

SYNAPSE

by young religious unitarian universalists, for everyone!



sexuality

education
awareness
community
safety
equality
respect
love
change
realization
support
development
acceptance
families
understanding
reflection
independence
identification
affirmation
LIFE



a point of contact where information & energy are exchanged

SPRING 2005 VOLUME XXIII ISSUE I

Wow, the theme of this issue is quite encompassing. There is so much to write about the topic of sexuality. I'd like to state that sexuality education, homophobia, heterosexism, relationship structures, gender binary issues, lookism, healthy sexuality and much more all deserve and need to be discussed within and outside our communities. In writing this editorial I wanted to focus on something that our UU communities and our larger world struggle with. Sexual violence is something that we can all work to stand up against. Here are some basic tools to start an active resistance against sexual violence.

1. **Everyone has the right to say "No"** - you, your sexual partner(s), and everyone else. These rights are too often violated and part of why sexual violence is a problem within our world. If something doesn't seem quite right, if you aren't ready, if you aren't sure, if you're uncomfortable, if you just don't feel like it, or even if you don't have a reason, you still have the right to say "NO". And to those who aren't sure what "no" means, I'll explain; no means no. It does not mean "sort of", or "I'm just playing", it means "no".

2. **"No" is not always said explicitly**- BE AWARE. When someone says something like, "Not tonight," or "I'm not sure I am comfortable with this," you should take such a statement as a "no". Furthermore, a "no" does not always come in a verbal answer. If someone

backs away from you if you try to get close, or if they move your hand away from them, this means "no".

3. **Ask for consent**- Often we have the notion that our sexual encounters are supposed to naturally flow without any form of real communication between partners. This assumes that all of the people involved want and feel comfortable with what is happening "in the heat of the moment." You may feel comfortable, but you've got to ask if the other person(s) is/are happy and willing to continue with what is going on. Silence does not mean "yes." So instead of just kissing someone, or anything else that involves physical contact, ask, "May I kiss you?" Some might think that this ruins the mood. I have two answers for that: 1. You can definitely ask in a loving and compassionate way that doesn't ruin the mood. 2. The mood is REALLY ruined when you hurt someone and you end up with a plethora of negative consequences including knowing that you have caused pain or the possibility of winding up in jail. Asking can be hot and can be super validating. Furthermore, having asked for and gotten permission to kiss a partner once does not mean you have permission to kiss that person another time. Always ask for consent, because even after being sexually active with someone for years does not mean that a person is comfortable with having sexual contact another time. People can consent in advance by saying, "From now on, you don't have to ask for a kiss." Communication is important and giving consent ahead of time in no way waives a person's right to say "no." Sex is not a right and no one is entitled to it.

continued on page 5

credits

staff:

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Josephine Bibby | Synapse Intern / Cover Art |
| Brian Kuzma | YRUU Programs Specialist |
| Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward | YRUU Programs Specialist |
| Ethan Field | Copy/Layout Editor |
| Barbara Gifford | Copy/Layout Editor |
| Jesse Jaeger | Youth Programs Director |
| Mary Benard | Review Board |
| Judith Frediani | Review Board |

contributors:

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Maya Bauer | Al Jensen |
| Florence Dickerson | Sean Jones |
| Megan Dowdell | Mai-Len Kennedy |
| Bart Frost | Siri Larsen |
| Wynters Leigh Geimer | Tera Little |
| Sarah Gibb | Jason Lydon |
| Heather Grant | Elisabeth Moore |
| Traci Griggs | Lydia Pelot-Hobbs |
| Lauren Harvey | Emily Ripsom |
| Kenneth R. Haslam, Md | Mary Sonne |

We sincerely apologize for our failure to credit Erin Stephens-North for the cover art on the fall issue.



☆ table of
contents

☆ *wink* from the youth office 2
 ☆ letter to the editor 4
 ☆ meet the youth office 4
 ☆ continental events 5
 steering committee speaks 6
 grants for your youth program! 7
 submit a youth council resolution! 7
 "attack" of the C*SACs 8
 consultation on UU youth ministry 9
 ☆ celebrate Our Whole Lives 10
 register for general assembly 10
 first-timers' guide to general assembly 11
 ☆ youth office resources 12
 ☆ our training program! 13
 ☆ betty jeanne's farewell 13

theme section.
sexuality

☆ what the swat? 14
 ☆ is it really because i'm a bitch? 15
 untitled (until further notice) 15
 what the hoot is owl good for? 16
 coming out 18
 ☆ polyamory and new family structures 19
 ☆ sexual behavior in group settings 20
 hi, i'm a pansy. 21
 ☆ 'my body' song 21
 ☆ sex ed workshop 22
 a call to action 25
 ☆ marriage equality: how to help! 26
 why sex ed? some facts to consider 27
 profile of a uu-friendly org: sex etc. 28
 ☆ youth council resolutions 29
 ☆ sexuality resources 30

spring 2005 ☆

☆☆ YRUU ☆☆

——— young
 —— religious
 —— unitarian
 —— universalists

Youth Council, the governing body of continental YRUU (a UU youth organization) meets once a year during the summer, 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, since they are the folks who you can bring your 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:

UUA Youth Office
 25 Beacon Street
 Boston, MA
 02108



letter to the editor

★ emily ripsom

Editor's Note: This letter refers to the symbol on the new YRUU t-shirt, released in 2004. Find more info about it at www.uua.org/YRUU/youthoffice/index.html#t-shirts.

Besides Emily, there are many other UU Christian and/or Catholic identified folks out there, including Youth Office Staffer Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward!



Dear Synapse,

My parents divorced when I was very young. Although my father practiced UUism for most of my life, I gravitated to the more unified Catholic Church, not only because we (Catholics) generally believe the same things, but because I felt more supported there.

I have been the brunt of much abuse at the UU Church because I call myself Catholic. I have been called "an idiot" and "brainwashed," among other things, for my faith in Jesus Christ. Although I realize that the UU church is often a safe haven for those who feel betrayed by their former religions, especially the Catholic Church, I could not allow myself to suffer the same discrimination many claimed my church perpetuates, and I decided to leave the UU church, rather than deny my faith in Jesus. I have not attended a service there since May.

However, this symbol of unification and non-discrimination being put forth by the group that used to shun me is very powerful. I appreciate the open-mindedness and the scholarship in searching for the symbol in the first place. I thank you for using it. I will be going to a 10:30 service tomorrow morning.

Emily Ripsom, Countryside Congregation UUs

P.S. The [fish symbol] in its present form (two semi-circles) comes from the days of persecution in the early Christian Church. When coming upon a stranger, a person might draw a semi-circle in the dirt. To those outside the Christian circle (no pun intended) this means nothing, but a Christian would know to draw another half circle to make a fish, the symbol of their Provider. It has been resurrected to show that Christians no longer need to hide their faith.

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 UU youth 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 stories.

Next Issue's Theme: Spirituality!
Share your stories of identity, UUism, and worship!

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

meet the youth office ★★☆☆

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 about 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. Who we are:

Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward is the outgoing June YRUU Program Specialist (YPS) and as such focused on Youth Office trainings, social justice organizing, and supporting queer and questioning UU youth. This meat-eating fan of "The O.C." is leaving the Youth Office to teach at Ithaca College (her alma mater!) and move to the West Coast to attend Starr King School for the Ministry. One time she accidentally cut all the way through her hand... with a butter knife. It's unbelievable but true.

Brian Kuzma, the September YRUU Programs Specialist (YPS), focuses on Anti-Racism programming, supporting Youth of Color, and helping plan General Assembly. He'll be in the office until September, when he returns to Earlham College. Brian would like to thank fellow UUA staffer Elandria Williams for giving him a much-needed and (according to observers) "hilarious" hair-washing this spring.

Jesse Jaeger, who hails from Madison, WI, has served as the Youth Programs Director for the last three years. He is an all-around fun guy and has some of the funniest dance moves you've seen in your life. His toddler-aged son, Lorn,

Send Submissions to:

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

by September 1, 2005



provides the office with some of the most amusing stories you can imagine.

Ethan Field, the Youth Office Assistant, is known for his funky tunes, distinctive laugh, and deliberate pronunciation of the letter "H" in words like "when" "why" and "where." Ethan is a dedicated young adult leader in the Boston area and originally hails from - that's right - Ohio. Like the rest of the YO, Ethan is friendly and doesn't bite, so give him a call!

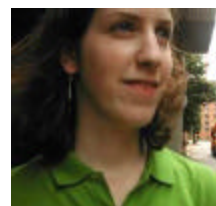
Josephine Bibby is the spring 2005 *Synapse* intern. Josephine is from Dallas, Texas in real life, but she currently goes to Brandeis University. She is into fair labor and the color pink. Josephine also enjoys making art, drinking tea, correct grammar, dancing ridiculously in her (or anyone's) room, and listening to the "Buffy" musical soundtrack with Betty Jeanne. The Youth Office staff thinks she's grrrrreat!!

COMING SOON to the Youth Office!!!:

Lily Sparks is the incoming June YRUU Programs Specialist, and will join the team this summer. Lily is a past member of both the YRUU and DRU-UMM (Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries) Youth and Young Adult Steering Committees (whew!) Read more about her in the fall issue of *Synapse*, and be sure to welcome her to the office - she's AMAZING!!!



Beth Dana will be joining the Youth Office in June as the first-ever Youth Ministry Associate, a one-year position similar to the YPS's, but focusing on the UUA Board of Trustees' youth ministry initiative (read more about it on page 9). A current student at NYU, Beth is a Chrysalis Trainer and member of the Anti-Racism Trainer-Organizer collective, and an absolutely fabulous person to get to know as well!!!



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

continental events

- June 17-22 2005 → Leadership Development Conference for Youth of Color in Dallas, Texas
- June 23-27 2005 → General Assembly in Fort Worth, Texas
- July 11 2005 → HUUPER app deadline for GA 2006
- July 21-30 2005 → Youth Council at Camp Hantessa in Boone, Iowa
- Nov. 2005 → YRUU Social Justice Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

to learn more about or register for these events, contact the youth office (see page 3 for contact information).

continued from page 2:

4. **Consent isn't possible when drugs are involved.** This includes alcohol and other drugs that impair a person's ability to make decisions. If a person(s) is/are under the influence of any such drug they cannot make a decision to give consent to sexual activity. Even if a person says "yes" it still doesn't mean that you have permission.

5. **It's not their/your fault.** It is not the fault of anyone that they are a survivor of sexual violence. No matter who they hung out with, what their behavior was like, what they wore, or anything else. Some people hold the belief that by some small factor, people ask for violence to be brought upon them. This way of thinking only keeps the culture of rape and sexual violence deeply imbedded within our society and ends up making survivors of sexual violence believe that it was they who brought the violence upon themselves.

6. **Other Resources.** On page 30 you will find The Sexuality Resource List. The list has links to resources that you can use to educate yourself and others about sexual violence. If you or someone you know is a survivor of sexual violence, or even if you aren't sure what sexual violence is, know that ministers, school counselors, local shelters, and help lines like the National Sexual Assault Hotline - 1800 656 HOPE (4673) - are there for you.

We live in a Rape Culture, and we need to work to change that. Silence is one of the biggest perpetuating factors of sexual violence. Educate yourselves, be aware, and speak up. We all have a part in this struggle. Remember... **SENSUAL is a part of consensual.**



steering committee speaks siri larsen



Good Morrow YRUU!

Howdy! My name is Siri and I'm an at-large member of the 2004-2005 YRUU Steering Committee. I'm here to tell you all about what SC is up to these days. I'm actually going to share with you a song I wrote:

(Chorus) Oh Steering Committee, Steering Committee, whatcha doin' now? Steering Committee, Steering Committee - Tell us what you do and how!

(Verse 1) Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression are things we really love, as well as community building, and mittens, not gloves!

We think consensus rocks! And YPS Selection! Birthday cakes for Jova are a favorite confection!

(Chorus)

(Verse 2) We work with other Steering Committees, like DRUUMM YaYA and C*UUYAN! We're sending representatives to the summit on Youth Ministry Regarding Drug/Alcohol Use, organized by Nan!

We didn't forget about Common Ground III/Convocation on Ministry to and with Youth, We created the amazing YRUU 7 to resolve concerns and plan, yay for a free and open search for truth!

(Chorus)

(Verse 3) We extended Youth Council 2005 to 10 wonderful days, so we won't be groggy the whole time or stuck in an exhausted daze!

We implemented the "It ain't just about marriage" resolution and made a queer-youth friendly addition to the June YPS's job description - Wow! what a marvelous transition!

(Chorus)

(Verse 4) We're responding to the ConCon decision with hope and future plans; liasonships and accountability are more things we think are grand!

Oh Steering Committee, Steering Committee, whatcha doin' now? Steering Committee, Steering Committee - Tell us what you do and how! WOW!!

Following the release of this song, one of my thousands of fan letters requested that I talk a little bit more about the things mentioned in the song and other exciting news.



This year's Steering Committee has gone through a lot together this year in terms of Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression work. We've stretched and grown, and are energized to work hard for a truly Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive YRUU. There is so much exciting work going on right now!

* This February, members of ARTOP (the UU Anti-Racism Trainer Organizer Program) led the first-ever Regional Anti-Racism Analysis Development Conferences, which were open to elected Youth and Young Adult leaders as well as others.

* There is a Youth of Color Leadership Development Conference happening in Dallas, Texas in June. (Visit www.druumm.org for more information.)

* A website on Youth and Young Adult Anti-Racism work is coming into its final stages of completion, soon to be available for you to check out for HOURS at a time!

* A meeting of YRUUers of Color to evaluate Youth Council's People of Color leadership structure, and the relationship with DRUUMM, is happening soon.

* And the Youth and Young Adult Anti-Racism Transformation Team is starting up! To learn more about these events and programs and others, check out the YRUU website, read on, and get excited!

Many other exciting things continue to happen for YRUU. This year, we've extended Youth Council from its original seven to now TEN days, to give us more time for programming (including Education Reform and Multiculturalism training!), consensus training, BUSINESS, networking, community building and FUN! We are excited about this extension and doing lots of amazing planning. We're also really happy to announce that at our January meeting, Steering Committee nominated the amazing Lily Jee Yung Sparks as the next June YPS! We're also really happy to announce that the fabulous Beth Dana has accepted the newly created position of Youth Ministry Associate. (Read more



about them on page 5.)

There's always so much going on in the world of YRUU Steering Committee, and we'd like to strongly encourage you to check out what's going on and keep in contact!

Well, that's all for today. Thanks for joining us for "Story Time with Steering Committee." See you next time!

Contact the Steering Committee with your visions for YRUU! Their info is at www.uua.org/YRUU/governance.

Didn't catch one of those acronyms/terms used in Siri's rockin piece? See if this key helps:

YPS: YRUU Programs Specialist

Jova: Otherwise known as Jova Vargas, a fabulous member of Steering Committee

DRUUMM YaYA: The Youth and Young Adult caucus of Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries, a UU People of Color organization

C*UUYAN: Continental UU Young Adult Network

Nan: As in Nan Moore, an amazing adult leader and Youth Council member

YRUU 7: Representatives who are part of the UUA's new initiative on youth ministry (read more in the article by Megan Dowdell)

ConCon Decision: The Youth Office recently withdrew its support for the YRUU Continental Conference. Read about the decision on the YRUU website.

how to submit a youth council resolution!

Youth Council (YC) is the governing body of YRUU and meets once a year during the summer. Members of YC pass resolutions and project proposals during the meeting. A resolution is a statement of policy, belief, or recommendation that represents the official position of Continental YRUU. Project proposals address smaller, more specific issues than resolutions do. An example of a project proposal would be writing a new resource. If you see change that needs to be made in YRUU or feel like proposing a project, here is your chance. By calling the Youth Office at (617) 948-4350 or by going to www.uua.org/YRUU/resources/online/resolutions.htm you can get all the info you need to compose a stellar resolution or resource. To have your resolution or proposal reviewed and possibly passed at YC, pass it on to your Youth Council Representative (YCR) before they leave for Youth Council, July 21st through 30th. Find out who your YCR is at: www.uua.org/YRUU/governance/structure.html.

The Local Youth Group Project Grants

There are four \$500 Youth Group Project Grants to help local youth groups develop new and innovative programs. The goal of this grant program is to 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 how you developed your project so that other youth groups can try to do something similar!

Deadlines will be in January or February.

To get an application go to

www.uua.org/yruu/youthoffice/pdfs/yogrants.pdf,

call (617) 948.4350, email yruu@uua.org or write to

The Local Youth Group Project Grant

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 UU youth 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 includes 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.**

Applications should be typed and are due by July 15th.

****YRUU Youth Council 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 get a Y*FUUD Grant application go to uua.org/yruu/governance/pdfs/yfuudGrantApplication.pdf or contact the Youth Office (info above)

spring 2005



synapse < 7 >

“Attack” of the C*SACs
 ☆ sean jones &
 al jensen

So as y'all may know we are the current Continental Social Action Co-ordinators (C*SACs) for YRUU. There are lots of things we plan to do within the next year to revolutionize social action work, both on continental and local scales. We have been working on lots of different things, mainly a possible new social justice structure for YRUU (SICK YRUU), and increased involvement between the UUSC and YRUU.

As part of our continental, as well as district plans, we have been working on a new component to the Social Justice structure of YRUU, called SICK YRUU. SICK YRUU, which stands for Socially Involved and Concerned Kids of YRUU, is envisioned as a continental organization within YRUU. Each district or region would have a SICK YRUU chapter, which would be chaired by the Social Action Coordinator for the district/region, and would be comprised of elected representatives, whether from each youth group, cluster, etc. These chapters would decide on district or regional Social Action work, workshops, and local efforts. The chairs of these chapters, the SACs, would attend an annual meeting of SACs, at which they would pass resolutions, which would then become recommendations to Youth Council. The purpose of this organization would be to increase continental accountability in terms of social action work, to the local efforts that make up YRUU.

As for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, we have been working to create a relationship between YRUU and the committee. We will be working with the UUSC in the future to create more social justice opportunities for the youth of YRUU. As of now, we are working

on a support structure for youth and young adults in the UUSC.

Do we have your attention yet? Well, here's what you can do! We need each and every person who reads this article to try to get their youth group and district/region to be involved in SICK YRUU. How? Well, youth groups can check in with their District/Regional Social Action Coordinator to see if this structure is being created, and if it is, get themselves involved in it quickly by electing a Social Action Representative to go to Social Action Congress in their district. If it isn't established, Youth Groups can encourage Social Action Coordinators to do so. If you are on a congregational, district or regional youth/adult committee, then you can work more directly on that committee setting up your SICK YRUU Chapter.

We are fairly sure Districts/Regions that do decide to do this will need to engage in OUT-REACH! So there is another thing you can do: go to Youth Groups not traditionally "in the loop" on

district, regional and continental happenings, and try to spark interest.

Once all of this is set up, we will be in a completely different ballpark. We will have a much greater capacity to do grassroots organizing on any number

"[We] have been working on a new component to the Social Justice structure of YRUU, called ... SICK YRUU, which stands for Socially Involved and Concerned Kids of YRUU."

of subjects, and create revolution at home. We are, however, moving forward one step at a time, and urge you to do so as well. Even if all we do in these two years is establish a strong framework, we will be two satisfied C*SACs. After all, once this is set up, the responsibility will be shared in greater amounts, and that means the energy will be greater, and that means the action will be greater, and that means.... The list goes on and on.

We hope we have imparted to you some form of enthusiasm, and we will continue to try. Without your help, we cannot succeed. This is for all of us, so all of us need to lend a helping hand. And maybe, just maybe, YRUU will meet its great revolutionary potential. We think it's possible, do you?



Ask the Question:

How does Unitarian Universalism DO youth ministry?

What would happen if you put a bunch of adult and youth institutional leaders, parents, religious educators, ministers, youth advisors and youth who are disconnected from the Unitarian Universalist Association and YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) in one room and told them to work together for forty-eight hours? Well, a lot.

In October, the Unitarian Universalist Association's Board of Trustees asked that a consultation be held to discuss ministry to and with youth. Shortly after, President Bill Sinkford asked me (Megan Dowdell, the UUA Board's Youth Trustee-at-Large) to co-convene this meeting. With support from staff, Bill and I identified the attendees of the consultation and located an outside facilitator to lead us in asking the question: How does Unitarian Universalism DO youth ministry and how might it do it better?

On February 25th, thirty youth and adults arrived in Essex, Massachusetts. Our facilitator, U.T. Saunders, led us through a dialogue to outline a process that will help Unitarian Universalism redefine and recommit to youth ministry. Some participants represented stakeholder groups, including YRUU, the UUA Board, LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association), DRUUMM (Diverse & Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries) and the UUMA (UU Ministers Association). Some represented UUA staff, including the Youth Office, Lifespan Faith Development staff group, and district staff. Others represented parents, youth advisors, and youth who were based in local congregations but disconnected from YRUU-the voices who you (reading this summary) may also represent, and which we as leaders have not heard enough.

After spending 48 hours together we identified five priorities encompassing what Unitarian Universalists must address in order to better minister to and with youth. In no particular order, they state that:

- > Youth Ministry needs to be served on a more robust, flexible, diverse level than YRUU currently offers.
- > Denominational youth work needs to serve local congregations and their youth ministry.
- > YRUU and UUA administration need to define an authority structure that respects the rightful role of institutional youth and adult leadership at the same time that it supports the growth and empowerment of all UU youth.
- > Anti-racism and anti-oppression work is an important part of youth ministry, although there is not only one way of doing it, and the "right" way depends on individual identities. We need to move this work ahead.
- > There needs to be more and better communication among continental, district/regional, and local levels, and within congregations.

A smaller group was identified and empowered by the meeting participants to create a draft plan for how to address these priorities. After this group meets to take action around the five priorities, key stakeholder groups will be able to respond to the proposal before it is finalized and implemented.

Ministry to and with youth is a vital component of each Principle and Purpose of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. In order to become an intentionally intergenerational religious community, we must always question the structures that define our relationships and how we are together as youth and adults. The Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth put us one step closer to living our faith, but there is so much more to do.

I promise that you will continue to hear more about this project and will be invited to provide feedback, ideas and concerns at each stage of development and change.

Megan Dowdell is a former Youth Office Intern and the outgoing Youth Trustee on the UUA Board of Trustees

spring 2005



synapse < 9 >

REGISTER FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY!!!

General Assembly Youth Caucus registration is now open for this year (June 23rd through 27th in Ft. Worth Texas). Youth ages 14-20 *may* register and youth ages 14-17 *must* register for Youth Caucus. Youth Caucus **Full-Time registration is \$170** and one-day registration is \$65. Youth Caucus registration forms can be found online at www.uua.org/ga or by calling (617) 948-6413. **There is no 'official' youth housing**, just register for housing using the standard forms. And remember, youth need an adult sponsor. (Each adult may sponsor a maximum of three youth.) **See you there!**

Our Whole Lives 5-Year ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION at GA 2005

Join us in celebrating 5 years of lifespan comprehensive sexuality education at General Assembly in Ft. Worth. Our Whole Lives was first introduced to our congregations 5 years ago and now over half of all UU congregations have trained OWL teachers. This is a tremendous achievement and we want to celebrate. Check out some of the opportunities below:

Before General Assembly submit your OWL testimonial to owl@uua.org for UUA Web publication and to display at GA: Have you had a good experience with the Our Whole Lives program? Why is the OWL program valuable to you? What does teaching OWL mean to you? Send emails as short or long as you like- and tell us what OWL has meant to you.

Check out these awesome events happening throughout GA:

- Advocate for Comprehensive Sexuality Education
- Student Advocacy for Sexuality Education, Gender and Choice
- OWL: What It Means to Me
- Our Whole Lives Lecture
- Our Whole Lives Celebration Reception



First-Timer's GA Resource



lydia
pelot-hobbs

CALLING ALL FIRST-TIME GA ATTENDEES!

(General Assembly, the annual meeting of congregations in the Unitarian Universalist Association, is happening this June in Fort Worth, Texas! Find information at www.uua.org/ga and be sure to register for Youth Caucus if you're between the ages of 14 and 20!)

Hooray friends! You are going to "GA"! Now, General Assembly has a lot of amazing opportunities to get involved in the larger world of the Unitarian Universalist Association, but it can also be very intimidating. At my first GA, I was completely overwhelmed: there were people everywhere, a million workshops at once, dances, performances, and much more. I knew I wanted to meet people and get the most out of my GA experience, I just didn't know how. Luckily I got through it and learned how to have a better GA the next year. Here are some tips for making the most out of your first GA:

—> **Youth Caucus** is programming especially for folks 14-20. This includes **workshops, worship, ID groups, dances**, and many other great events.

—> Don't miss the big events of GA: the **Opening Ceremony** is a big event that begins GA, and the **Closing Ceremony** is where we say good-bye to GA for another year. The **Service of the Living Tradition** is where our ministers are recognized. In the **Bridging Ceremony**, youth bridge into young adulthood.

—> If you haven't already, become a **youth delegate** for your church. Youth delegates get to vote in **plenary**, the major business component of General Assembly, which selects social justice issues for the UUA to work on, and elects people to committees and at-large positions on the UUA Board of Trustees. Going to plenary (whether or not you're a delegate) is a great way to get your voice heard and understand how the UUA works on a greater level.

—> Go to **Fun Times**, the business meeting of **Youth Caucus** and speak to people like UUA President Bill Sinkford, learn about continental YRUU, and help elect (or possibly run for) youth leadership roles.

—> **Identity Groups** are places where you can explore your racial identity as a white person and/or a Person of Color. They are great for developing and deepening your **anti-racism analysis** and a tactic for making YRUU and the UUA a more inclusive community.

—> Go to **workshops** that you are interested in. There is a program that lists all the workshops with descriptions. Circle which workshops you're interested in in advance so you aren't as overwhelmed when you get there. Take notes and get the contact info of the presenters so you have them as resources for later.

—> Going to **worship** is a great way to center yourself when GA is chaotic. As a faith community, worship is an important component of GA. Every night there is a youth worship, as well as the **All-GA Youth Worship** on Monday night.

—> In the exhibition hall, don't just buy things, **network!** For example, if you are interested in economic justice, go to the *UUs for a Just Economic Community* booth and introduce yourself. Find out how you can get involved the other 360 days of the year. Some questions you can ask are "Do you have any volunteer opportunities?", "Do you have any conferences coming up?", and/or "Are there any materials I can take back to my youth group?"

—> **Meet adults.** Introducing yourself to adults at intergenerational events such as the **All-GA Dance** and the **Intergenerational Breakfast** as well as workshops is a great way to start relationships with adults who may turn into mentors. Most adults love meeting youth, so just introduce yourself and tell them what you're interested in and where you're from. Hopefully the rest will take care of itself.

—> There is a **message board** at GA; post notes for your friends or family if you can't find them, and you might get notes too!!

—> Don't forget to **breathe**. There is so much going on it is easy to forget to eat or even sleep. Slow down, take some time off for **self-care**, and remember to play some, too!

Lydia Pelot-Hobbs is the 2003-2005
YRUU Working Action Manager.

spring 2005



synapse < 11 >

New and Upcoming Resources Available from the Youth Office!



The Youth Office is thrilled to announce some of its newer resources, available by visiting www.uua.org/YRUU (check out the "Resources" section for these and MANY more!) or calling (617) 948-4350.

Be sure to check out the following, and share them with your youth group!

The SWAT PoAT (pronounced "swat pot"), or Super Working Action Team Packet of Activist Tools, is a new resource for youth and youth allies who want to learn more about, or organize around, YRUU's Working Action Issue, *Education Reform and Multiculturalism*. It includes resource lists, workshops you can put on in your youth group, information about YRUU's social justice structure, and much, much more! Print it out, and share it with your friends, fellow students, and youth group members - be sure to tell us how you use it, and what you'd like us to add!

"Get Involved in Unitarian Universalism!!" is a comprehensive resource for youth who want to get involved in UUism *beyond* YRUU! Information and insight about getting involved in UU leadership at every level from local to continental. A must for any youth group ready to take UUism by storm!

coming soon:

The Youth Group Handbook

A collage of youth group experiences and practical suggestions for local youth group leaders and members. The Handbook contains a multitude of programming ideas for YRUU groups of any size. Newly updated, a must for any youth group! *Available Fall 2005.*

An in-depth resource about

Spirituality Development Handbook (title yet to be decided)

planning worship and infusing your youth group with spirituality. Will include testimonials from UU youth, sample worships, and much more! *Available Fall 2006.*

Racial Identity Group Manual

Caucusing in groups based on racial identity has been a part of continental YRUU programming for years. Learn how to get your local, district or regional youth group involved with Anti-Racism efforts and how caucusing around identity can be an important and helpful way to discuss issues of race and racism. *Available Fall 2006.*

Supporting Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Queer, Questioning and Transgender Youth

Resources both for BGLQQT youth and their allies (i.e. youth group leaders, advisors). Topics covered include Coming Out (excerpt featured in this issue of *Synapse!*), Identity, the Power of Language, Inclusive and Affirming Programming for Youth Groups, and Websites/Books/Movies to Learn More. *Available Summer 2005.*



Presenting.... The Chrysalis Training Program!!

Heard of Leadership Development Conferences? Or Advisor Trainings? Well, **be sure to read this because the fun has only just begun!**

Over the past few years the Youth Office at the UUA has been focused on program development and training for youth and adults across the continent. The need for an educated base of trained individuals who are involved in partnership, leadership and advocacy for Unitarian Universalist youth has become apparent, as has the need for recognition of the accomplishments of these individuals. The Chrysalis Training Program can help to fulfill these needs, and brings together youth and adults from all experience and leadership levels to engage in meaningful, inspirational youth ministry training.

The UUA Youth Office offers a variety of 15-hour trainings for youth and adults, focusing on a wide range of issues important to youth ministry and programming. Over the last few years, the program has nearly doubled, and the Youth Office now offers 25-30 weekend-long trainings each year to UU districts, regions, and congregations across the continent.

Trainings currently offered are:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| *Leadership Development Conferences | *Advanced Youth Advisor Trainings |
| *Spirituality Development Conferences | *Anti-Racism Trainings |
| *Basic Youth Advisor Trainings | *Chaplain Trainings |

How can you get involved?

- Check out www.uua.org/YRUU/training or call (617) 948-4350 for more information.
- See if there are any trainings happening near you, or talk to other youth leaders/advisors in your area about hosting a training yourself!
- Keep your eye on *Synapse* and the YRUU website to find out how you could apply for one of our annual Training of Trainers and get paid to lead trainings across the continent!
- Submit a verification form to receive credit to any trainings you've attended.
- Spread the word to UU youth and adults you know about this exciting program!

Dear friends,

It is with sadness, inspiration, anxiety, hope and gratitude that I look back on the action-packed year I have spent in the Youth Office. This year I've gotten to connect with some of the most amazing folks I've ever met; UUs and non-UUs of all ages, from all over the world. This year in particular has also marked a time of intense transition and change for UUism, and youth programs. Being so intimately involved in our denomination enabled me to feel deeply the pain, growth, struggle, and rewards that come with such change. The next few years will bring much more change with them; be patient, be strong, be engaged, and be good to each other. To my friends and family (you know who you are) who have supported me through this intense experience, I can't thank you enough. As I leave my position and chase such pursuits as graduate school, sleep and free time, I'm reminded of the amazing time I spent working with Jo Bibby, *Synapse* intern extraordinaire. Jo and I (along with former June YPS's and current she-roes Megan Tideman and Megan Selby) have sometimes found it easier to express ourselves not in sentences, but in lyrics from the musical episode of "Buffy." Excuse the melodrama, but this is just one of those times...

"Believe me I don't wanna go / And it'll grieve me 'cuz I love you so / But we both know
Wish I could say the right words to lead you through this land / Wish I could play the
mother / And take you by the hand / Wish I could stay but now I understand / I'm standing
in the way"

That's all there is to say right now! Enjoy this issue of *Synapse*.

In peace, *Betty Jeanne*

(I'm the one in the middle. Love these womyn!) →



spring 2005



synapse < 13 >

theme section: SEXUALITY

☆
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 who are organizing around this issue in their congregations, communities, schools, districts/regions, or anywhere else). A resolution was passed last 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* - which is a resource on Ed Reform and Multiculturalism 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! Change is not that difficult.

Every school I have ever heard of has a non-discrimination policy. You know, those statements on websites or pamphlets that say, "All-American/Canadian High School does not discriminate based on sex, race, color, creed..." Yet many policies are missing something, something pretty important: sexual orientation. For example, in the United States the only states that have statewide non-discrimination policies that include actual or perceived sexual orientation in public schools are Hawaii, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Washington. That means that in the other 44

states it is perfectly legal for schools to expel students who are queer, fire teachers solely based on their sexual orientation, ignore when students are harassed for being queer, and not address other serious acts of discrimination. What do you do, you ask? Well how do you think sexual orientation got added to those six states' non-discrimination policies in the first place? Students (you!) rallied, organized, got mad. Students, faculty, staff, parents, civil rights organizations formed coalitions to make sure everyone, including queer youth, were as protected in their schools as heterosexual youth. They went to school board meetings, had educational workshops, lobbied their legislature, wrote letters to the editor, and countless other actions. By having one district or school change at a time, these states were able to get sexual orientation on their statewide non-discrimination policy. These are YOUR schools, they should/need to be accountable to you as citizens but more importantly as students. But what if you don't go to a public school? You have strength in numbers and can do many of the same things your public school peers can. You can be an ally to public school students by working in the legislature for rights for queer students. Then, hopefully by having state/province-wide support society will start to have a greater acceptance of queer folks that will lead to rights for queer students in private schools.

"Every school I have ever heard of has a non-discrimination policy, ... [y]et many policies are missing something, something pretty important: sexual orientation."

To get you started here are some resources:

The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network:

www.glsen.org

American Civil Liberties Union:

www.aclu.org

Canadian Civil Liberties Association:

www.ccla.org

EGALE Canada:

www.egale.ca

National Journal of Sexual Orientation Law (US):

www.ibiblio.org/gaylaw

14 > s y n a p s e

Lydia Pelot-Hobbs is the 2004-2005
YRUU Working Action Manager.



s p r i n g 2 0 0 5

is it really because i'm a bitch?



wynters
leigh geimer

I can remember it well: Summer Con in July 2004. We, the Joseph Priestley District Youth Steering Committee (JP DYSC), had officially named our conference Camp Con-a-we-go (my idea, I used to go to a Girl Scout camp named Camp Conowingo) and we held it in the Middleofnowhere, Pennsylvania. It was my first conference ever as a DYSC member and as the Youth Council Representative (I'd been elected in April). So naturally, I still possessed the unnatural optimism of someone who'd never been burned.

In the JPD we have a tradition Saturday night clean-up - that way we don't have to do too much on Sunday morning when we're groggy. Saturday night clean-up is always, always before the "Super Secret Activity" and Worship. Well, lo and behold the appointed hour for clean-up was upon us. Surprise, surprise, no one moved to clean. To me this was shocking, shocking! How could people not want to pitch in? So I turned to our lovely female youth Co-Chair "Eleni" and asked her what we should do about it. Her answer: "You want to try? Go ahead, and see what happens." I of course did.

On our schedule, we'd allotted an hour for cleaning. Confidently, I strode forth to rally the troops. What did Eleni mean anyway? It's just cleaning and anyway I'm on DYSC. They'll listen, I mean, it's sooo simple. Room to room I went with my cry of, "Guess what?! It's time to clean up! Make sure all your stuff is out of the hallways!!!" Much to my surprise, dismay, and horror very few people moved to clean and some who did returned to their prone positions upon realizing the lack of activity among their friends and fellow Con-goers. Even DYSC members were sprawled on the floor doing nothing. As the hour wore on I grew more and more irritated, to the point of becoming what some called "bitchy." Eventually I ran into "Jean", our male youth Co-Chair and complained to him. He said, "I'll take

care of it."

I followed as he traveled from door to door, his battle cry an echo of my own. To my surprise, everyone aroused from their stupor and cleaned. It was done in ten minutes. I didn't understand. Eleni told me it was quite simple. They didn't do what I'd asked because of the way I was born. All I was to them was another woman.

I knew at this point all the Helen Keller jokes, the misogynistic jokes, the "playful" snapping of bras, the derogatory names assigned to females during Silent Football, weren't a joke. It's disrespect towards all females. Sexism, like racism, still exists. "Who cares? It's just a downer." That's what they tell me.

*"All I was to them was
another woman..."*

Wynters Leigh Geimer is the current Youth Council Representative of the Joseph Priestly District.

"Untitled (until further notice)"

I am not \$5.99 by the pound
at the meat market, across the street from the playground,
where your stare penetrates and violates
my sacred sanctuary getting irate.
His eyes criminate my body without touchin',
feeling my skin saturate and drench with hate.
His hanging flesh becomes King Tut's treasure,
world's eighth wonder.

Always hiding behind lies whispered sweetly
meaning to tell me I'm his object
to be sold, bought, or traded.
My body won't be degraded,
tryin to obtain images of perfection
to please him! And win his affection.
While treatin me like a " slut"
on the front page of just purchased smut.
Putting me down as some animal nicknamed, "bitch",
calling my sisters "hoe", "whore", and "witch".

All throughout history they forgot to write herstory
Since Eve and the forbidden fruit days
'til present I can't escape from the female clichés.
At this moment I demand my respect and equality,
from those who can't stand a " bitch" with qualities in this quantity.

--Mai-Len Kennedy, Fourth Universalist Society in Manhattan

spring 2005



synapse < 15 >

what the hoot is owl good for? ☆testimonials☆

SEX ED: WHY IS THIS IS A UU YOUTH ISSUE?

Inspired by the UUA Washington Office for Advocacy

Comprehensive lifespan sexuality education has been something important to the UUA and YRUU for years. The UUA has displayed its commitment to sexuality education through its partnership with the United Church of Christ in the creation of the Our Whole Lives (OWL) program and its predecessor About Your Sexuality (AYS). As UUs, it is important to live out our faith and not just accept traditional sexuality education, but promote real comprehensive sexuality education which is inclusive of queer folks and people who identify outside the gender binary, which teaches youth about different options on abstinence and safer sex, and which recognizes sexuality as a normal, healthy, lifelong aspect of human development. YRUU's commitment to issues surrounding sexuality are evident in our Policy on Sexuality and Community, which affirms that "sexuality is an important part of young people's lives" and discourages sexuality in conference communities, not because sex is bad, but because it breaks down community.

Why is this a youth issue? Who are the ones being taught? Youth. We should have a say in what we are taught and how it's taught. We deserve to learn not just the facts (although those are important) but to understand our own sexuality and how it has an effect upon our lives. **Sex and our own sexuality are incredibly important aspects of our lives** and we should not be subjected to watered-down curricula that do not meet our needs. It is important that we pay attention and are involved in how sexuality education is implemented across the U.S. and Canada because this issue affects us more than anyone else, and no one can speak for us as youth, except ourselves.

Here are testimonials from UU youth across the continent, sharing their feelings on sexuality education within their congregations, schools, families, and communities:

I participated in the OWL (Our Whole Lives) program at my church when I was in eighth grade, three years ago. In my school system one must take "health" class: sex ed, drug ed, depression ed, etc. basically the same topics covered by OWL, only the school's spin on it was more like if you do any of these things you will die. By the time I took OWL I'd had "health" twice, and since then I've had it three more times. One year alone of OWL taught me far more than those five classes at school. Maybe I feel like I learned more because it was taught by two amazing people from my community who I trusted more than any health teacher I've ever had. Maybe it was because I was with my friends, or because we did things like have overnights and eat dinner together every week. Maybe it was because **instead of being fed abstinence over and over, I was given useful information**, in a setting where I felt free to ask any question I had. My experience with the OWL program was an extremely good one: when I took it my church had made the switch from AYS (About Your Sexuality) to OWL a few years before and the program was so praised by those who had taken it that our class not only had twenty-seven people, but at least four or five of them were people who didn't normally go to Religious Education classes, at least six didn't regularly go to our church, and one or two weren't even UU! All of the people I know who took OWL at my church have wished over and over again that the program could count instead of health at school, but as yet that's not possible. I know that in many places the program still needs work, and I'm not saying that my experience was flawless, but I had fun, I talked to some people I would have otherwise never approached, and I learned. We were treated as mature people who deserved to be told the truth, and therefore we told the truth in return, sharing stories that affected us personally. My experience with OWL was a very good one. My experience doesn't speak for that of any one else, but for me OWL was so much better than anything the school has ever provided, and every once in a while I'll be talking to a group of people including someone who was in my OWL class about something, and both of us will know the answer to a question, laugh and say, "Oh right, we learned that in OWL!"

Florence Dickerson, Follen UU Church, Lexington, MA



My school has what's called a senior project. All seniors are required to pick a topic, submit a letter of intent, write a report, do a physical project, present an oral presentation, and attend a project fair on any subject of our choice. After many topic changes and mind-boggling sessions, I decided to do my project on sexual education in public schools. It is my belief that sex ed should start at kindergarten with a focus on respect for the body. All throughout elementary, middle, and high school students should have a sexuality class/lesson. AIDS should not be presented to junior and senior high for only a half hour once a year. **Algebra is not taught in a half hour, and neither should AIDS.** I have read studies showing that half of all North American teenagers are sexually active. This is why an abstinence-only curriculum is a naive approach to handling teen pregnancy. Just a little thought...

Mary Sonne, UU Church of Fort Wayne, Indiana

"Sex." Yes, That's right, I said it, **SEX!** This is what goes through the minds of many young middle school youth; a giggle, a gasp. Why are we so afraid of sex? Why is it that some people are uncomfortable even uttering the word?

It's because we (or they) are afraid our children will become too involved too soon. I myself have gone through the toned-down sexual education class at school. It's amazing that the whole sexual anatomy can be taught in 2 class periods of about 55 minutes. I found that they were not telling us the complete truth 100% of the time. So why do they even try? If they're not giving us all of the information, why tell us anything? A teacher at my 5th grade school got suspended from teaching health because he gave the kids "too much information". Too much. Whenever I wonder about it **it gets me really upset that we would punish someone for trying to educate our children.** Wouldn't they have learned it eventually? Why would we penalize someone for answering a few questions?

So why is it that we feel the need to preach abstinence? I am fourteen and I know I don't like people telling me what not to do because it just makes me more curious. So maybe it would be a good idea to not just teach about abstinence but about safe sex and protection too. Youth are not always going to be abstinent so why don't we make them safe at least. Wouldn't that be a good solution to teen pregnancies?

I have also gone through the OWL program (Our Whole Lives) at my neighboring church. The information I got out of that class was unbelievable. It taught me how to make the right choices and take care of my self better than I ever could have imagined. I realized more about me and people around me and that I was going through the same struggles as everyone else. I was not alone in the dark.

Education. That's what we need. We don't need to be punishing others for teaching and educating the minds of the youth of our world. Why can't everyone just loosen up a bit? I wonder...

Elisabeth Moore, UU Meetinghouse of Chatham, Massachusetts



coming out

from a resource written and
edited by jason lydon &
betty jeanne rueters-ward



Coming out as bisexual, gay, genderqueer, intersex, lesbian, queer, questioning, or transgender is a process. It can be a celebration or the scariest horror flick ever. Coming out is something different for everyone and luckily

there are so many resources available to those choosing to come out as well as for those learning of someone close to them sharing their sexual orientation or gender identity. The most important aspect of coming out is that it is YOUR

decision and yours only. You need to concern yourself with what is best for you and makes you most comfortable. Others often think they have the best understanding of when you should come out and you may hear things like, "Just don't tell your grandparents, it would kill them." Or, "You have to be out at school; I am, you should take the heat too." You have your own decisions to make and do not need to do what others tell you to do. That doesn't mean you have to completely disregard other people's experience or knowledge. At times, others are sincerely looking out for your best interest and can be a support from their own experience, or act as an ally while you struggle through each decision.

Coming out doesn't look the same for everyone. Coming out isn't just a one-time event. Sometimes you may want to tell every person you meet, other times you may choose to wait till you feel safe, and there may be people and situations where you choose not to be "out." But what is "coming out" really about? What does an "out" person look like? The trick here is that it is very different for each person. Some people sit their families down and tell them about their self-discovery. Other people start wearing rainbows and hope that people pick up their signals. There are people who write letters, make phone calls, scream and cry at family barbecues,

kiss lovers publicly, even make announcements at church. If you are deciding to come out it can be helpful to find some sort of support base, either a glbtq group, a loyal friend, a minister, or wherever you feel safe - because there will be hard days and there will be fun days. Some folks you tell may claim to already know, some will act awkward, some will celebrate with you, and unfortunately some may not take it well. Often glbtq folks are told to be patient with those having difficulties. Those people are not your responsibility. You deserve love, respect, friendship, and kindness. When those who are

uncomfortable are able to accept you as your full self they will. Directing them to resources may speed up their process, but it is not your responsibility to hold anyone's

"But what is 'coming out' really about? What does an 'out' person look like? The trick here is that it is very different for each person."

hand as they engage in their own struggle to unlearn bigotry and judgement. It can be helpful to direct those who are your hetero allies to the others in need of someone to process with. You have enough to deal with, and friends addressing their own ignorance should not be yours to have to take care of. Coming out can be a big deal, and allowing yourself time and space to have and express your feelings is healthy and good. So whether you are quietly coming out to yourself or yelling to strangers in the middle of the street, remember you're in a process and more people than you will ever know are struggling right along with you.

This is an excerpt from a new series of resources for BGLQQT (Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Queer, Questioning, Transgender) youth currently being developed by the Youth Office. Let us know what you think!



photo courtesy of traci giggs



polyamory and
new family structures



kenneth r.
haslam, md

Once upon a time a family was Mom and Dad, Bro and Sis, Spot and Fluff and a little house with a white picket fence in a pastoral suburb. Or so the story goes. But it is all a lie. The real family of today is all too often made up of two or more families where the kids are adopted, foster, his, hers, and ours. And single parent households are all too common. Increasingly, although

it is rarely talked about in "polite society", there are loving gay and lesbian families with two parents of the same sex and/or gender.

And to complicate matters further there are families with three or more parents, who, along with the kids, live and love together under the same roof. These include Polyamorous families.

Just as a parent can provide an equal amount of love for each of several children, the Polyamorous parent loves equally not only all the kids, but also the other adult members of the household. Because the concept of consensual multipartnering (Polyamory) is not widely accepted in mainstream North America many members of this kind of family can feel out of place. Many feel that they are the only ones who live in a multiple parent group and keep very quiet about their living arrangements. They have to live in the closet because of "what the neighbors, coworkers, friends, etc. might think".

And to make matters worse, there are those who believe that children being raised in a household with more than two adult "parents", no matter how caring or loving the parents might be, might be emotionally damaged. Some feel so strongly about these unconventional families they have interfered, had the children taken away, and the family broken up.

Not all Polyamorous families have children, and not all live together under the same roof. But in all, there is a deep love and caring among the members. They live otherwise normal

lives with the exception of loving more than one partner consensually and concurrently.

Over the past several years, some Unitarian Universalists who loved more than one openly, consensually and concurrently have found each other on the Internet and at Polyamory Conferences. In the beginning they thought they were the only ones who loved more than one, and were overjoyed to find that there were others with the same life path. Almost all were "in the closet", ashamed and afraid to tell of their multiple loving relationships and unusual families.

Ultimately these UUs got together at the Nashville General Assembly in 2000 and formed

Unitarian Universalists for Polyamory Awareness (UUPA). They met again at GA in Cleveland, Quebec, Boston, and Long Beach.

At each of these

meetings workshops on Polyamory were presented, and were well attended by both lay and clergy UUs. A workshop on Polyamory is scheduled for General Assembly in Fort Worth in 2005 where a young woman from a Poly family will tell her story.

There are currently about 100 members in UUPA supporting each other as well as newcomers to Polyamory. There is an Email list called UU Poly where members discuss the joys and concerns of being part of a Poly family. You can subscribe at: www.uupa.org/mailman/listinfo/uupoly-l.

UUPA has its own web site at www.UUPA.org where you can read brochures on Polyamory written by UUs. Read the comparison of UU and UUPA principles and our Mission Statement. Come and read the stories of other beginning Polys and find out about UUPA.

So if your "family" has more than two parents, or you find you love more than one, you are not alone. Come and find us. We will welcome you to our "family".

Kenneth R. Haslam, MD is the Vice President and a Founding member of UUs for Polyamory Awareness.

"Just as a parent can provide an equal amount of love for each of several children, the Polyamorous parent loves equally not only all the kids but also the other adult members of the household."



fishbowl:
for adults who practice ministry with youth

☆ **tera little**

**Book review: Secret Encounters:
Addressing Sexual Behaviors in
Group Settings, by Michael Shelton**

Last summer I had the good fortune to stumble across a great book dealing with children and youth sexuality within the camp setting. The book is *Secret Encounters: Addressing Sexual Behaviors in Group Settings* by Michael Shelton, and the American Camping Association published it in summer 2004. His book covers areas from creating an atmosphere that discourages inappropriate sexual behavior to screening staff, to setting up a safety plan, how to talk with staff about safety, and dealing with sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and sexual assault.

I had imagined the book would be a stale, clinical look at the sexual behaviors of young people and how we, as adults, should work hard to stamp this out at every possible turn. I was so wrong! Shelton's

attitude toward the sexual development of children and youth is very much in keeping with the Our Whole Lives philosophy: people of all ages are sexual beings, and there are developmentally appropriate ways of demonstrating it. Shelton goes on to say that just because a child, youth or adult is going to camp (or entering a religious education program, or attending a youth conference) that does not mean he or she is able to turn off this part of themselves. Rather, it is up to us to ensure that we create a culture of safety and respect in which harmful behaviors such as sexual harassment, assault, or abuse will not be tolerated.

As an adult who has worked in youth ministry since 1996, one of the most useful things for me in this book was Shelton's assertion that no matter what, we are never going to stamp out sexual activity in the camp (or religious education pro-

gram or youth conference) setting. These places are some of the most romantic atmospheres in our society - time away from "reality", in close proximity to your peers, and in situations that foster physical and emotional closeness. Shelton says that if you have a zero tolerance toward sexuality in your program, the only thing that will accomplish is driving sexual behaviors underground, making them even harder to detect by youth staff, advisors, teachers, etc. He advocates a more open policy toward sexuality with the understanding that this will encourage greater communication about sexual activities and will make it more likely that aberrant behavior such as abuse, harassment, or assault will be reported. This does not mean that we throw caution to the wind and encourage 'free love' among participants; rather, that we allow and acknowledge appropriate, age-related sexual expression and that when faced with a situation that involves a more intense contact than is allowed, we do not immediately panic and banish the parties from the conference or camp.

"[I]t is up to us to ensure that we create a culture of safety and respect in which harmful behaviors such as sexual harassment, assault, or abuse will not be tolerated."

Shelton also points out that we can never absolutely make our space 'safe.' We cannot prevent against every imaginable situation.

What we can do is work on prevention, and creating an environment in which unhealthy behaviors cannot thrive. He offers a safety survey, one for staff members and another for children or youth participants, so that the leadership can begin to adequately assess how safe people feel in the program. Once you have an idea of the level of emotional, physical, and sexual safety people feel, then you can begin to craft a safety plan.

One of the most powerful aspects of YRUU for me has always been the belief and commitment to making the community space a safe space for the youngest members. There can be huge physical and emotional differences between a savvy 17-or-18-year-old youth leader and a brand-new-to-conferences 14-year-old. Our Unitarian Universalist philosophy of youth ministry engages both the youth and adult leaders



in how to best create a nurturing atmosphere for both. It's imperative for all of us to engage our minds and hearts and figure out how we can form communities that are sexually safe for everyone, and allow for appropriate sexual expression. I do not think this is an easy task. This will be unique to individual communities, and requires ongoing, frank, and honest discussions among youth, advisors, and parents.

There are very good chapters in Shelton's book that deal with sexual assault between members of your staff (this translates to sexual assault between members of your youth group or participants at a youth conference), sexual harassment, and sexual abuse. In the sexual assault chapter he discusses triggers for assault within relationships, such as jealousy, anger, alcohol, trying to control the behavior of another, trying to gain revenge, or trying to protect one's image. He also gives a very clear outline of how to deal with sexual assault if it occurs in your program:

1. Stay calm
2. Give the survivor partial control of the situation
3. Do not act as judge - Shelton is very adamant that this is the role of the legal system should the survivor decide to press charges. It's the role of leadership to create a safe environment and make all efforts to prevent similar assaults.
4. Do not act as therapist. While we may be empathetic or call ourselves chaplains, most of us are not trained counselors or social workers, skilled in dealing with interpersonal violence. We need to have resources available in the event this does take place.

I think this book would be well worth having in your YRUU or church library. It was very helpful for me in terms of looking at ways we assess safety at camp and conferences.

To order, go online to www.ACAcamps.org, then go to bookstore or call the ACA bookstore directly at 800.428.2267.

Tera Little is the Pacific Southwest District Lifespan Religious Education Consultant and a former Adult-at-Large on the YRUU Steering Committee.

hi, i'm a pansy.



heather
grant

.... But if you call me that, I won't answer. Because pansexuality for me is about being a person, not a label. So call me by my name, respect me for who I am, not for my sex or gender. Because honestly, we're all born blank slate, right? So I don't see why those things really matter in the end. For me, or you. Or anybody, for that matter. When I am talking to someone, I'm not talking to their gender, I'm talking to them. When I love someone, I don't love them for their gender, I love them for themselves. Male, female, male to female, female to male, genderqueer, genderless, and all the other places inside or outside of gender and sex, why should it matter to me? Everybody is just beautiful.

my body

a song



This is a song the Ohio Meadville District sings at conferences after they explain the "no means no" rule.

*My body's nobody's body but mine
You run your own body
Let me run mine
Sometimes it's hard to say no
And be strong
When the "no" feelings come
Then I know something's wrong
Cuz my body's mine
From my head to my toe
Please leave it alone
When you hear me say "NO"!*



*photo courtesy
of traci griggs*

spring 2005



synapse < 21 >

w o r k s h o p :

sexuality education

by Lydia Pelot-Hobbs and Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward

Time Needed: 1 ½ to 2 hours, plus preparation time - lead it at a youth group meeting!

Note: Before you start this workshop, let participants know they will be asked to reflect on and share messages they've received about sex and sexuality throughout their lifetime. It is **very important** to give folks with different comfort levels options: encourage them to say "pass" for any question they don't want to answer, or to reflect privately rather than discussing with others if they so choose. If possible, prepare an **alternate activity** for people who would like to opt out of the workshop altogether. Also, make sure at least one or two adults (youth advisors, etc.) know what will happen in the workshop so that they can help handle any issues that may come up. Now get to it!

Preparation work for the workshop:

1. Get supplies: paper, pens, butcher paper, markers, tape, Sex Ed quiz questions.
2. Set up chairs for the "Pinwheel Activity"
3. Identify a scribe who will write notes on the butcher paper.
4. Gather resources (books, websites, organizations etc.) for participants to do follow-up work.

Introductions (10 minutes)

Purpose: Participants and workshop leaders can get to know each other, if they don't already.
Any quick get-to-know you activity will do, or you can use one of these activities (from "Deep Fun", available at www.uua.org/YRUU/resources/online/deepfun.html):

"Syllable"

Have each member of the group clap out a beat corresponding to the number of syllables in their first name. Niall claps once. Linda claps two times. Then have people with the same number of syllables in their names find each other without speaking, by walking around the room clapping out their names. Once the group is divided into subgroups, have them introduce themselves to each other and then to the rest of the group. Variation: Shake hands in a rhythm corresponding to the number of syllables in your name.

"Hog Call"

Have the group split up into pairs and come up with a matching set of words or sounds (i.e. "hic-cup," "peanut-butter," or "honey-bee"). Have each person choose one of the words as their own. Then have each person announce their word to the group, so that there are no repeats. Then instruct the group to close their eyes and start milling around the space with the goal of getting as far away from their partner as possible. Once the pairs are well-separated, announce that they are to find their partners without opening their eyes, by shouting their word. (If all goes well, Peanut will meet up with Butter).



Reading (15 minutes)

Purpose: Give reflection time for the group to begin to think about sexuality and education.

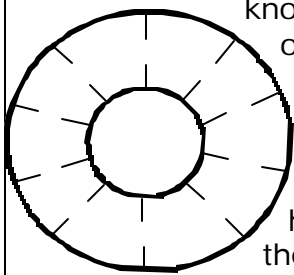
Read: "A Call to Action: An Argument for Comprehensive Sexuality Education" by Sarah Gibb (see pages 25-26.) Ask participants to reflect silently on the following questions: (give them paper/pens to write down or draw thoughts if they'd like):

- What struck you most about this article?
- This article was written over ten years ago. What has or has not changed since then?
- Do you agree with this argument for comprehensive sexuality education? Why or why not?

Pinwheel Activity (25 - 30 minutes, plus 10 - 15 minutes for discussion)

Purpose: For participants to share and reflect on their own experiences, opinions and understandings of sexuality education. This activity, which can be done in a number of settings, came to us through the Anti-Racism Trainer-Organizer Program.

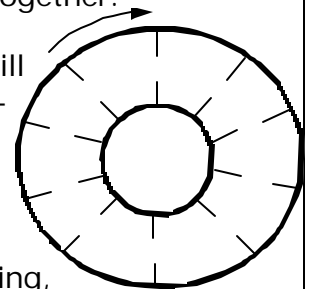
Set up two concentric circles of chairs, with one chair for each participant. Have participants sit in pairs facing each other (the inside circle faces out, the outside circle faces in.) Let the participants



know that you are about to ask them several questions about their experiences, opinions, and understandings of sexuality education. Tell them there are **no right or wrong answers**.

The facilitator will ask the questions one at a time, and is responsible for keeping track of time. After a question is asked, the person in the outside circle will have two minutes to respond to the question. (Facilitator yells "Switch!") Then, the person in the inside circle will have two minutes to respond. (Facilitator yells "Discuss!") Then, both will have one minute to discuss the topic together.

After you're done with the first question, participants in the inside circle will remain seated, while participants in the outside circle will move one chair clockwise. Continue the activity until all questions have been asked and responded to. (Participants will get to be a part of five different pairs.)



Questions to Ask:

- 1) What has your education (public school, private school, homeschooling, unschooling, etc.) teach you about sex and sexuality?
- 2) What has your family (however you define it - parents, guardians, relatives, people you live with, etc.) teach you about sex and sexuality?
- 3) What has your religion/church teach you about sex and sexuality?
- 4) What have your peers (friends, classmates, people your age) taught you about sexuality?
- 5) What is one of the most important things you've learned about sex and sexuality?

Discussion: Invite participants to form a big circle and discuss the following questions as a big group (*remember to draw out quieter voices in the discussion - be aware of people who are speaking a lot, etc.*) Ask participants not to name names or share specific stories, but talk about general themes, commonalities, etc.

- 1) What were some of the things you had in common with folks you talked to?
- 2) Where did you get the strongest / most intentional messages about sex and sexuality: education/school, family, religion/church, friends?
- 3) What are other ways you received messages about sex and sexuality? (i.e. television, movies, Internet, books) What were those messages?
- 4) At what age do you remember first being aware of messages you were receiving about sex and sexuality?

continued on next page...



continued from previous page...

Note: if you don't have enough room to use chairs for this activity, you **could ask participants to stand, but it's best to be inclusive of differently-abled people who may find standing difficult. Have at least **a few** chairs available for those that may need them.**

Taking the Test (20 minutes)

Purpose: Identify what participants know and don't know about trends in sexuality education.

Give participants five minutes to guess the answers to a variety of fact-based questions on sexuality education. (If you need some facts, see some examples on Page 27, or browse the resources listed on pages 30-31) Tell them their results will **not be collected or shared with others**; this is merely a tool to get them thinking.

Once participants have completed the test, announce the answers to each question and write them up on butcher paper. *Be sure to list the source of the information you found.* Ask participants "Is there anything about this answer that surprised you? Why?"

Making an Action Plan (20 - 30 minutes)

Purpose: To empower participants to think further about their thoughts on sexuality education, and how to advocate for better resources and information in their communities.

Break participants up into small groups of 4-5 people. Have them brainstorm for eight to ten minutes on what their ideal sexuality education program/resources would be like. For another eight to ten minutes have them brainstorm plans/actions to get these ideals implemented. Then come back together as a large group and have each group report back the plans/actions they made for implementing change in their communities.

Resources for Change (5 minutes)

Purpose: To equip participants with organizing tools.

Hand out to each participant a handout of resources for further self-education (**including those on pages 30 and 31!**)

Evaluations (5 minutes)

Purpose: To find out what parts of the workshop participants found useful or could use more work so future workshops can be better.

Draw two columns on a piece of butcher paper, one column for positives and one column for deltas (things that could change). Ask participants for feedback and write the positive and delta feedback in their respective columns.

| + plus + | △ delta △ |
|----------|-----------|
| | |

Post-Workshop Work

E-mail or contact the Youth Office and Working Action Manager with the notes from your workshop, reflections, evaluations, and/or suggested additions/changes to the workshop. Get the Youth Office's and the WAM's contact info at www.uua.org/YRUU/justice/wai.html



a call to action



sarah gibb

Blast from the Past! This article was published in Synapse ten years ago. My, how times have (somewhat) changed...

Activist members of radical right-wing Christian groups across the United States are working to change the way that Sexuality Education is presented in the public schools. The classroom has become the latest battleground in the religious right's ideological war with America. Youth are the prize they seek. Many powerful religious and political leaders, parents, activists, educators, and school board

members associated with the religious right are working to eliminate sexuality education curricula in the public schools and replace them with "abstinence-only" curricula that teach abstinence and heterosexuality as the only options for teenagers. Abstinence-only curricula are largely fear-based, and do not teach youth to cope with the realities of sexuality. They deny the fact that humans, including teenagers have valid sexual feelings. They cast pre-marital sex, masturbation, single parenthood, abortion, and homosexuality in a negative light, lacing these subjects with fear, guilt, and hatred. Many of these curricula do not mention rape, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation - it's as if these problems don't exist. The religious right is very organized. Their relentless strategic campaigning and fund-raising has resulted in the alteration of many school districts' sexuality education curricula to cater to the right's narrow interpretation of sexuality, and have succeeded in placing their abstinence-only curricula in a few thousand schools and churches nationwide. Fortunately, many Americans support comprehensive sexuality education. They are by far greater in number than those supporting abstinence-only curricula, yet the religious right continues to have its way in school district after school district. We must stop being complacent while our values are trodden upon. We must educate ourselves, define our beliefs, and take

"Abstinence-only curricula are largely fear-based, and do not teach youth to cope with the realities of sexuality."

action on what we believe in!

Comprehensive sexuality education teaches students the skills to make their own decisions about their sexuality. This kind of education is useful for all students, whether or not they are sexually active, whether or not they plan to marry, whether or not they are heterosexual, whether or not they are Christian. An abstinence-only curriculum is not going to help the teenager who doesn't know how to prevent transmission of HIV and is becoming involved in a sexual relationship. Abstinence-only is not going to help the child who blames himself for the sexual abuse he receives. Abstinence-only does not deal with the realities and complexities of human psychology and sexuality. It does not prepare young people to grow into sexually healthy adults. And by avoiding discussion of contraception and dis-

ease prevention for the sexually active, it does not prepare students to survive.

The core values of the Young Religious Unitarian Universalists and the Unitarian Universalist Association call us to take action to defend the right of youth to comprehensive, reality-based sexuality education. Because we believe in "the inherent worth and dignity of every person," we honor the value of loving relationships, regardless of the genders of the people involved. We are called to challenge actions by the religious right that use the public schools to devalue and degrade people who are "different" - people who do not share the same religion or values as the radical religious right. Because we respect "the right of conscience," we acknowledge that students should not be pressured into ways of thinking that directly contradict their values. Because we believe in "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations," we seek to promote equality and harmony between the sexes. We promote curricula that address the emotional responsibility of relationship. We advocate sexuality education that provides a safe environment for youth to learn, question, and explore - an environment in which youth can affirm their own beliefs and act responsibly.

The Unitarian Universalists Association, in conjunction with the United Church of Christ, is currently developing a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum to be

continued on next page...

spring 2005



synapse < 25 >

continued from previous page... used in the churches of both denominations, as well as in secular settings. The curriculum will include age-appropriate education from kindergarten to adulthood. This new curriculum won't be available for at least three more years. Currently, the UUA curriculum About Your Sexuality is taught to numerous junior high-aged UU youth by trained UU leaders. Though the audio-visuals are a bit outdated - with pictures of youth and adults with early-1970s hairdos and bell-bottoms - the curriculum is right-on in helping youth foster healthy sexual attitudes and practices.

We cannot let the radical religious right speak for all religious people. And we cannot let only adults speak for youth. As religious youth, we can make a difference. Youth are the most eloquent and powerful youth advocates. This summer, at the UUA's General Assembly in Fort Worth, Texas, the Youth Caucus wrote, sponsored, and presented their own resolution to the General Assembly, a body comprised of delegates from UU churches across the continent. When the resolution "Sexuality Education in Public Schools," was presented, the adults were moved. Afterwards, thunderous applause and a standing ovation immediately broke out from the overwhelmingly adult audience. Many of the adults that I spoke to were in awe. The power of youth, standing together, speaking for youth, is immense and should never be underestimated. Get the facts. Define what you believe in. Speak out!

Sarah Gibb was a YRUU Programs Specialist from 1994-1995. She is an amazing youth ally and is currently writing a high school Coming Of Age curriculum.

L e a r n a b o u t . . .

OBGLTC (we love those acronyms!)

The UUA's Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns is an office guided by the vision that someday oppression against bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people, whether it be overt or subtle, will be a thing of the past.

A bit of history about the office: Unitarian Universalism has been on record as supporting the rights of bisexual, gay, and lesbian people since 1970. The Office was formed in 1973. Unitarian Universalists: We have advocated against sodomy laws and job and housing discrimination. We have advocated for ceremonies of union and same-gender marriage, the right to serve in the military, the right to lead congregations as ministers and religious professionals, and the right to be parents. We are now on record as supporting the rights of transgender people. The number of Welcoming Congregations is growing, having nearly doubled in the last 18 months. There is still much homophobia and heterosexism. The work and the story are still in progress. Each of us has the opportunity to be a part of the work and the story.

This office can help your UU congregation become more welcoming to GLBT folks, and distributes a number of exciting resources such as a "Living the Welcoming Congregation" newsletter, a Same-Sex Wedding Guide, and all sorts of articles, pamphlets, stickers, handouts and more! Be sure to check out their website at www.uua.org/obgltc or contact them at obgltc@uua.org or (617) 948-6475.

Marriage Equality- A New Way To Help!

Looking for a way to get involved with the struggle for marriage equality?

Check out this amazing idea, which now involves UU youth and others from across the continent!

The Pride Rainbow Project, started by four youth of the Unitarian Church of Calgary, offers a creative new way to promote equality for the GLBT community. The PRP is creating a giant rainbow pride banner in support of the pending same-sex marriage legislation in Canada. Your youth group can help with this project! The Pride Rainbow Project website has detailed instructions so that your group can make your own section of the banner! There is also a list of other ways your group can help if you'd like other options besides creating a section of the banner.

Check out the website at
www.priderainbowproject.com/youth.html
or contact Chris, Group Organizer and Webmaster, at goddess.of.saturn@gmail.com.



Learn about... *Interweave*

Interweave is a membership organization affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association, dedicated to the spiritual, political, and social well-being of Unitarian Universalists who are confronting oppression as lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender or queer persons, and their heterosexual allies; and facilitates the celebration of the culture and lives of its members.

Check out Interweave's website, where you can find the online newsletter "Interweave World," join and/or support Interweave, learn about Interweave's annual Convocation (held this year in Oakland, California), or contact an Interweave Board member to find out about how you can get involved!

www.uua.org/interweave

why sex ed?

☆ some interesting facts to consider... ☆

----- In Missouri, according to state law teachers must advise students that teenage sexual activity places them at a greater risk for dropping out of school. (1)

----- Over 42,000 womyn aged 15-19 become pregnant in Canada every year. (3)

----- In the U.S., many of the federally mandated abstinence-only curricula present the religious belief that life begins at conception as scientific fact. (5)

----- In the United States, teens get pregnant and contract STIs at rates ranging from three to 74 times higher than teens in the Netherlands, France, and Germany. (7)

----- Approximately one in four sexually active teens in Canada and the U.S. will get an STD each year. (9)

----- 89% of Ontario youth believe it was important that they receive sexuality education in school. (2)

----- The U.S. federal government will spend \$170 million on abstinence-only sex education in the 2005 fiscal year. (4)

----- In the U.S., some of the federally mandated abstinence-only curricula teach that condoms are ineffective against STIs and HIV. (6)

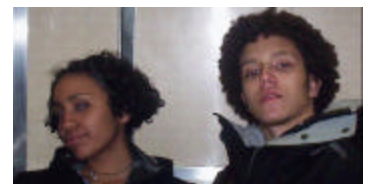
----- Ohio requires STD and HIV education and abstinence-until-marriage education, but does not require information about preventative behaviors or methods. (8)

----- Every dollar spent on comprehensive sexuality education that teaches students about contraceptive methods in Canada could save approximately \$10 from the costs of abortion services and income maintenance for single teenage parents. (10)

references:

1 <http://www.siecus.org/policy/states/mandates/MO.html>
 2 http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cgshe-ldnemss/she_2e.html#rationale
 3 New Brunswick Students' Ideas About Sexual Health Education New Brunswick Department of Education, University of New Brunswick, November 2001.
 4 <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/abstinenceonlycontent.pdf>
 5 <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/abstinenceonlycontent.pdf>

6 <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/abstinenceonlycontent.pdf>
 7 http://www.sxetc.org/index.php?topic=Stories&sub_topic=Sex&content_id=3136
 8 Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000.
 9 <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/pp2/clvld/files/clvld/getinvolved/compsexed.xml>
 10 <http://www.ppfc.ca/ppfc/content.asp?articleid=354>



photos courtesy of bart frost and traci griggs

spring 2005



synapse < 27 >

profile of a uu-friendly org! ☆

lydia pelot-hobbs

Sex, Etc.

Sex, Etc. is an amazing organization that works on multiple issues relating to sex education including (but not limited to) pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, abortion, abuse and violence, safer sex, and emotional health. Sex Etc., like YRUU, is very youth empowering: all of the editorial staff of their website and newsletter are teenagers. While much of their website is heterocentric and reinforces the gender binary, they do have a section devoted to queer related issues and talk about gender identity. Its website has a lot of great resources such as message boards, articles, and sex ed related Q & A.

I think the best resource Sex Etc. has is The Roadmap. The Roadmap is an organizing tool for students to organize around comprehensive sex ed in their schools. The editors of Sex Etc. developed it in conjunction with The Network for Family Life Education at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. The Roadmap has a ton of resources, suggestions, and directions for sex ed activism.

They have tons of resources, from basic facts to in-depth informational resources. These include "The ABC's of Sexuality Education", statistics on different topics dealing with teens and sex, state-by-state laws related to sex ed, the real facts about common myths, and contact info for several related organizations. They also have amazing informational resources on how to build coalitions. No matter what kind of organizing you're doing, coalitions are crucial to creating long-term effective change. The coalition section is a resource that can be used in other organizing as well.

Sex, Etc. has lots of resources and guides for many different tactics you may use in your campaign. The tactics for which they have resources and guides consist of student and parent surveys, petitions, community forums, school board lobbying, position papers, and media tactics. While having so many options can be overwhelming at times, it is also great because you are able to pick and choose which tactics would be more effective in your community.

In conclusion, I recommend anyone and everyone to **check out Sex Etc. at www.sxetc.org** whether your interested in comprehensive sexuality education activism, or

"[T]he organization ... is leap years beyond most sex ed websites targeted at youth. This is one of the best sex ed websites I have ever seen."

you just have some questions about sex and/or your own sexuality. While there are a few problematic aspects of the organization, it is light years beyond most sex ed websites targeted at youth.

This is one of the best sex ed websites I have ever seen.

Lydia Pelot-Hobbs is still the 2003-2005 Working Action Manager, and one of Betty Jeanne's favorite people ever.

Holler!



self portrait by maya bauer

j s e x u a l i t y r e s o l u t i o n s !

Youth Council, the governing body of YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists), **has issued statements and resolutions on a variety of sexuality-related topics** since its inception in 1983. The following are some of the MANY resolutions that you can learn more about by visiting the Youth Council Resolution Archive at www.uua.org/YRUU/governance.

"Contraceptive, Abortion, and Sexual Rights" 1983

Youth Council committed itself to advocating for federal funding of contraceptives and abortion, to upholding individual decision-making regarding sexuality, and to opposing "squeal" laws which would limit access of minors to accessing contraceptive devices and abortion.

"Mandating Action on Lesbian, Bisexual, and Gay Youth" 1991

Youth Council acknowledged the need to provide a comfortable, safe place for lesbian, bisexual, and gay youth, and urged UU youth groups and congregations to address homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism in their programming and at all events.

"On Membership in The Religious Coalition For Abortion Rights" 1993

Youth Council supported the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR) and its covenant to ensure every woman's right to choose an abortion; and charged the 1993-1994 Steering Committee to examine the process of becoming a member of RCAR. (Note: The RCAR is now the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, or RCRC.)

"On YRUU Involvement with Interweave" 1995

Youth Council upheld UU principles which support and affirm gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual individuals, acknowledged the unique and serious issues facing GLBT youth, and supported collaboration between YRUU and Interweave.

"Providing GLBT Youth in the Greater Community with Relevant Information using the OWL Curriculum" 1998

Youth Council identified gaps in comprehensive sexuality education for GLBT youth and charged district leaders with advertising the UUA's OWL (Our Whole Lives) sexuality education curriculum.

"It ain't just about marriage!" 2004

Youth Council advocated for further gatherings of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning youth such as the 1999 and 2004 SATUURDAY (Sexually Accepting/Alternative Teenage UU's Respecting Diversity Among Youth) conferences, called for the Youth Office to designate part of their work exclusively to supporting queer youth, and affirmed the ongoing work of GLBTQQ youth leadership in UU communities.

What's going on with Youth Council now?

Got something to say to your Youth Council Representative? Get vocal! You can find their contact information at www.uua.org/YRUU/governance or by calling the Youth Office at (617) 948-4350.



s p r i n g 2 0 0 5

photos courtesy of bart frost



s y n a p s e < 2 9 >

here are some sexuality resources you may find useful:

SEXUALITY EDUCATION:

- ***Our Whole Lives*** (a UU curriculum) www.uua.org/owl
- ***Rethinking Schools***: www.rethinkingschools.org/sex
- ***Sex Etc***: www.sxetc.org
- ***Coalition for Positive Sexuality***: www.positive.org
- ***Advocates for Youth***: www.advocatesforyouth.org
- ***National Coalition to Support Sexuality Education***:
<http://www.siecus.org/policy/NCSSE/ncsse0000.html>
- ***The Safe Schools Coalition***: <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/>
- ***Sexuality and U***: www.sexualityandu.ca
- **Sexual Ideology and Schooling: Towards Democratic Sexuality Education**
by Alexander McKay
- **Queering Elementary Education: Advancing the Dialogue About Sexualities and Schooling** Eds. William J. Letts, James T. Sears
- **Youth and Sexualities: Pleasure, Subversion, and Insubordination In and Out of Schools** Eds. Mary Louise Rasmussen, Eric Rofes, Susan Talburt
- **When the Drama Club Is Not Enough: Lessons From the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students** by Jeff Perrotti

SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE:

- ***Rape Abuse and Incest National Network***: <http://www.rainn.org/>
- ***Students Active for Ending Rape***: www.safercampus.org
- ***Raising Our Voices: Queer Asian Women's Response to Relationship Violence***: endabuse.org/programs/immigrant/files/RaisingVoices.pdf
- ***Northwest Network Of Bisexual, Trans And Lesbian Survivors Of Abuse***:
www.nwnetwork.org
- ***Sexual Assault Care Center***: <http://www.sacc.to>
- **Gender Violence** Eds. Laura L. O'Toole, Jessica R, Schiffman
- **Transforming A Rape Culture** Eds. Emile Buchwald, Pamela Fletcher, Martha Roth
- **Issues in Intimate Violence** Ed. Raquel Kennedy Bergen



woo! more resources!

LINKED IDENTITIES:

- **Colors of Resistance:** <http://colours.mahost.org/>
- **Women of Color** Web: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/grhf/WoC/>
- **Queers of Color:** <http://www.queersofcolor.org>
- **Queer Asian Pacific Resources:** <http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/5010/resources.html>
- **National Organization for Women:** www.now.org
- **Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism** by bell hooks
- **Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center** by bell hooks
- **This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color** Eds. Cherrie Moraga, Gloria Anzaldua
- **Sister/Outsider:** by Audre Lorde
- **Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora** by Martin F. Manalassan IV
- **Revolutionary Voices: A Multicultural Queer Youth Anthology** Ed. Amy Sonnie
- **Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism** Ed. Bushra Rehman
- **M. Butterfly** by David Hwang
- **Cunt: A Declaration of Independence** by Inga Muscio
- **Troubling Intersections of Race and Sexuality: Queer Students of Color and Anti-Oppressive Education**
Ed. Kevin K. Kumashiro

RESOURCES FOR GLBTQQ YOUTH:

- **Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network:** www.glsen.org
- **Sex Etc:** www.sxetc.org
- **Gender and Sexuality:** <http://eserver.org/gender/>
- **Queers of Color:** <http://www.queersofcolor.org/>
- **Queer Asian Pacific Resources:** <http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/5010/resources.html>
- **The Safe Schools Coalition:** <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/>
- **Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora** by Martin F. Manalassan IV
- **Bi Lives: Bisexual Women Tell Their Stories** ed. Kata Orndorff
- **Revolutionary Voices: A Multicultural Queer Youth Anthology** ed. Amy Sonnie
- **Challenging Lesbian and Gay Inequalities in Education** Ed. Debbie Epstein
- **Coming Out of the Classroom Closet: Gay and Lesbian Teachers and Curricula** Ed. Karen M. Harbeck
- **Troubling Intersections of Race and Sexuality: Queer Students of Color and Anti-Oppressive Education**
Ed. Kevin K. Kumashiro
- **Queering Elementary Education: Advancing the Dialogue About Sexualities and Schooling** Eds. William J. Letts, James T. Sears
- **Youth and Sexualities: Pleasure, Subversion, and Insubordination In and Out of Schools** Eds. Mary Louise Rasmussen, Eric Rofes, Susan Talburt
- **When the Drama Club Is Not Enough: Lessons From the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students** by Jeff Perrotti

GENDER IDENTITY:

- **Trans Proud:** www.transproud.com
- **Gender and Sexuality:** <http://eserver.org/gender/>
- **Gender Education and Advocacy:** <http://www.gender.org/>
- **Intersex Society of North America:** <http://www.isna.org/drupal/>
- **Transsexuality:** <http://www.transsexual.org/>
- **Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink or Blue** by Leslie Feinberg
- **Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman** by Leslie Feinberg
- **Genderqueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary** Eds. Joan Nestle, Riki Wilchins, and Clare Howell
- **Read My Lips: Sexual Subversion and the End of Gender** by Riki Wilchins
- **Gender Shock: Exploding the Myths of Male and Female** by Phyllis Burke

spring 2005



thanks for reading!
xoxoxo

Synapse < 31 >

more changes on the way for

 **SYNAPSE**

Many of you will remember the announcement three years ago that the funding for *Synapse* had been cut as part of larger cuts to other UUA publications. Many UU Youth and the Youth Office worked hard on a plan to streamline *Synapse* and get some funding restored, and by the Fall of 2003, *Synapse* was back to two issues per year. Again this year, the struggling economy has made some budget cuts necessary across the Association. In 2005-06, *Synapse's* budget will be reduced by about 50%. (To put this in perspective, the UU World magazine will be published 4 times per year instead of 6.)

The Youth Office pondered a number of options... the idea that seemed like the most creative compromise was: **We would increase the *Synapse* production to three online issues per year, and one print issue which would be a compilation of the three online issues.** So, after the Spring 2005 issue comes out next month, you won't see another print issue of *Synapse* for over

a year... but in (roughly) October, January, and April, you'll see a new online issue of *Synapse* containing articles, resources, and timely announcements of opportunities. Then around the end of August, you'll see a large print issue containing all the articles and resources from the online issues, as well as flyers with opportunities for the upcoming year.

How is one big issue cheaper than two smaller issues? It turns out there are some one-time costs associated with making each issue which do not increase significantly with the size of each issue. Also, having one issue means **more real content**: Only one front cover, one back cover, one table of contents, etc.

Even though we're disappointed about the realities that caused the funding to be cut back, we're excited about the opportunity to continue to move *Synapse* in the direction it has been for the past two years: Away from flyers and announcements about events with expiration dates, and towards resources, information, and perspectives that will be useful for years to come. The idea is, **as you collect *Synapse*, you're really collecting a library of resources and youth essays!**

One last note: For those currently subscribed to the print version, you'll receive the one big print issue per year, starting around September 2006... and remember, check the subscription expiration date on the back of your *Synapse* - a subscription is for two years (which now means two issues), and you may need to resubscribe!

Looking to the future --The Youth Office

Subscribe Me to Print *Synapse*!

Subscribe to *Synapse*: If you want to receive print *Synapse*, you can go to www.uua.org/connect (preferred) and create an account for yourself and subscribe there; or you can also fill out this form and mail it back to us for a 2-year subscription. Print *Synapse* is free for youth aged 14-20. For adults, a 2-year subscription costs USD \$10 (additional donations always welcome!) Remember that a free copy of *Synapse* is always mailed to every UU congregation! Make checks payable to "UUA" and mail them to the Youth Office at the address below.

Read *Synapse* Online: If you're down with the internet, you can read *Synapse Online* at: www.uua.org/yruu/synapse

There you can also find out how to subscribe to an email list for *Synapse* updates.

- I'm a youth, age 14-20. *Synapse* is free!
- I'm an adult. Enclosed is my USD \$10 payment.
- I'm generous! Enclosed is my \$___ donation.
- I'm full of ideas! Enclosed is my article, artwork, letter to the editor, or idea for *Synapse*!

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____

Country _____ Birthdate: _____

From The Youth Office, UUA
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108 USA

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

*Is your subscription about to **expire**?
 Check the date on your mailing label,
 and resubscribe if you need to!!*

