of them.

While it was difficult for me to come to terms with the Christian heritage and tendencies of my religious home, both in terms of my bad associations and the laundry list of oppression and violence that many denominations have accumulated, it was amazingly rewarding to explore some of the most basic lessons of the man called Jesus and his followers. Wrapped in archaic metaphor, much of the sentiment behind the most famous biblical stories parallels our modern-day Principles. It is easy to see, upon analysis and personal interpretation, how our basic beliefs grew from a liberal, humanist interpretation of biblical parables. Many, like the story of the loaves and fishes, have underlying themes of the importance of community and of giving thanks for what little we have. In Matthew, chapter 15, Jesus and his disciples come upon a "multitude, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others" in the mountains of Galilee. After healing the injured, Jesus asks his disciples for

food with which to feed the assembled crowd, refusing to send them away hungry. Although they have among them only seven loaves of bread and a few fish, Jesus gives thanks for that little amount, and breaks it into enough pieces — miraculously — to feed all of the "four thousand men, beside women and children." This is one of many sources of the symbol of the fish bearing the word "ΙΧΘΥΣ" (translated into the English alphabet from the Greek, this is "ICHTHUS," ancestor of the word "ichthys," our English root meaning "fish") The so-called "Jesus fish" is seen today as a popular logo on bumper stickers and jewelry, and holds different meanings for different Christians. Many see it as a symbol of Jesus' divinity, but others take it instead as a symbol for Jesus' teachings on community and thankfulness. It is this interpretation of Christian philosophy - the spirit instead of the letter of the word, if you will - that has lasted through decades of persecution and suppression in the hearts of Unitarians and Universalists. This often unpopular, loose interpretation, along with the beliefs of many others of neighboring faiths, has served as a basis for many of the things that we think of as contemporarily UU. A fish with the letters YRUU replacing ΙΧΘΥΣ [on a YRUU t-shirt] reflects the civil union of revolutionary, modern thought and ancient Christian ideals of community that UUism embodies.

Many UUs come to our faith from very non-Christian backgrounds, or simply do not relate to UUism's Christian past for any number of personal reasons. However, Unitarian Universalism is derived from Christian traditions, and many of us claim those roots, good and bad. There is a place in our religion for every faith, Christians very much included. Perhaps by educating ourselves about our history and its philosophical significance, we can draw out an appreciation for the elements of Christianity that survive in our faith, and what

Annie Powell, a youth from the Bethesda, MD, was a member of the 2003-2004 Steering Committee and currently attends college in Boston.



The Local Youth Group Project Grant

The 4 Youth Group Project Grants are \$500 grants to help local youth groups develop new and innovative programs. The goal of this grant program is support the innovative work that is being done by local youth groups all over the continent. The one requirement of the grant is reporting to the Youth Office that you developed some way to share your project with other youth groups so that they can try to do it as well.

To receive an application go to www.uua.org/yruu/youthoffice/pdfs/yogrants.pdf, call (617) 948 4350, or write to

C/O The Youth Office
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA. 02108

Y*FUUD GRANTS

Youth Funding for Unitarian Universalist Development (Y*FUUD) is a grant fund for new and developing YRUU programs. Any youth who is doing new and creative programming in their local youth group, district or regional body, or continentally may qualify. New and creative programming that Y*FUUD might fund include creating a conference to address a specific need, developing a resource on a topic currently unaddressed, making a new publication, setting up travel for a youth group, or any other new project idea that YRUUers can come up with. The average Y*FUUD grant is between \$500-\$1,000.** Your application should be typed and is due by July 15th.

***Y*FUUD will review all applications received. Because of the difficulty in obtaining funding, Y*FUUD will distribute funds with priority to local, district/regional, and continental programs, in that order. Funding must be used within the same fiscal year. For multi-year projects, Y*FUUD must receive another application and progress report.*

To receive a Y*FUUD Grant applications go to www.uua.org/YRUU/governance/PDFS/yfuudGrantApplication.pdf, write to yruu@uua.org, call the Youth Office at (617) 948-4351, or write to:

C/O The Youth Office
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA. 02108.

BOSTON DURING THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

This past summer, the Democratic National Convention came to Boston. The Youth Office was within walking distance of the convention, and had two amazing summer interns who experienced the excitement firsthand. Here are some of their reflections...

I wasn't sure what to expect coming into Boston on the first Monday of the Democratic Convention. My parents had warned me several times about terrorists and police, and the media had certainly hyped up the security. On my arrival at South Station there was a huge armored police vehicle surrounded by a bunch of guys dressed in black body armor. The scene was similar throughout the city — outside Park Street Station were a bunch of guys dressed up in army camouflage holding weapons. At the Youth Office we can see the Capital Building through several windows. We could see a sharpshooter walking back and forth on the roof. We waved at him, and Betty Jeanne nicknamed him Snipey the Sniper.

On Tuesday we decided to visit the "free speech zone" at the Fleet Center. The "free speech zone" was a cramped space set up by the city for protesters to demonstrate. After navigating through a maze of fences and barricades closely guarded by mean looking secret service agents, we finally found it. It was hidden under an abandoned overpass, surrounded by two to three layers of barricades, and barely visible from the Fleet Center. The whole zone looked as if it could fit a few-hundred people, but not nearly enough for a big rally.

Ben D'Avanzo



BOSTON DURING THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

Ariel Aaronson-Eves

I am at a loss for words when I try to describe the Convention. "Oh my God! It was SOOOO amazing!" does not do justice to the event, and yet that seems to be all that comes out of my mouth. My favorite speaker was Barack Obama — a candidate for US Senate from Illinois — who I had never heard of before the DNC. He is an engaging speaker with much charisma and energy — he spoke of hope, and I felt hope — and I wanted to nominate HIM for president. I have to admit that I haven't been paying too much attention to this campaign for the nomination, so I never knew all that much about any of the candidates. But none of them ever made me say to myself, "I want HIM/HER for president." Obama did that. Maybe having him as the keynote speaker that night was part of the Democratic National Committee's attempt to start grooming him for the presidency. I certainly hope so (Obama for President 2008, anyone?).

I spent my lunch break on Thursday outside the convention center exploring the surrounding area. Ben, my fellow intern, and I headed down to the "Free Speech Zone" (AKA "The Cage"). It was relatively quiet — although I know some violence broke out and there were some arrests, but Boston in 2004 was a far cry from Chicago in 1968. Signs had been put up along the sides of "The Cage," and based on these signs it seemed the major protest was not about the Democratic Party and its platform but against gay marriage or the concept of the Free Speech Zone itself. Many said that containing protests to the "Free Speech Zone" was not only unconstitutional, but that it also prevented rallies from reaching their intended audiences. But to me rallies seem comparable to political conventions themselves, both being an opportunity to preach to the choir. The energy surrounding protests I've experienced is the same type of energy I felt at the DNC.

2004 FALL

DAY OF ACTION!

May 2005

The first ever YRUU Day of Action is coming!

The 2005 Day of Action will be a community festival, and can feature speakers, music, puppets, workshops — whatever you want!

Youth across the continent will be celebrating and bringing attention to Education Reform and Multiculturalism, the current YRUU Working Action Issue. YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) has committed itself to organizing around this important issue. The Day of Action was created to empower youth and foster local, grass-roots community organizing and social justice work.



photo courtesy of YRUU

We are looking for youth all over the United States and Canada to get involved and make the Day of Action happen in their communities. This is going to be your festival — tell your friends, teachers, and other youth and adults in your school or congregation about it!



photo courtesy of YRUU

How can I learn more?

You can learn about YRUU and the Working Action Issue (Education Reform and Multiculturalism) at uua.org/YRUU/justice/wai2003.html or by contacting Lydia Pelot-Hobbs at congirli@yahoo.com



04-05 STEERING COMMITTEE

Laurel Newton and Jennifer Bell

The 2004-2005 YRUU Steering Committee wants you to know about everything that this is going on in the world of YRUU. Let's begin with the obvious: "Who is Steering Committee?" This year's fabulous and energized continental governing body consists of: Jova Vargas, Lehna Huie, Siri Larsen, Nora Lindsey, Jazmin Sandoz-Rosado, Laurel Newton, Gregory Boyd, Jennifer Bell, Rick Roehlk, and Kathryn McIntyre. Also, we're thrilled to announce the first liaison between YRUU Steering Committee and DRUUMM (Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries) Youth and Young Adult Steering Committee: the one and only Sean Jones!

As some of you may know, Youth Council is an annual meeting of YRUU representatives, charged with conducting the business of YRUU. It is Youth Council's responsibility to edit, change, and pass or not pass all the fabulous resolutions and proposals that are submitted by folks across the continent. This year's Youth Council resolutions (as well as the meeting minutes) can be viewed at uua.org/YRUU/governance.html. Or contact the Youth Office at 617-948-4350 and they can send you a copy. Check them out! They affect you! And as always, think about running/applying for a spot on Youth Council in the future! Or write a resolution — what do *you* want YRUU to be?

One of Steering Committee's main commitments is Anti-racism/Oppression work. All members of Steering Committee have had Anti-racism training, and we're super excited to continue this work. Our experience at Youth Council was difficult but enlightening, and we hope to further YRUU's commitment to Anti-racism through this year. We each have very different identities, experiences, and struggles, but we are working together and welcome others to join us. We, like many Unitarian Universalists, hope to create a community of

understanding, accountability, equality, and acceptance; where hate, oppression and the tokenization of marginalized people/s are obsolete.

In addition to our commitment to Anti-racism work, we also want to make Youth Council truly unforgettable and rewarding to YRUU. If you have any suggestions, ideas, concerns, or joys to share with us, get in touch! We're so excited to be working with you.

03-04 STEERING COMMITTEE

Jova Vargas

This past year on your 2003-2004 YRUU Steering Committee (SC) has been both trying and fulfilling; an unforgettable experience. I learned and grew so much, along with ten amazing people. Given this issue's theme, I want to address the Anti-Racism ("AR") issues SC dealt with last year. My experience with AR was not the same as other SC members', so I will speak personally.

My position on SC was on the POCAC (People Of Color Advisory Council). Since YRUU is a mostly White organization, it was my job to represent People of Color in the greater YRUU community, and I was honored to have this position. Before joining SC, I had been to a series of Anti-Racism trainings and DRUUMM (Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries) conferences. I was very comfortable with my AR analysis and assumed that the rest of the SC members would be as well. But I was in for a surprise — as it turned out everyone was on a different level, and had a different analysis.

By the end of our first meeting, I was sure of one thing: here was a group of people who were ready to start struggling personally and as a community. Later that year, SC went to an Anti-Racism Leadership Development Conference in New Orleans, and it was an amazing experience for each of us. That

weekend we grew together and came closer to a common understanding of AR work.

But the struggle was not over. During our last meeting, as well as this past Youth Council, I learned so much about myself, SC and the greater YRUU community. It was a bittersweet feeling, mixed with tears, smiles, and confusion. I learned that a lot of UU's play into the myth that "I'm UU; there's no way I can be racist/prejudiced." Yet we each have our own prejudices, and by playing into that myth we ignore issues instead of dealing with them.

I have learned that as a Person of Color (POC), my experience in YRUU is very different from a White Person's; I don't have the luxury to choose whether or not I want to deal with racism. White people do have a choice, and can use their privilege positively by choosing to deal with racism. I learned that as a POC it is not my job to tell White People "how not to be racist." It is other White Peoples' duty to teach each other, in order to create an Anti-Racist YRUU. I have learned that AR work is not easy, and that there are no quick fixes. But I empower people to do the work. People will hurt and feel uncomfortable, but the only way to further the movement is by letting people struggle through that hurt.

Being on SC has taught me that to keep doing this work, I must have an open mind, stay at the table, be willing to change, and accept the fact that people are at different points in their AR analyses. We have to open our eyes to new things, and keep them open even during hard times. The "race issue" isn't dead: it is very much alive, and I see it every time I go to a con or any YRUU event. It's not just because I am a Person of Color; it is because I am a member of a community which I love and care for beyond belief. I empower each and every one of you who reads this to bring AR work to your youth group, to help further this movement.

If there's one thing I learned from being on Steering Committee, it's that I am not the same as you, nor as the person next to you, but I am certainly not alone. Don't be afraid to move

mountains: even though you may not be able to change the whole world, your voice can and will leave a mark on others. Being on SC was hard, but I spent the year with people who support me, my struggle, and the movement. They helped make me who I am today. I have found a voice I never knew I had while doing this work, and I owe that to YRUU and SC. I will no longer be silenced when it comes to AR work, and I will be here to support anybody interested in doing this painful yet fulfilling work. We must meet the challenge to make a better YRUU: not just for me, or you, but for everyone.

Katie Whitworth

I agree with the points Jova has made. However, despite the good intentions of everyone on last year's Steering Committee, issues of racism were sometimes denied or ignored. What can we accomplish if we are not totally honest with our feelings, or if those who are honest don't feel acknowledged? I personally left Steering Committee wondering why I used so much energy talking about my issues with racism, only to be ignored. My hurt would have been eased if others had acknowledged that my points were valid, and had the willingness to talk about them as a whole group. By fully acknowledging racism, a group can move on to challenging and changing behaviors.

I do have great hope for the 2004-2005 Steering Committee. I can't stress enough the importance of being honest when it comes to race and Anti-racism work, and listening to others when they are honest. Racism does exist, and there is always more that can be done. One of the major things I still see happening in Unitarian Universalism is tokenization of People of Color. Everyone has a valid story about race. People of Color don't need to be recruited to churches and events just so White People can do Anti-racism work. "Multicultural" does not equal anti-racist. There is always Anti-racism work that needs to be done regardless of the racial makeup of a group. All experiences where great struggle

Continues next page...



Steering Committee 03-04 continued...

occurs are valuable, but the experience of White People engaging in Anti-racism should not be compared to the struggles of People of Color. White People still have White privilege, regardless of what they give up. People of Color struggle with race everyday without a choice.

I hope what I say is meaningful. Even though the 2003-2004 Steering Committee's time has passed, future Steering Committees can challenge racism. Further, youth groups, congregations, district/regional leaders and conference planners all have the opportunity to engage in Anti-Racism work. Don't forget the power that one individual has to make a difference when it comes to talking about and challenging racism. I know I won't.

FROM THE UUA WASHINGTON OFFICE

Amelia Rose

Hi! I'm Amelia Rose and I work at the Unitarian Universalist Association's Washington Office for Advocacy as the Legislative Assistant for Economic Justice. Our office represents the UUA to the U.S. Congress and other national organizations, as well as within the faith-based advocacy community here in D.C. We also try to support the advocacy work done by UUs and congregations through written and web-based resources, presentations at District meetings and in individual congregations, and through our weekly email action alerts.

My work focuses on a couple different issues related to economic justice including early childhood education and childcare, the federal budget and tax policy, and global AIDS initiatives. Other issues our office covers include post-9/11 civil liberties, same-sex marriage, reproductive health, separation of church and state, and the Middle East conflict, among others. For each issue, we come out with a policy position according to UUA social justice statements decided at our General

Assemblies, track the relevant legislation, and work with congressional offices, faith-based and secular organizations, and UU congregations to support or defeat policies based on our seven principles.

I grew up UU in Reston, Virginia and think my involvement with YRUU in high school has a lot to do with why I'm here now at the Washington Office. Basically, what made YRUU so important in my life were the adults that supported it. The adults who believed in, hung out with, talked to, advised, made fun of, and laughed with me as I trudged my way through adolescence. Without them instilling in me a feminist perspective on religion through classes on goddess worship, encouraging me to be politically-active, taking all of us camping, and renting the van to drive to Busch Gardens (theme park) every year with the money we raised through our hoagie (sub sandwich) sale, I probably never would have even gone to church in high school let alone stayed UU through college and now into young adulthood.

Their involvement in and consideration for my life and my experiences allowed me to appreciate and love myself and who I was and what I believed in, which has directly influenced the life choices I've made since then regarding my career, my politics, my faith, my friends...everything.

It wasn't any one thing my YRUU advisors, AYS (before there was OWL, there was AYS-About Your Sexuality) leaders, Director of Religious Education, or other adults in the congregation and at cons did that had this kind of effect on me — it was just the knowledge that they respected all of us youth and wanted us to speak our minds, to lead, to think... And when given the chance, that's just what happened.

To learn more about the Washington Office and find out how to get involved you can visit <http://www.uua.org/uuawo/new/>, call (202) 296-4672, or write to 1320 18th Street NW, Suite 300B· Washington DC · 20036.



BRIDGING RESOURCES

BRIDGING THE GAP

Chuck Sokol

"I felt really connected as a youth, but now I feel really separated from UUism as a young adult."

~Robin Hill of Rock Island, IL

As a youth nearing the end of my time with YRUU, I share Robin's sentiment. At General Assembly this year, I found that many other youth preparing for college (or otherwise moving away from their home, family, and congregation) felt the same way. Nine out of every ten youth disappear from UUism after YRUU, and I'd be willing to wager that it's because we can't find any way to stay involved in a manner that suits our needs. What do we do with all of our UU spirit when we graduate high school? Where do we go? If you are at all like me, you don't necessarily feel that the next logical step is to join a congregation in the town where you are moving. Personally, I found Sunday worships in unfamiliar churches to be intimidating, impersonal, and outright boring. That's not what my experience was in YRUU, so why should it be now?

That still leaves the question of what to do now that we are being pushed out of the nest. As it turns out — I'm sure most of you are aware — there is a Young Adult network of UUs throughout the US and Canada. Becoming involved with Young Adult (or sometimes "Campus Ministry") activity could be exactly what you are looking for. Unfortunately, through both personal experience and what Robin has told me, I've found it's not always easy to find the perfect (perhaps even any) Young Adult group near you. However, there are ways you can find Young Adult groups (if you know where to look).

Do whatever you can to spread this information on to others. Raise awareness in your congregation's youth group. Gather some information and lead a workshop at a

FUUSE.com

As an online Young Adult community featuring message boards and upcoming events, this may be a good place for you to start getting connected.

ConnectUU

A database including many groups and events around the continent can be found at uua.org/connect. It's also searchable by location and type of group/activity.

UUYAN.org

The UU Young Adult Network's web site may be helpful to you. Here you can find names and phone numbers of people in charge of coordinating Young Adult groups or events in your area. Simply look under "Newcomers," then select "Find Young Adult Groups and Events." You may want to get contact information for your Regional Organizing Consultant — available right on that page — for help in finding what you're looking for.

UUA Young Adult/Campus Ministry Office

Calling the UUA office could be the best thing for you to do if all else fails. They can supply you with everything from information on local groups in your area to resources you may need to start your own Young Adult group. They can be reached by e-mail at ya-cm@uua.org, by phone at (617) 948-6463, by fax machine at (617) 367-4798, or by mail at

Office of Young Adult and Campus Ministry
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

district/regional-level conference. Just tell all of your UU friends that there is a "bridge" over the proverbial "gap," and it is critical in combating the issue of so many of us disappearing, as it can help you stay involved with UUism for years to come. I'd certainly feel cheated if my age disqualified me from my style of religious practice, and it's wonderful to finally know that it doesn't.



I Am: A Riddle

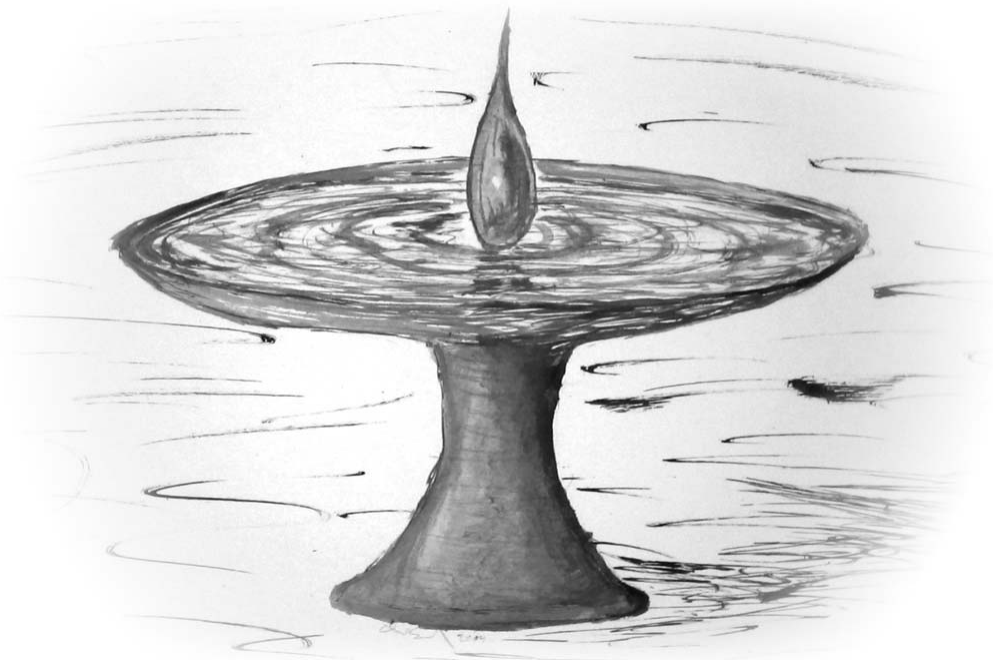
Brooke Weber

*I am the wind, the sky, the water
I am the phoenix who questions the fire of your heart
I am the protector of the stars, of those who have been
I am a dancer whose arms entwine like the threads of the silk that some dress me in
I am the great one, who has three eyes
I am split into many grains of Nile sand, crushed under monuments of my past reigns
I am the hand that moves the moon and sun
I am a myth, a legend, a hero, a champion
I am an overseer, a spy, who strikes terror in the souls of some and will punish
those who don't obey the rules
I am nothing to fear; I don't even exist
I am the creator
I am your creation
I am...*

War

Caitlin Woodall

*Not bad but miserable
Drenched in gray sadness, lonely grief handed
Out to all, people dying, children crying
Families torn apart, animals wasted.
Creating hate, losing hope, choosing death not life
Innocence betrayed by guilt, guilt smothered in murder
Murder and bloodshed...bloodshed, death
Lurking in streets, blackness, no light, no faith,
No hope, no life...*



*The second time to meet you
Memories stirred from the past
The aura of peace is surrounding us
Sealing away the pain*

Leaving by Moonlight

Naomi Edelman

*It won't let us fall
If even for a night, we can share
I wanted to let my soul radiate into you
It's me, and there's no way out
You seem to understand the beauty I love
Minutes soar swiftly past the brazen, glimmering orb of sun
Sometimes I get swept away;
I close my eyes and become the earth
My body vaporizes
Letting me freely combine into a surging, swirling spiral of raw energy
Unscarred and new, tender and beautiful
I drift with the pure silky clouds that gracefully flow against the azure ocean of air
I see the tiny shining hills of snow and hibernating trees
Little houses where little people live
Enclosed in their bodies just like me
When I come back I am breathless
Nature intoxicates me
I feel this inside you
Your spirit touches me, gently but powerfully
I know you too can feel the icy tingle of rippling stream water playing
on your lips
so we walk by mystical moonlight
I can see your soul within your eyes
We embrace...and say goodbye*

The 10th Annual Youth Advisor of the Year Award

Do you know of (or are you) a fantastic advisor or amazing adult who works with Unitarian Universalist Youth? If so, we invite you to simply submit a nomination to the Youth Office by **April 1, 2004!**

The advisor selected will be presented with the Outstanding Advisor Award at General Assembly in Fort Worth, TX in June 2005. The Outstanding Advisor will have \$500 donated to their congregation's youth group in their name, in addition to much overdue recognition, celebrity status, and the undying love and support of youth everywhere.

Advisor nominations must include:

A brief bio which lists the advisor's experience with youth and his or her qualifications

Two letters of recommendation from youth with whom the advisor has worked

One letter of recommendation from an adult in the congregation or district/region with which the advisor has been affiliated.

Send Nominations to:

Advisor of the Year
c/o The Youth Office
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108
617-948-4350
yruu@uua.org



SYNAPSE THEME SECTION

Anti-Racism

WHAT THE SWAT?*Lydia Pelot-Hobbs*

Hey everyone!

My name is Lydia Pelot-Hobbs and I am the current Working Action Manager (WAM) of YRUU! My job is to organize around the Working Action Issue (currently Education Reform and Multiculturalism) and coordinate the SWAT (Super Working Action Team: the folks on a grassroots level who are organizing around this issue in their congregations, communities, schools, districts/regions, or anywhere else). A resolution was passed this year at Youth Council to make Education Reform and Multiculturalism the long-term Working Action Issue so YRUU can help make significant change. If you are wondering how to get involved, it's simple: You can be on SWAT (it is a self-selected job.) If you decide this is something you want to put your time into, you can request a Super Working Action Team Packet of Activist Tools — SWAT PoAT — from the Youth Office, come to the YRUU Social Justice Conference (YSJC), participate in the Day of Action, support the Working Action Issue at General Assembly, or do anything else you can think of!

As an example, I'll tell you how I recently found a situation where I could become involved in stopping the perpetuation of racism. At my former high school, on the first day of school seniors dress up in a theme. This year the senior class officers chose the theme of "Wild Wild West." At first this seemed fine, but as I read the rest of the letter I noticed

dressing up as "cowboys or Indians" was encouraged. While in our society we have realized blackface is offensive, we have yet to catch on to the inherent racism in pretending to be Native Americans/Indigenous peoples. Even though many Native/Indigenous organizations have made statements about how this is hurtful and oppressive, many people do not seem to care. By doing such things, we are showing disrespect for a people's ethnicity and culture. I decided to write a letter detailing why asking students to dress as Native Americans is inherently racist and problematic and how seniors are leaders that need to set an anti-racist and anti-oppressive model for younger students to follow. I also asked in my letter that people consider what this means for our educational system when senior high school students — a year from graduating — have not learned that such behavior is inappropriate and oppressive. I sent the letter to the senior class officers, the high school newspaper, the community paper, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and the administration of my high school. Even if that letter is never responded to or printed, at least some people will read it and hopefully learn from it, and that is a first step to creating an anti-racist school environment.

Change is not that difficult. Look for the little things you can do to start the ripples of significant change in our educational system. You drive this movement!

Lydia Pelot-Hobbs is a bridgeter from St. Louis, MO. She currently attends Oberlin College in Ohio.



PAIN*George Brown*

There are several definitions, but basically pain is when your body says something is not right. However, pain is a broad spectrum. Many people feel emotional pain...I mean, shit, that's why we have faith, go to cons, rallies, General Assembly and special havens we make exclusively for ourselves, right? At some point in our life we experience some kind of emotional pain related to religion, race, gender, or sexuality, and we need a place to get away from that pain. Just about every day I am in a constant state of physical pain. I feel pain because I have a defect in me, a pain that feels like hellfire, and the only thing that can cure it is a major surgery. Every day I am in a constant state of mental pain caused by having to explain myself to ignorant people. Every day. By "myself" I mean my physiology, my anatomy, my mentality, my culture...you name it. I have to explain an entire culture, people, and lifestyle based on my skin color. Every day. Sometimes most of me wants to cave in, to laugh at all the "nigga" jokes, to take the threats, to be the toy that my school wants me to be. So I guess my confession is that I want to give into the oppression. But then I remember that my body is in a constant state of pain and my body is telling me something is not right...something is not right with my world, not with my thoughts. Something is not right with giving in.

George Brown is a youth from Azle, TX and is a member of the DRUUMM Youth and Young Adult Steering Committee, as well as the Anti-racism Trainer-Organizer Program

ARADC

What's that you say? There are going to be three Anti-racism Analysis Development Conferences (ARADC) happening across the continent this year! ARADCs will be held on:

February 4th – 6th
UU Church of Bloomington, IN

February 11th – 13th
West Hills Church of Portland, OR

February 18th – 20th
First Parish in Cambridge, MA

These working conferences are for both those who have never been to an Anti-racism (AR) workshop, and for those with lots of AR experience. If you go to your youth group once a month, or if you are a part of district or regional leadership, we would be happy to have you attend. We will take a look at societal, institutional, and personal racism as we build community. Get a flyer and registration form at :

uua.org/YRUU/training/pdfs/ARADCflyer.pdf

Or contact the Youth Office at (617) 948-4350, yruu@uua.org, or write to:

ARADC
c/o The Youth Office
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

To register for a particular conference, contact the registrar for that conference.

Bloomington:

Megan Selby — meganselby@bust.com
(812) 391-0491

Portland:

Hafidha Acuay — hafidhauu@comcast.net
(503) 750-7550

Cambridge:

Gregory Boyd — exigente@bu.edu
(717) 877-8522



THAT NIGHT

Gregory Boyd

Youth Council is the weeklong business meeting of YRUU held annually in late July or early August. The meeting is usually held the week after Con Con, the Continental Conference of YRUU. The delegates to Youth Council are called YCMs (Youth Council Members) and constitute four different bodies: regional and district YCRs (Youth Council Representatives), youth and adult at-large representatives, PoCC (The People of Color Caucus), and Steering Committee and the Youth Office who are there in a non-voting role. The purpose of Youth Council is to direct the course of YRUU on all levels for the year by using the Formal Consensus process to accept or reject resolutions, bylaws changes, and Y*FUUD (YRUU Fund for Unitarian Universalist Development) grant applications.

Youth Council has 4 equally important parts: Regional/District reports, Anti-racism and Anti-oppression analysis development, decision-making, and election of the new Steering Committee and PoCAC (People of Color Advisory Council to Steering Committee). PoCC and PoCAC are bodies of People of Color who have full "voting" rights at Youth Council and Steering Committee meetings, respectively. Both bodies are aware of how tokenizing (falsely representative) their positions of power are in YRUU.

PoCC and PoCAC were created out of YRUU's genuine desire to represent communities of People of Color in the Unitarian Universalist movement. The bodies were instituted at a time when there were no regional or district YCRs of Color. Again, this was the case this year — only the at-large and PoCC positions were filled by People of Color. For the under-representation of Youth of Color in YRUU, primarily, and many other reasons, secondarily, we do Anti-racism analysis development.

A large emphasis was put on doing Anti-racism analysis development. Each day, there was a 2-hour Anti-racism training that was part of the "Challenging White Supremacy"

workshop. In addition, there was a variable amount of time for racial and other identity-based caucusing. However, it was very obvious that this key component did not have enough time. Because of Plenary, the business part of Youth Council, taking as much as 3 hours when scheduled for an hour and a half session, Anti-racism work was often rescheduled at odd times. And as the struggle toward an Anti-Racist/Anti-Oppressive YRUU is ongoing, rescheduling also caused the real Anti-racism work to bubble up at unforeseen times.

"...Racism is still alive and kicking in YRUU and the UUA. It did not die back in 1968 with the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr."

On the fourth night of Youth Council, the Council community — tired and restless — had a decision to make that was brought about by the desire to build a healthy and strong community. This was the Council's first night to use the Formal Consensus process to accept or reject resolutions. This had been the plan, but it had also been the plan to begin this Plenary earlier and to have reached consensus on one resolution the previous day. It was already long past the bewitching hour, when one member asked that we break from Plenary for bed and pick up where we left off the next day. Another voice spoke up and asked that we stay through one more resolution in order to avoid the hazards of last year's Youth Council: working on resolutions until 4AM. Everyone was tired.

Before long, there was a battle between the two requests. There were those people who wanted to stay up longer and have less work for the next day, and there were those people who felt that we needed to end immediately because they were tired. Those groups were the People of Color and the White People, respectively. Tempers flared. White Youth left the room crying. Other White Youth followed behind to comfort them. Some White Youth



cried in the room about the fact that the community was breaking down because we would not agree to break. Other White Youth yelled that we were ignoring people who left the room or complained about not being able to leave the room. Everyone was tired.

Tempers flared. Youth of Color yelled about other situations where they stayed up late to do the work of the group despite being tired. Other Youth of Color cried about how the community was breaking down because we would not agree to get through one more resolution. Another Youth of Color yelled about how we were still here ready to do work despite those who refused to come back in the room. Another Youth of Color left the room because the situation was too much to take followed by a Youth of Color who went to provide support. Everyone was tired.

“...Racism is not an issue of Black People... Racism is not just about White People being oppressive. Racism and race prejudice are issues for all of us to deal with.”

Soon after hearing everyone, we decided to take a break. There was a rift in the community, a rift between races. Could it be true? There was racism in YRUU? As we broke, in more ways than one, some fled, others walked calmly out of the room and most Youth of Color cried silently, but noticeably — huddled in a mass in a corner. The hunger pangs of racism resounded softly in the air as we cried. We all cried that night, the Youth of Color. I do not know about the White Youth, for after we came back together, we decided to hold racial caucusing and many of us avoided White Youth for the rest of that night. As a Black Youth, it was terrifying for me. For the first time in my life, I was so afraid of White People. I was afraid that they would try to comfort me. I was afraid they would try to hug me. I was afraid that they were going to tell

me, "Don't worry, it's alright." It was not alright. It was fucked up what happened that night. It was fucked up what happened to me because of institutional racism. It was fucked up what happened to us Youth of Color that night. It was fucked up that 14–20-year-olds were the perpetrators of racism in our "safe" community. I did not feel safe.

Everyone was tired that night that racism surfaced at Youth Council, Thursday, August 5, 2004. It seemed surreal at first. We did not know what was happening. But then, just as fast, the battle lines were drawn and it was a race war.... Hold up, "How did it change so fast?" asked one Youth of Color. When I think about it, that's the funniest part. The racism that surfaced that night didn't just come about so fast, ze was there all along. Ze was the other at-large in the room that no one invited. Steering Committee didn't select zir to be there. And nobody would speak about zir or to zir. Yet racism had managed to crash our annual business party.

One of the strange things I learned that night was that it's all about racism. Of course this can be said about all linked oppressions (sexism, heterosexism, genderism, classism, prejudice, ablism, ageism, etc.), but racism is an easier common thread for me to see. We have all grown up in a racist society. Growing up and living in a racist society means that everything that we do is shaped by racism, power, prejudice and oppression. We all experience racism. The way we experience it is not the same, but we all know racism when we see it, whether or not we can name it, call it that or actively realize it.

All White People are racist and all People of Color are race prejudiced.

"But that's a generalization!"

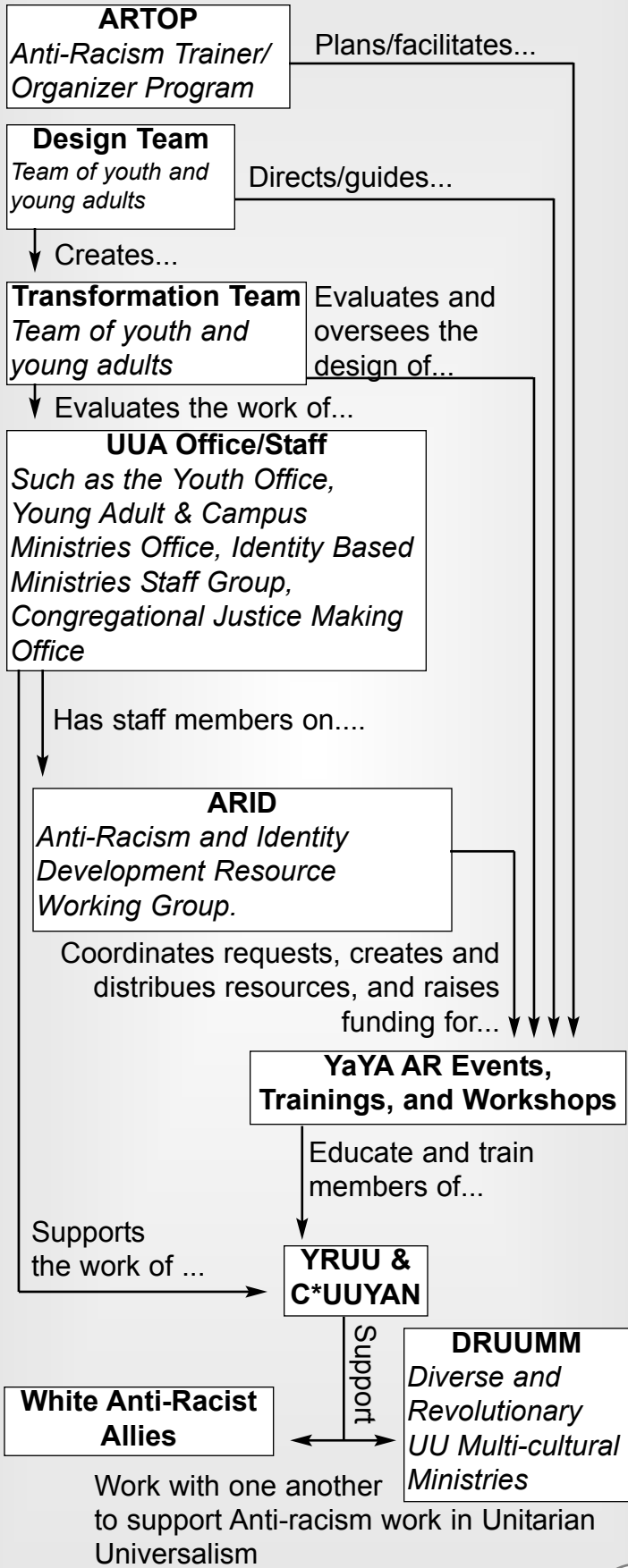
Whoever told you that generalizations are always wrong?

All apples have a core. The previous is a true generalization. All White People are racist and all People of Color are race prejudiced is another true generalization.

Continues on next page...

Anti-Racism Leadership Guide

(for UU Youth and Young Adults)



That Night continued...

Racist people and race-prejudiced people are not bad people. They are people on a journey through and within prejudice and oppression. We are all born into this journey, the anti-oppressive transformative journey toward liberation. What this means is that good people — even liberal religious youth — can be and are prejudiced. We may not be born prejudiced, but that does not mean we do not end up that way. Something we cannot control does not make us bad people. However, willingly refusing to admit who we are, what we do or own up to our positions of power and/or oppression in a racist society does make us bad people. We cannot sit by idly saying "I didn't create this problem;" or, "Racism doesn't exist where I live, everyone is White," or "I don't like to see colors, I see people and judge everyone on zir/her/his merits." If we who are on the cutting edge of liberal religion refuse to challenge racism and White supremacy, who is going to do it for us? Nemo.

Racism is still alive and kicking in YRUU and the UUA. It did not die back in 1968 with the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Racism is not an issue of Black People. Racism is not an issue of People of Color. Racism is not an issue of having more People of Color at Youth Council or at youth group or at a con. Racism is not just about White People being oppressive. Racism and race prejudice are issues for all of us to deal with. Those of you who think you don't experience racism, look closer, for racism is just below the surface of every conversation you have, preventing it from being fully genuine, fully meaningful and even truly anti-racist. That is why on that night at Youth Council, we saw racism come to a head, erupting like a hideous bacteria-ridden blemish on the milky white skin of YRUU. Racism was right there, painful and ready to process. It was the last thing we wanted to deal with, but we had to, though we were all so tired that night.

Gregory Boyd is a bridger from Harrisburg, PA. He currently attends college at Boston University and is also a member of both the YRUU and DRUUMM Youth and Young Adult Steering Committees.



YRUU ANTI-RACISM TIMELINE

compiled by Jennifer Dunmore

A second Youth and Young Adult **Resource Meeting** in Portland, OR **Youth Council** passes a "Resolution to Establish a Joint YRUU/C*UUYAN Anti-Racism Transformation Team" which would oversee and evaluate the Anti-Racism efforts of both YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) and C*UUYAN (Continental Unitarian Universalist Young Adult Network). The Youth and Young Adult Anti-Racism **Design Team**, a group of youth and young adults which will design the Transformation Team, meets for the first time **ARID** (the UUA Youth and Young Adult Anti-racism and Identity Development Resource Working Group), a group of UUA staff, is established

YRUU Social Justice Conference in Washington D.C. First ID Group coordinators as staff positions selected **GA Cleveland, OH:** Kendra Joseph-Rodgers and Jennifer Dunmore become the first youth staff ID group coordinators at GA. A **week long workshop** is held at the Pacific Southwest District's Youth winter camp. First **DRUUMM** (Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries) YaYA conference in Atlanta, Georgia **Steering Committee** participates in another AR training with UUA staff

Winter Steering Committee:

Keith Kron and Christine Murphy lead Anti-racism workshop for the Steering Committee

YRUU SC starts to realize the need for AR work in **YRUU** (see SC letter to YC 1999)

Spring Steering Committee:

Steering Committee writes a letter to Youth council about the need for Anti-racism work

YRUU invited to "Next Steps on the Journey Toward Wholeness meeting" in Kansas City, MO, June 5th. Melanie Griffin brings a proposal to steering committee that there be a Youth of Color family group (Identity group) at **ConCon** (the YRUU Continental Conference)

Youth Council passes a resolution: "It's Time We Do Something About Racism in **YRUU!**"

Mandy Jacobson cites the need for AR work in her final Position-on-Appraisal report to YC. It is decided that the new **Position on Appraisal** (Mandy's successor) will focus on Anti-Racism work

Spring Synapse focus is Anti-racism

The Winter issue of **Synapse**, the **YRUU** magazine, includes articles concerning cultural understanding and race. **ConCon**, the annual **YRUU** Continental Conference, is held in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Its theme is "Coloring Outside the Lines: Celebrating YRUU's Year of Interracial/Intercultural Understanding"

Youth Council, the governing body of **YRUU** (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) passes "Resolution to Reach Out to Youth of Diverse Backgrounds" at its annual meeting

The **AR Training of Trainer-Organizers** occurs in Boston, MA and brings together over thirty youth, young adults, and adult mentors who will become part of the Anti-Racism Trainer Organizers Program (ARTOP). **ARTOP** members begin to lead Anti-racism trainings throughout the continent at UU summer camps, continental **YRUU** and C*UUYAN conferences, and district/regional/local youth and young adult events. The theme of the Fall **Synapse** issue is Anti-racism

Youth and Young Adult **Resource Meeting** in Tampa, FL. **DRUUMM** YaYA conference in Chicago, IL. **First White Allies Conference** occurs in coordination with the DRUUMM conference in Chicago, IL. The development of a youth and young adult **Anti-racism Training** is discussed at a meeting of UUA staff working for anti-oppression and youth and young adult programming, and made a strategic budget priority for the next year. Mass Bay, Clara Barton, and Ballou Channing districts hold **Joint AR training** for district leadership and the **YRUU Steering Committee**

Youth Council representation includes the first People of Color Caucus, and the first People of Color Advisory Council on is elected to Steering committee. **Anti-Racism trainings** for youth take place in the New Hampshire/Vermont District and Metro New York District. **Metro District AR conference** for youth. **General Assembly Nashville, Tennessee:** First ID groups at General Assembly (the annual meeting of congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association). **ConCon Emory, Virginia:** First ID groups at **ConCon Steering Committee:** First Steering Committee AR training with the Board of Trustees. The theme of the Fall **Synapse** issue is "Stopping the Tides of Racism"

Youth Council passes a resolution to begin funding programs which will broaden diversity in **YRUU**. **Spring Synapse** features an AR article

Youth Council passes a resolutions on:

- "Resolution on Assimilating Racial Justice into Continental YRUU Sponsored by the Racial Justice Working Group"
- "Resolution for Exploring the Possibility of Establishing a Liaison between the Youth Council and the Black Concerns Working Group Sponsored by the Racial Justice Working Group"
- "Resolution for the Creation of a Youth-Specific Anti-Racism Resource Sponsored by the Racial Justice Working Group"
- Resolution on YRUU Support of 'Journey towards Wholeness' Sponsored by the Racial Justice Working Group"

Youth Council passes "Resolutions on Interracial and Cultural Inclusiveness"



Learn more about...

DRUUMM

Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural
Ministries

A UU People of Color Organization

The Mission:

As People of Color mobilized in an anti-racist collective, members of DRUUMM unite to:

- Work for self-determination, justice and equal opportunity,
- Empower their various ministries,
- Celebrate their diverse heritages,
- Overcome racism through resistance,
- Transform and enrich Unitarian Universalism through their multicultural experiences.

DRUUMM's mailing address is with the UUA's Washington Office and specifically the Identity-Based Ministries Staff Group with which we have a developing relationship. That address is:

DRUUMM c/o UUA

**1320 18th Street NW Suite 300 B
Washington DC, 20036**

or, contact Sean Jones, the DRUUMM
Youth and Young Adult Liaison to YRUU:
sean@winterhill.net

UU White Anti-Racist Allies

a forming organization for white-identified
Unitarian Universalists

White UU youth and young adults have been doing Anti-racism work as White Allies for years. At this year's General Assembly, a group of youth, young adults, and adults got together to vision for a formal, accountable organization to support white UU's doing AR work.

This organization is still forming, but there are youth on the Interim Steering Committee who you can contact for more information:

Beth Dana: erd231@nyu.edu
Margaret Daniele: brooklynqt2488@yahoo.com

You can also subscribe to its email listserv, anti-racism-interim@uuan.org, by emailing
PAldrich@uua.org.

ID GROUPS: THE TOKEN VERSION

George Brown

This is a warning to all who read: I hope these words make your heart bleed. Know that a man had to cry and then die so you will know what I see. So now I am through crying and finished dying and this is the end of this man rhyming.

Recently a White Person approached me with a question I have heard only too often. "Why don't we have a third identity group? I don't identify as White and I don't believe that it is White Peoples' job to stop racism."

I write the following words because I will finally give in and become the token you want me to be. I will answer this question as an individual Person of Color, as an individual Black male, as proof that I have answered this question already.

It *is* White People's job to stop racism.

People of Color have been making attempts to "teach White People how not to be racist" for over 100 years, and, as history has shown, it has failed. All we have done is turn other People of Color who aren't aware of the injustices of racism into teachers who don't want to teach. For example, it is not fair that someone will probably take this article and show it to a Person of Color and ask their approval or comments on it.

So let me break down my problem with the "Identity Group question." The fact that a White Person asks me shows they really don't want to actively stop racism.

I know in White ID groups the leaders tell White Folks the ugly truth about White privilege and White supremacy, but you must understand that the leaders of those groups are not there to make White People feel guilty "...because guilt is worth shit, and shit won't help me and it won't help you." Instead of feeling guilty in identity groups, forgive yourself and ask the real fucking question that I want answered: "How are White People going to work with other White People to stop racism?"



Secondly, understand that it is White privilege that allows a White Person to ignore the fact that they are White. I cannot wake up and live in this society and truthfully say I am not a Person of Color. Cabs drive right past me while I try to call them, and that puts me back into my place, back in to my reality. Understand that when a White Person asks me that question, it breaks my heart, because those individuals are still not listening to what the Anti-racism trainers are saying or to what the White Allies are saying. Those people asking this question are trying to impose their White supremacy to be escapist and force me, and others like me, to answer their questions that

“...it is White privilege that allows a White Person to ignore the fact that they are White.”

have already been answered.

White People need to understand that choosing your Race Identity is different than choosing your sexuality or gender. Those things are scientific - Meaning if you are gay you don't choose to be gay. If you feel that you are supposed to be a woman or man then you probably are supposed to be one or the other. If you are neither then you are neither.

Race is totally different because, sadly, being White or a POC is a societal title given to you. The idea of race is not simply a choice, it is a prerequisite, a rubber stamp of power or of none, of oppressor or of the oppressed. The identity "White" gives White People the privilege to ignore or control these truths.

This brings me to my last rant. My allowing the notion of a third identity group would empower POC in no way. I refuse to lie to a White Person or Person of Color and tell that person they have no role or title in society. If they choose to struggle with their identity that is up to them, but I refuse to have a hand in perpetuating racism to such a gross degree.

I've made a commitment to be Anti-Racist; not Non-Racist ergo escapist.

Finally this beautiful token has been eloquently spoken.

I hope my words have opened people's senses, not put up their defenses. Understand that I am no UU traitor, but rather this is just my plea on paper.

These words have no White Man's forge: This is me being me, this is me being George.

Speaking of Anti-Racism...

This year's **UU United Nations Office Annual International Spring Seminar** is

"Beyond Labels: our Common Ground."

Discussions will cover national, religious and sexual differences around the world as well as "exploring our common ground." There will be speakers from the UN as well as many other organizations, and there will be a youth panel with guests from PFLAG in NYC.

The seminar is from April 13th - 16th, 2005.

For registration forms and other information about the UU-UNO visit the website uu-uno.org or e-mail the Head of the Youth Seminar Rosara Torrisi at HeadHOTY@yahoo.com or call the office at 212-986-5165 and ask for the Onsite Coordinator Erin Williams.

Have you ever dreamt of an ANTI-RACIST YRUU?

It's about time we did some more Anti-racism work in the CUC, UUA and in larger society! **The Anti-Racism Trainer Organizer Program (ARTOP)** is here to save the day and aide you in your own work. This newly formed program is full of energy and has trainers all over Canada and the USA. They can do hour-long workshops, weekend long conferences, multiple meeting workshops, whatever you like. Any group size is right for them. If you want to have an Anti-racism (AR) workshop or conference for your youth group, congregation, local area, or region/district call the Continental Youth and Young Adult AR Hotline at (617) 948-4356 or by e-mailing yruu@uua.org.

FOR WHITE FOLKS WHO HATE ID GROUPS

Megan Selby
with co-signers Nancy DiGiovanni and Annie Abernathy

Part I: The Apology

I'm writing this piece to some of my fellow White People who may have attended Identity Groups and gone away feeling angry, accused, or hurt. I'm writing to those of you who have heard that White Identity Groups are where White People get together so the facilitators can tell them they're racist and bad; I'm even writing to those of you who have attended in the years past and kept coming back. To all of you, I want to say I'm sorry.

“...People have been hurt by past White ID Groups, and I've heard youth and young adults tell their friends not to go for that reason. I'm really sorry that was your experience.”

I'm sorry because I've been a facilitator of several White identity groups, which I now believe were led very poorly. There was a lot of shaming, invalidating your experiences, broad generalizations, and unnecessary schooling involved. I'm sorry I called you out in anger or tried to shove definitions down your throat. I'm sorry I tried to tell you what your experience as a White Person was supposed to be. I'm sorry I dismissed your concerns and your pain. I did this because of my own feelings of guilt as a White Person and my own struggle with my identity and life experiences that I didn't know how to handle then. I didn't know how to deal with it all, so I took it out on other White People. I used that age-old bully tactic of pushing other people down to lift myself up, and I'm really sorry you had to experience that.

You see, Identity Groups are a fairly new thing for YRUU. We've only been doing this for five years now, and compared to the history of an organization that's a pretty short time to enact institutional change. When I started facilitating White ID Groups in 2001 I didn't have anyone mentoring me. There wasn't anyone by my side helping me to get past my White guilt. I really didn't know what I was doing half the time, but I thought it was better to be doing something about racism in my YRUU community than nothing. But for some of you I'm not sure that's true. People have been hurt by past White ID Groups, and I've heard youth and young adults tell their friends not to go for that reason. I'm really sorry that was your experience.

Part II: The Invitation

With that said, I would like to invite you all back to White Identity Caucusing. As short of a time as five years is, some significant changes have been/are being made. Those of us who have been working with White Folks folks on Anti-racism have learned quite a bit from our mistakes and our successes. We are beginning to listen to all of your concerns, and are starting to listen better to People of Color who are concerned about our activities and strategies in ID Groups. There is collaboration with other organizations doing Anti-racism and Identity work, and as we have been witnessing their style they have been giving us some important critiques of our work. We have Anti-Racist elders in our faith who are working with us now giving us their support and guidance. We're doing things differently now. We're becoming a community of White Folks that support each other's struggles, validate one another's experiences, and appreciate the cultural diversity that exists in White communities.

Don't get me wrong. Some of the old problems are still present. We haven't yet created the ideal community of White Folks who are supportive of each other, accountable to People of Color, and doing Anti-racism work; however, we're working on



it and we need your help to keep us evolving and making our space safe. We need to reach all those people who have attended those shame-based White ID Groups of the past, say "we're sorry," and show them another way of doing AR work so "the shame" isn't perpetuated. We need to be continuously critical of what we're doing in our activities, strategies, words, and principles. We still need to break down issues of elitism in the White Allies community and be more inclusive and appreciative of new folks. We need to value different ways of approaching Anti-racism, so if someone doesn't follow the YRUU precedent we can still appreciate and incorporate those sentiments and view them as steps in building an Anti-Racist community. Most importantly, we White People need to keep working on Anti-racism and the struggle to understand our identity as people who are privileged by the oppressive system of racism. It is our responsibility.

There are a couple groups of people who have taken on this responsibility, including the newly forming White Allies organization and the White Folks in the Anti-racism Trainer-Organizer (ARTO) Collective. Acting as hubs for feedback from various conferences and workshops, these groups are getting other White Folks involved in Anti-racism and Identity work. They are constantly reworking programs like White Identity Groups to include this feedback. For more information on the White Allies organization or the ARTO program, contact the Youth Office. Get in contact with these groups and help them do the work. They need you.

Give White ID Groups another chance. See if you find truth in anything written here. See if there are changes being made. If you still don't like them, I won't blame you. I'll do my best to listen to your concerns and explore what other transformations can be made. We can work together to build our community. We need to work together.

Megan Selby is a member of the Anti-racism Trainer Organizer Collective, a former YRUU Programs Specialist, and a student in Bloomington, Indiana.

Reasons We Have *From the YRUU Social Justice Conference 2001*

IDENTITY GROUPS

We all need a safe space to talk about our differences and ask questions without worrying about offending people.

We must talk about race openly and intentionally, especially in dealing with the prison industrial complex. Racism is inherent in the prison system, and you have to look at how you can work to challenge a racist system.

White People need a place to talk about breaking down racism, because it is not up to People of Color to tell White People how to be anti-racist.

People of Color need a place to talk about the unique experiences that White People don't experience in UUism, YRUU and society.

ID groups are a place where people can talk about racism from wherever they are without pushing toward a goal.

ID Groups are also a great place to talk about linked oppressions, without losing focus on race...i.e. "I'm a White Queer Woman, and what does that mean? How does that combination of privilege and oppression affect me?"

We need to actively dismantle racism. Ignoring race and being paralyzed by fear of discussing or offending won't change anything.

We want to acknowledge and embrace differences, not ignore them. We have to recognize race to be able to work against racism. Trying to be "colorblind" avoids actively working for change.

Separately, we can talk about the situations that are unique to our experience because of our race/background with people who have been through the same kinds of experiences. Then we can come back together and talk about what we have in common, and how we can work together.

Everyone is affected by racism, regardless of who they are. It is embedded in our institutions, culture, etc, as well as in our personal assumptions. It is subtle and it permeates everything we see and do. We have to deal with the subtleties of racism and how we've been conditioned to not notice it.

We all believe that racism is bad, but we have to focus on how our actions (or lack thereof) contribute to the problem.

ID groups are not just for People of Color. White People need to discuss their identities and heritage. Often, White People have a rich cultural heritage that is ignored or made invisible by society. White People have to learn to be proud of who they are while combatting the imperialism and oppression present in White heritage.

Anti-Racism Movie Guide

compiled by Lydia Pelot-Hobbs

DANGEROUS MINDS**Overview/Description:**

"Dangerous Minds" follows LouAnne Johnson, a White Teacher at a school within a school for "special needs" students. This Academy is made up almost entirely of Students of Color, who all have White Teachers. Most of the students are bussed in to this suburban high school from the city. This movie chronicles a semester of one of LouAnne's classes.

While the purpose of this movie was intended to illustrate how wonderful LouAnne is as a teacher and how she reaches out to her students, there are inherent issues of oppression of this White Woman "saving" these Youth of Color. The movie also deals with issues of school funding, militarization in schools, curriculum in schools, and how rules and discipline affect the learning process.

Things to think about:

As you are watching the movie, take notice of how White People and People of Color interact with one another. Also, think about problems in your schools that are illustrated in this movie.

Discussion Questions:

— What does it say that almost all of students are Students of Color? How does the film portray Students of Color to the audience?

— What do you think of the fact that after LouAnne's first day she is reading Assertive Discipline?

— LouAnne uses the fact she was a marine to get the students attention. How does this illustrate militarization in our schools? How have your schools been militarized? How does this affect one's education?

— In the classroom a student says, "Since when has the Board of Education done anything for us?" What does it say that they feel this way? Do you feel the Board of Education of your school does/did care about you?

— A question on one of Hal's exams asks which president of the United States was the most influential. One student answers "I will not answer as it is culturally biased." Was it? Are history classes culturally biased? How could we change them to be more inclusive?

— LouAnne tells her students "there are no victims in this classroom." What does this say about how she views the world? How does this influence how she sees her students and how she teaches?

— Many times throughout the movie, LouAnne is told she doesn't understand. Jarelle's grandmother tells LouAnne to "find some other poor boys to save." Why do you think there is hostility towards LouAnne? Do you feel any hostility towards her? Why or why not?

— How do the ideas of discipline and rules play into the movie?

How can rules and forms of discipline be effective?

Why are they often ineffective?

AR RESOURCES

Compiled by Jennifer Dunmore

antiracismnet.org — From what I can tell, this site is built for activists, specifically AR activists. I'm not sure of their general analysis, but I think they might have some really cool linked oppression stuff.

antiracist.com — This is a Canadian site. I like this site because it has a special youth page, which always rocks my world. The downside is that their idea of AR seems to only be about personal racism or more commonly recognized forms of racism.

splcenter.org — Southern Poverty Law Center is a good resource for U.S. folk when trying to explain the VERY real threat of extremist racism and so on, especially for teens living in the burbs. They also have a website, *Teaching Tolerance*, and while I have issues with the term "tolerance", their teen site on teaching tolerance has some pretty cool organizing tools and racism awareness activities. From my experience with this organization though, they don't have much of a deeper analysis past personal privilege and oppression.

ncbi.org — The National Coalition Building Institute does a lot of work with helping organizations build connections within their community. They are an international organization, and have programs out of some cities in Canada as well as the U.S. Their AR analysis sounds like it could be real tight, looking at their description of the training, but I feel I've heard mixed reviews about it from people that have gone, so take them with a grain of salt.

magenta.nl/crosspoint — This is a resource site having AR website info for just about any major country one could think of. Really a good site to get an idea of what kind of organizations are out there and to see if any might be near you or a group you are working with.

projectchange.org — This is a really tight organization that started out mostly in the southwestern U.S. They are connected to the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, and this website has free access to some of their publications, which seem like they rock. They also rock, because they seem to be all about the community organizing.

crr.ca/EN/default.htm — The Canadian Race Relations Foundations has good info on the history of Racism in Canada. It seems to be about the basics of race issues in Canada, not much of a deep AR analysis, but some pretty cool stuff all the same.

schoolnet.ca/aboriginal — Canadian website that seems to be a great place to learn all about the Canadian First Nation folks.

ncai.org/index.asp — This is the National Council of American Indians, from what I can tell, its run by U.S. First Nation folks. I think it's a good combination of what First Nation folks are up to in U.S. politics today, and their Frequently Asked Questions About Indians sheet is pretty tight.

nativeweb.com — Another very good site for finding out about indigenous cultures around the world and current events of aboriginal peoples and their history near you.



ATTENTION YOUTH!

Here are all the current YRUU leadership positions to apply for.
We are always happy to have new people apply!

Youth, we need your help! We are experiencing a drought here in Boston. Yes, a drought that could jeopardize YRUU's ability to be a thriving youth organization. "What is this drought," you ask? It is the severe lack of applications we have been receiving for ALL youth leadership positions. Youth! are you out there? We need to see you! As MC5 once said, "Lemme see a sea of hands!" Or better yet, let me see your applications! Please review the following leadership positions currently available in YRUU and apply for as many as you desire! Go, like the wind!

Youth Council Positions

The YRUU Youth Council is the governing body of Continental YRUU. They meet once a year to make policy decisions, pass resolutions, worship, have fun, and decide the direction for the UU Youth Movement for years to come. Members of the YRUU Youth Council work throughout the year to follow through on the resolutions that they have passed and to do groundwork for resolutions to come to the next year's Youth Council. Steering Committee is now accepting applications for the following Youth Council positions:

People of Color Caucus: 8 positions (1 year)
Transitional Age Range Representatives:
1 jr-high, 1 post-high (1 year)
Canadian Youth At-Large: 1 position (1 year)
Adults-at-Large: 4 positions (2 years)
Applications are due March 11th. For more information, check out www.uua.org/yruu/governance/whatsmyjob.html

Apply to Work in the UUA Youth Office!!

Applications are being accepted for the one-year YRUU Programs Specialist (YPS) position for Sep '05 - '06. "The successful YRUU Programs Specialist applicant will have an amiable personality with leadership qualities, good written and verbal communication skills, the maturity and creativity to handle an often hectic but rewarding full time job, have the freedom to live in the Boston area as well as travel, and will be between the ages of 16 and 22 at the time of application."

Applications are on the YRUU web site at www.uua.org/YRUU or by contacting the Youth Office at yruu@uua.org or 617-948-4350

The complete application, including letters of recommendation, must be postmarked by February 15th!

Position on Appraisal

The Position on Appraisal (POA) is a two year term that serves on both Youth Council and the YRUU Steering Committee. This person, who is selected by the Youth Office, has many tasks including process observation (meaning this person will observe how different business meetings are held and work to make meetings anti-oppressive). There will also be a themed subject of interest which the POA will study and then work to implement throughout YRUU. Look for further postings from the Youth Office to learn more about this position, or contact us if you would like to receive an application.

YRUU web site - uua.org/YRUU

Want To Be A Trainer???

This winter/spring there will be two training of trainers: one for **Spirituality Development Conference (SDC) Trainers** and the other for **Advanced Advisor Trainers**. Are you interested in leading trainings around the US and Canada for YRUUers and adult allies for the next few years? Do you enjoy working with people to develop their spirituality? Apply for the CSDC! uua.org/yruu/training/pdfs/2005CSDCApp.pdf Are you a big fan of advisors and want to help them learn better how to serve the youth community? Apply for the CAAT! uua.org/yruu/training/pdfs/2005CAATApp.pdf This is a great opportunity to develop leadership skills and meet folks involved in YRUU around the continent. For more info contact Betty Jeanne at BRuetersWard@uua.org or 617-948-4353 or check out the YRUU website.

Applications for Youth Council positions should include:

Vital Information: Name, address, phone number, date of birth, home congregation, UUA district, and a list of people from whom you expect letters of recommendation.

A Letter of Intent: Why you want the position for which you are applying, what you feel you can offer that position, what you think you can offer to the group, what YRUU issues concern you, and your dreams and goals for YRUU.

Anti-Racism, Multiculturalism, and Diversity: How do you define racism? What sort of education have you had on issues of racism, Anti-racism, and/or multiculturalism (describe these experiences)?

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).

Send all applications to:

UUA Youth Office; 25 Beacon Street; Boston, MA02108

SATUURDAY

This summer, a group of queer (including bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender) and questioning youth and adult advisors got together in Santa Monica, California for the SATUURDAY (Sexually Accepting Teenage Unitarian Universalists Respecting Diversity Among Youth) conference. This event, which started several years ago in the Metro New York District, is one of the ways YRUU hopes to support youth with different sexual preferences and gender identities. Here, read the reflections of two of the youth who attended the conference.



photo courtesy of Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward

Scott McNeill

A couple of days after my first General Assembly, I got to experience my first youth "con" — SATUURDAY — and it was an amazing experience. Truth be told, I was worried at first: I can be shy, and I didn't know anyone there when I arrived in Santa Monica. But while I was there I gained several close friends - so close that I'd consider them family. Talking about my faith and my sexuality so openly was liberating and empowering, something that doesn't happen enough in our lives. Safe spaces for young, queer UUs are magical — they help make us stronger, better people.

I wouldn't have had this wonderful opportunity if it weren't for Interweave, a UU

affiliate group that brings together queer UUs and their supporters. I proudly serve on their board and coordinate Diversity, Anti-oppression and Coalition Building. Interweave is where I first heard about SATUURDAY, and it was their commitment to supporting the con in whatever way they could that taught me how important UU youth are to Interweave and the UU movement. We need you to bring new voices and new insights to Interweave and other organizations that support queer and queer-friendly UUs (not just adults!) So give Interweave and SATUURDAY a chance — you'll grow more than you thought you could!

Scott McNeill is a Bridger from Asheville, NC

SATUURDAY Continued...

KT Hariman

The SATUURDAY conference brought queer and questioning youth together to learn, worship, and bond as we worked toward a common goal: establishing an official queer/trans youth caucus within YRUU.

Caucusing is vital to the strength of our movement. Queer/transgender youth need the support of peers who share their identities in order to move past obstacles that don't exist for heterosexual youth. Invisibility and isolation shrink our perceptions of the queer/transgender community and cripples our organizing within primarily heterosexual circles. Establishing SATUURDAY as an organization cements our validity within YRUU and gives us a presence that we need to nurture in our movement and ourselves. Even in its infancy, SATUURDAY has given me so much — I can only imagine how much good it will do once it is larger and more vibrant.

SATUURDAY helped me grow as a person as I began to unravel the fabric of my oppression. Understanding how discrimination has affected my life and those of my friends has given me a new perspective on power dynamics in our society, and I developed leadership skills that I couldn't find in an environment where I had to explain and justify my identity. SATUURDAY was my first time at an event run by and including only queer and transgender people. While I have many wonderful straight friends who are my allies, I felt security in the knowledge that everyone there had many similar struggles. Whether we like it or not, we have each other's back.

KT Hariman is a bridging youth from Des Moines, IA

Youth Council passed a resolution this year in support of SATUURDAY! Find out more by contacting the Youth Office at yruu@uua.org or 617-948-4350. Learn more about **Interweave** by visiting www.uua.org/interweave

YRUU Chaplain Training

April 15-17, 2005

San Diego, CA

*Youth of ages: 14-20. Adults: 25 and up.
(Young Adults, 25+, Welcome)*

Chaplains are caring, understanding and compassionate listeners. They are there to offer one-on-one, personal care and attention to those whose needs go beyond what the larger conference community can provide. These are not certified professionals, but everyday people with a desire to serve their fellow human beings. Chaplains have one of the most important positions at a conference because of the emotionally supportive and spiritually nurturing role that they play in the con community as a whole.

The training for this event will be conducted by a team of outstanding facilitators which includes youth, adults, and experienced chaplains. The programming is designed to teach the basic skills necessary for effective chaplaining such as active listening, dealing with crisis, and responsive awareness. In addition, the training will cover topics such as the chaplain's role in the conference community and will address issues of confidentiality and ethical chaplain behavior. Ultimately, each participant will be challenged to take an inward look into their reasons for being a chaplain as they strive to find ways of enhancing their abilities to serve others.

Interested youth and adults are encouraged to apply for this training. Applications must be received by February 20, 2005. Selected applicants will be notified by March 1st. Registration for the training, which includes all training materials, as well as food and accommodations for the weekend, is \$125 (\$100 for applications received by February 1st).

Participants are also required to provide their own transportation to San Diego, California but are strongly encouraged to seek financial assistance from their churches and districts/regions in covering the costs of registration and transportation. A very few partial scholarships are also available. Please contact Tim Murphy (early) for more information on these.

Questions? Need an application?

Contact Tim Murphy at (756) 643-6147 or write to nightcoaster@yahoo.com



CONCON MURDER MYSTERY

At this year's YRUU Continental Conference the community was treated to a dazzling, dramatic murder mystery surprise! Special thanks to Martina Szarek for making it all happen! Check out these photos!



YRUU Superheroes from left to right: YPS Betty Jeanne Rueters Ward as "Stacey," ConCon Dean Lydia Pelot-Hobbs as "Cassandra," YPS Jason Lydon as "The Ambiguously Queer Single," and Worship Coordinator as Mighty Matty."



"The Ambiguously Queer Single" in a moment of desperation following the death of "Mighty Matty."



"Stacey" wails at the loss of "Mighty Matty" as ConCon attendees watch in confusion.



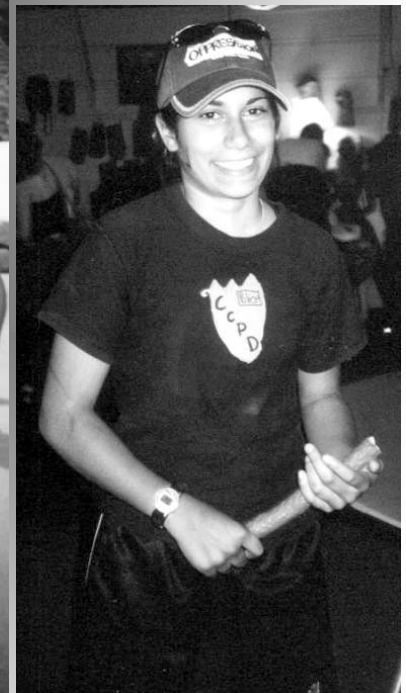
Environmental super-villians "First Energy" and "Brush Wellman" wreak havoc on ConConVille



Oh No! "Mighty Matty" has been murdered!



"Who are you protecting here?" Identity Group coordinators Laura Manning and Asha Philar play the police.



Society gives us a box to live in, and YRUU helps us think outside that box. But YRUU becomes a box too, unless we keep thinking outside of the institution, and keep reforming that institution to be truer to our ideals.

Soapbox is a part of Synapse reserved for editorials from UU youth to share their thoughts on the state of YRUU and our greater UU community. The opinions expressed herein do not reflect those of the UUA or Youth Office.

The following is an excerpt from an in-depth article Heather and Tim submitted to Synapse and to the YRUU Steering Committee earlier this fall. To read the entire piece, go to <http://www.uua.org/YRUU/synapse/index.html> or call the Youth Office at 617-948-4350 to have a copy mailed to you.

IS IT TIME FOR ANOTHER "COMMON GROUND"?

Why YRUU Must Change or Die

Heather Vail and Tim Fitzgerald

Recently, many youth and adults have recognized a need for a re-evaluation of YRUU, raising concerns about YRUU's accessibility and ability to meet the needs of UU youth locally, in the districts, and continentally. In 2003, leaders within YRUU organized a Long Range Planning meeting, and a group of youth and adults from across the continent came to Boston to consider the future of YRUU. Unfortunately, the conference received little institutional support. Because money promised by the UUA for reform never materialized, YRUU found itself cutting back on staff and structure rather than strengthening it. Since then, adult leaders in the UUA, including UUA President Bill Sinkford, have pushed YRUU to address some of its issues, calling for a new Common Ground conference. The first two Common Grounds occurred in the early 80s and served to disband and reorganize the UUA's previous youth program, the more independent, more risky Liberal Religious Youth (LRY), and create YRUU. The proposition on the table now is for a Common Ground III.

Originally, we intended the focus of this article to be solely on Common Ground III and the repercussions of Youth Council's recent decision (YC '04) to not pass the resolution that would lay its groundwork. After a lot of discussion, though, we've decided to focus

here on the larger institutional issues behind the need for reform. We do this in the interest of starting a dialogue within YRUU about its problems and about how we, as youth, can take responsibility for them. We see this as vital not only for the long-term success of YRUU, but also so that we can enter future dialogue with the adults of the UUA on a solid footing to articulate our needs, including those of the youth to whom we currently need to be more accountable. YRUU's leadership must recognize, and take responsibility for, its institutional failings before the UUA Board of Trustees decides that it has no choice but to impose something as drastic and potentially disempowering as a Common Ground.

We see the role of adults in this process as one of advising and facilitation, not unlike the relationship that we expect all adults in our communities to maintain with youth. What we believe is that YRUU, on all three levels, needs some drastic re-visioning work, but that it is the responsibility of youth, and not adults, to call for and design this process. We feel that this internal re-evaluation needs to happen before any alliance with the UUA's adult leadership can yield progress that both addresses YRUU's institutional concerns and upholds youth empowerment. All UU adults can help this process by working to restore a sense of youth empowerment to the intergenerational UU community. Necessarily, a sizable component of this process will involve a dedicated and conscious focus on the part of the adult leadership of the UUA to actively promote and demonstrate a commitment to anti-ageism.

What, then, are the problems with YRUU? How does YRUU need to change, while being accountable to youth empowerment and its vision for the future?...

Heather Vail and Tim Fitzgerald have each served on the Mass Bay District Youth Steering Committee, and are active in and committed to Continental YRUU.

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