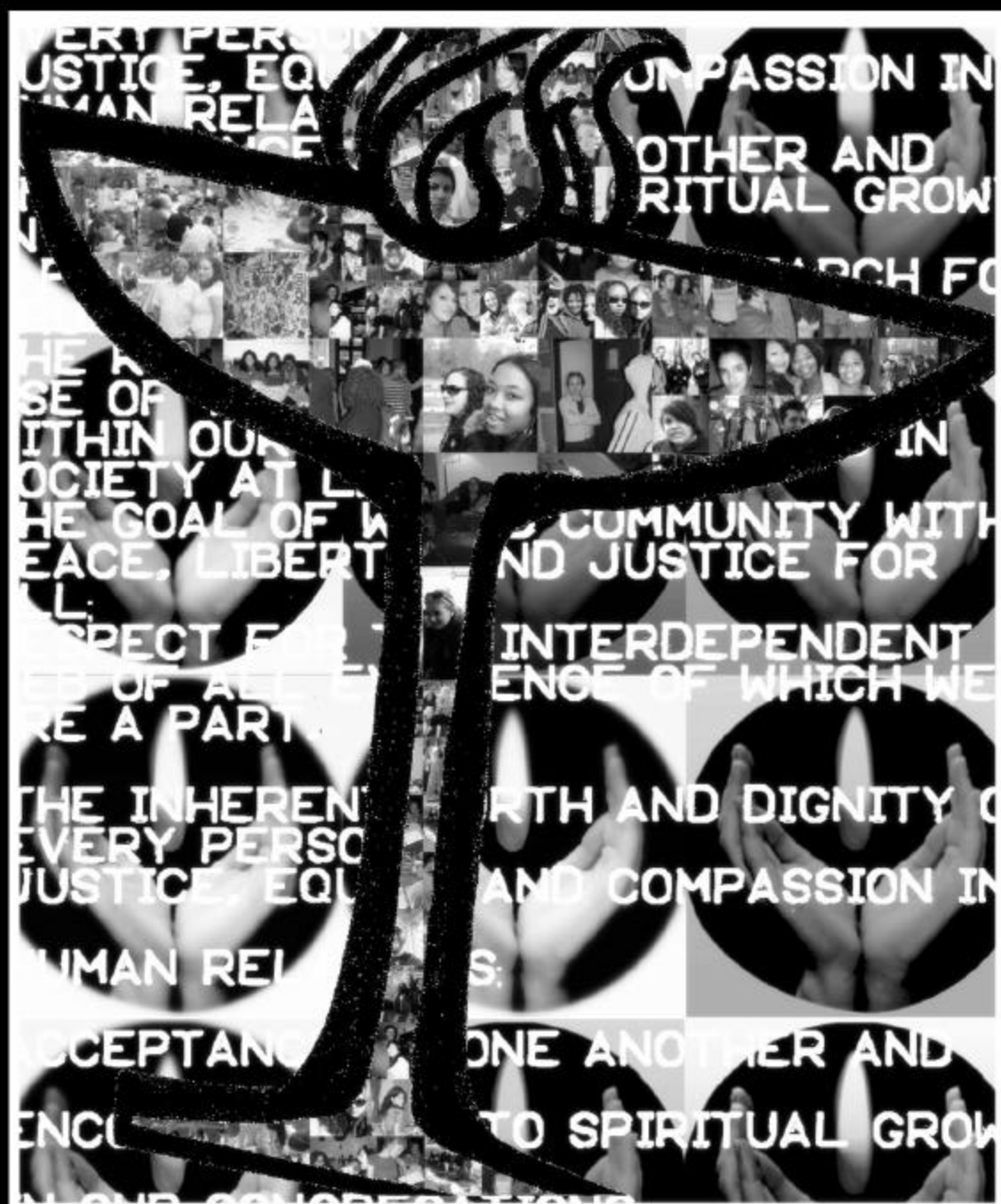




A point of contact where information and energy are exchanged...



Hello Readers of *Synapse*!

You are about to embark on an excellent adventure, filled with art, poetry, spirituality, social justice, and the inspirational stories of your fellow youth throughout the continent. That's right...the print version of *Synapse* has arrived! Here you can find everything that has been included in the past two online versions, as well as new things debuting in this issue, printed out and delivered for your reading pleasure. Unfortunately, *Synapse* will only exist in print version once a year from now on. However, there are two online issues each year as well, which can be read by going to YRUU's website at <http://uua.org/YRUU/synapse>. There you can also find information about subscribing and submitting things to *Synapse*.

Thank you to all who submitted things and to those who supported and subscribed to *Synapse*! Enjoy!

Zoe Engberg
Synapse Intern
Summer 2006

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Table of Contents

Meet the Youth Office	4
Marissa's Goodbye	6
Joo Young's Goodbye	7
Co-Facilitation With Youth	8
Five Guidelines for Committees With Youth Members	9
"My Little Bird"	11
What Does It Mean To Be Hot	12
Katrinaid Coffee House	13
Her Disappearing Daughter	14
Youth Ministry Award Winner - The Church of the Present	15
Youth Ministry Award Winner- With Our Eyes Shut	18
Responsive Resolutjon on Racism and Classism	19
SLAM - Anti-Racism Movie Guide	20
Darfur, STAND and Community Building	21
"Beautiful"	22
About Cultural Theft	23
Do It Yourself Chalices	24
Adventures of a Religious Activist	26
"Reflection"	27
God Is Love: Spirituality and Social Justice	28
This I Believe, Like a Candle Flame	29
The Religion That Caught My Eye	30
Love	31
Getting the Call to Ministry When Your Phone is on Mute	33
"Nature's Beauty "	34
You Matter	36
"Maybe Then I Will Nod"	38
The Emperor Has No Clothes	39
"Lost and Found: Please Claim!"	40
How Many Licks Does It Take to Get to a Tootsie Roll Pop Center?	41
Forgotten	43
"Naps and Before"	44
My Sabbath	45
"You"	47
Worship Service to Celebrate Identity	48
As a Person of Irish American Descent Can I Now Be Considered a "Person of Color" and Join the Ranks of the Oppressed?	49
Top Ten YRUU Songs	52
One Year After Katrina: Our Committment	53
Leadership Opportunities	54
Summer 2006	

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 district/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 you who 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 St.
Boston, MA 02108



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 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.

Meet Beth Dana!

Greetings, Synapse readers! My name is Beth Dana, and I am one of the Youth Ministry Associates ("YMA"). I'm in the middle of a two year position at the Youth Office, where I'm focusing on an exciting revisioning and youth-ministry-deepening process called the Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth. I also work on Synapse, resource development, and anti-racism/anti-oppression work.

A bit about myself – I'm 22, a lifelong UU, and a former YRUUer from the St. Lawrence District (Albany, NY). I'm taking time off from school in NYC, where I'm studying urban studies and religion. Just like the rest of the Youth Office, I'm here to serve YOU. Please give us a call or send us an e-mail if you have questions or need youth programs support. We're friendly people!

Meet Jesse Jaeger!

Hi All, I am Jesse Jaeger, the Youth Programs Director at the UUA. That means I get to work with all the Youth Ministry Associates as they provide services to your youth programs. Besides supporting them with their work I also support the Our Whole Lives sexuality education curriculum, keep an eye on UU Scouting issues, manage the Youth Offices budget, and advocate for Youth Programs through out the Association. I spend a lot of time helping youth and adults who work with youth figure out what they can do in their congregation. For the past two years I have also been spending a fair amount of time working on the Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth. More is being said about that in this edition of

Synapse 4 Synapse so if you do not know

what I am talking about you should check out the articles about it. It is a really important that as many people take part as possible.

When I am not working I am hanging out at my house in Lynn Massachusetts (home of the first Unitarian Youth Group ever). My wife Natalie and I have been married for five years and we have a 3 year old son named Lorn. We like going to the ocean, working in our garden and fixing up our really old house. Hopefully I will have a chance to meet you at your congregation, district, or possibly at some continental event. I look forward to seeing you.

Meet Kat Manker-Seale!

I'm the incoming Youth Ministry Associate that works on the Chrysalis Trainings, General Assembly Youth Caucus, and anti-racism and anti-oppression work. Yep, I'm taking over Marissa Gutierrez's job and I'm really excited to work for all of you this year! Hello Readers of Synapse!

Meet Laura Manning!

Hi ya'll! I am one of the new Youth Ministry Associates in the Youth Office. I am a 19 year old queer white womyn from New Orleans. For fun I like to dance, swim, spend time outside when it's pretty, read, and listen to good music. My focuses in the youth office are supporting the YRUU Steering Committee and other leaders in YRUU, planning the Youth Social Justice Training (YSJT), and Youth Council.

AR/AO Support

Together Kat and Laura will be working with anti-racism and anti-oppression programming for UU youth. We are both really excited to support youth all over the continent in beginning and continuing anti-racism work and racial identity development. Kat will also specifically support youth of color in this journey and Laura is here to support white youth. We love to chat! Call us! You can reach Kat at (617)-948-4351 and Laura at (617)-948-4353.

Meet Rek Kwawer!

Hi, I'm Rek Kwawer, your Youth Office Assistant. I handle many of the day-to-day administrative tasks at the Youth

Summer 2006



Office. I answer the phones, and the yruu@uua.org email address, help register people for events, handle the details of the Youth Office finances, and work with the wonderful Youth Office Volunteers! When I'm not at the Youth Office, I enjoy cooking vegan food, going to bed early, and taking classes in improvisational dance and Spanish.

Meet Zoe Engberg!

Hey everyone! I'm the Summer 2006 *Synapse* intern. My job, which is now ending with the completion of this issue, was to lay out the magazine that you are about to read, as well as do other random tasks around the Youth Office. When I'm not working I like to explore and discover new places, eat food and food-like things, make big messes that I don't have to clean up and discover new and interesting textures.

District Gatherings on Youth Ministry.

As part of the Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth, youth and adults in every district are coming together during the 2006-2007 year to talk about how to strengthen support for and ministry with youth throughout the district – at the local and district levels. You can expect visioning, celebration, problem-solving, and FUN. Everyone's voice is essential to building a shared vision for the future of youth ministry!

2006

11/3-5 Thomas Jefferson District
11/10-12 Mountain Desert District
11/18 Ballou Channing District

2007

1/6 Clara Barton District
1/12-14 St. Lawrence District
2/2-4 Southwest District
2/10 Pacific Central District
2/10 Florida District
2/16-18 Pacific Northwest District
2/24 Ohio Meadville District
3/23-25 Pacific Northwest District
4/13-15 Prairie Star District
4/13-15 Central Midwest District
4/27-29 Joseph Priestley District
4/27-29 Pacific Southwest District
5/4-6 Mid-South District
5/4-6 Metro New York District
5/11-13 Heartland District
5/12 Massachusetts Bay District
5/19 NH/VT and Northeast Districts



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.

Send submissions to:
Synapse Editor
UUA Youth Office
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108

The next issue's theme is
Community Building!

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



Goodbye to the Youth Office

Hola, amigos!

As I type this to you all, I am sitting in the middle of Mexico City, which according to 2000 statistics, has a population of about 8,605,239.* Making it the 10th largest city in the world, right after Beijing....it's pretty amazing. It's actually the second largest urban agglomeration in the world, with 19,013,000, surpassed only by Tokyo, Japan (with 35,327,000).** Wow!

"Why am I telling you this," you're probably wondering. If there's one thing I want to leave YRUU with, it's perspective. There are a LOT of people in this world. Although this sounds obvious, I think we often forget this, as we get tangled in our own lives: wrapped up in the challenges and opportunities that are presented to us, I know I do this. But, one of the many things I have learned while working in the Youth Office is that we really are an inter-connected web of life. We are constantly learning and growing from each other, every single day.

One of my favorite examples of this was my work with the Chrysalis Training Program (which you should all become a part of...this year the Youth Office will be accepting applications for Leadership Development and Groundwork: Anti-Racism Trainers!). I helped coordinate trainings for districts I will never visit and for folks I will never have the chance to meet. But I know that they are doing good GRASSROOTS work. This is important to mention, because it's from the roots--youth training other youth, who in turn teach others, and so forth. Imagine how many people receive trainings each year! We all learn and grow from one another...we are all a part of one huge chain, thus we must always remember to fight for the justice of those within our chain.

I hope that you will continue doing good work in your own communities and also remember to stand in solidarity with people whom you will never meet, in places you may never visit. Whether it is helping folks in Darfur (www.savedarfur.org), fighting against sweatshops in the Dominican Republic (www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org) or demanding that Mexico City gas station attendants get a salary (www.fatmexico.org)!

In closing, I will miss the Youth Office and it will always hold a special place in my heart. Make sure you give Kat Manker-Seale an e-mail now and then (kmankerseale@uua.org)...she and the rest of the team are pretty amazing. May you grow as much and even more than I have and may you always stand up for what you believe in, with as much passion as possible.

Life continues on.....what are you going to do with yours?

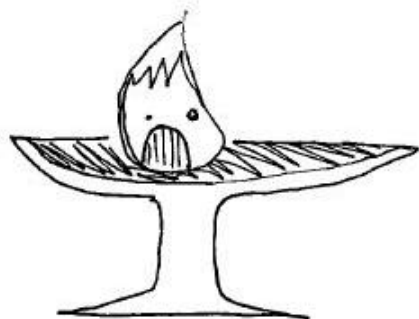
*Wikipedia.org

**Infoplease.com

Adios,

Marissa A. Gutiérrez

2005-2006 Youth Ministry Associate





Goodbye to the Youth Office

What a year this has been, I am so honored to have had the chance to work in the Youth Office and work with so many truly amazing, talented, inspiring and awesome young people.

This has been of those experiences you never forget. Through out this year I have learned more about the importance of social justice, spirituality, anti-racism, classism, and of course, youth empowerment!

What can I say? To the youth I have met, please continue to stay fabulous and continue to be agents of change in a world that definitely needs a lot of big changes. Please don't give up your passion and the truth of your words and feelings.

To the youth of color who have blessed me with their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and hearts, thank you for everything. The wisdom you

hold is more than I will ever know, keep up the struggle and stay strong, you are worth it. Stay close to your community, support and love one another, learn as much as you can about who you are and the oppressions you will face, know that you do not fight alone but you have other friends of color and white allies to support you.

To the young white allies I met this year. You turned things I saw as fact into fiction and fears into hopes. Watching many of you blossom from youth who didn't understand the importance of anti-racism to young people who have made anti-racism a part of your life, has been so inspiring. Stay strong and keep up the fight, you have and will continue to change the way the people around you see world.

And to YRUU as an organization, an experience, and a family, I want to say thank you. Never have I ever worked a job that has brought me to know the map of my own heart. YRUU has changed my life, it brought me a sense of self-confidence I never thought I would ever believe I could have, it has brought me friends and introduced me to people I call my 'chosen family', it has brought me mentors, free education, free life lessons, and more love and support I could've ever imagined.

Again, thank you and good bye.

Stay Safe, Stay Focused, and Maintain...

Love

Jooyoung Choi

“Never have I ever worked a job that has brought me to know the map of my own heart.”

Co-facilitation with Youth: Ways to Involve Youth in Program Leadership

By Jesse Jaeger

The standard model for facilitating a curriculum-based program is adult leadership with children or youth as participants. This model suits the needs of grade school children who find active participation in a program challenging and satisfying. In adolescence, however, youth are motivated by increased complexity and responsibility. Their investment in programs often increases when they are involved in leadership. Participating in program leadership is a great way to empower youth to start taking a more leading role in their faith development. It helps them build skills that will serve them well in the future, as they become leaders in their youth program as well as in their congregations.

There are many different ways to involve youth in co-facilitation. The spectrum of involvement ranges from contributing input about programs to co-leading an entire program. Youth vary in their interest and readiness for leadership responsibilities. While age is often a factor in leadership readiness, there is wide variation between youth. Although junior-high youth generally need more support than senior-high youth, there may be junior-high youth who are ready to engage with co-facilitation and some senior-high youth who are not. It is important to assess each youth to determine what level of leadership involvement is best. Here are a few co-facilitation models that you can think about employing. Of course, these are just suggestions-use your creativity in implementation!

Lead an Activity: For many youth this is probably the best place to start. Leading an activity can be as simple as asking one of the youth to do the opening or closing reading. It can also be more complex such as preparing and leading an activity. With any of these, support is essential. Like any volunteer, adult or youth, it is important that we set them up for success. If they need to select a reading, show them the back of the UUA hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*, a book collection of readings, or brainstorm with them places that they might find a reading that fits the themes of that day. If they're leading a section of the program, help them plan it out. Offer support. You might even encourage them to practice presenting it with you before hand.

Co-Lead a Session: Leading a program session with an adult co-leader would be the next step. Meet beforehand to review the activities, preparation, materials, timing and who will lead what sections. Again, support is critical. Make sure youth have a firm grasp on what they are doing and help them find the resources they need for success. Youth will become increasingly comfortable leading sessions through experience. Programs with older youth might even get to a point where the adult leaders are there mainly for support and the youth are doing most of the planning and leading.

Co-Lead a Program with an Adult: After experiencing partial leadership, one or two youth may emerge as ready to co-lead the curriculum with an adult for its whole length. A youth co-leader should be treated like any other co-leader: doing the preparation together, meeting regularly and sharing different tasks. Ultimately, however, it is the adult's responsibility to offer support and mentorship to the youth co-leader. Like adults, youth have very busy lives. The difference is that youth are just learning how to balance competing demands. Help them stay on top of things with regular contact and feedback, particularly if they seem to be taking on too much. Notice the many positive things they bring to their leadership role and share these observations with them abundantly.

"Co-facilitation of curriculum is a great way to empower youth to start taking a more leading role in their faith development."



Co-Lead a Program with another Youth:

Seasoned youth leaders may become ready to co-lead a whole RE program for the other youth without adults. While often such youth are usually older and experienced in leading the youth group or teaching Sunday school classes, this is not always the case. Sometimes there are very dynamic youth who are less experienced, but ready for the challenge. It is important not to just hand the youth leaders the program guide and leave them to it. They need an adult to stay in touch with them, give them guidance and help them evaluate how they are doing. That adult walks the fine line of being present enough to truly support the youth leaders, but also being absent enough to provide the youth freedom to truly take on leadership and make the program their own. Youth will undoubtedly have ideas of their own to

bring to the program. Their insights and interpretations can benefit the program for years after those of their youth leadership. Encourage youth program leaders to note their successful innovations of the program so that future groups and their leaders can benefit.

Conclusion: With support and guidance youth can take a larger role in their faith development and religious education. Participating in program leadership empowers youth and nurtures them as engaged and committed, current and future, Unitarian Universalists. Working in collaboration with youth can be highly rewarding and most importantly, it is fun.

Jesse Jaeger is the current Youth Programs Director.

Five Guidelines for Committees with Youth Members

By Michael Ohlrogge

*Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself...*

*You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to
make them like you.*

-Kahlil Gibran

Why Youth on Boards and Committees?

In recent years an increasing number of church boards and committees have been including youth members, observers or representatives. The UUA as well now includes youth members on its Board of Trustees and in many other top positions of national leadership. Why this growing trend in youth representation throughout

Unitarian Universalism? The reasons are many.

Youth empowerment, along with the high quality training available to youth leaders, has led youth to seek active involvement not only in youth programming but in the wider world of Unitarian Universalism as well. Furthermore, many UUs, inspired by commitments to justice and equality, are coming to see full representation of youth as yet another way to live out their ideals of a just and diverse community. Unlike in a corporation, the work that happens on a church board/committee is spiritual work. Having a youth presence in such a group helps create an intergenerational community that fosters the spiritual experiences and growth of all involved.

Perhaps most importantly of all though, the visions and voices of youth are essential to the very survival of Unitarian Universalism itself.

Charles Darwin taught that what does not adapt to changing conditions will surely become extinct. Modern society and culture are changing rapidly these days and religions that do not adapt are bound to be left by the wayside. Because youth are some of the people most attuned to these cultural and societal changes, their participation means far more than merely ensuring a stable status quo by teaching future leaders how to do things just as they are done now. Youth participation means boldly reaching into the future to find the vision for the church



of tomorrow whose construction must start today.
Youth Presence Alone is Not Enough

While people may bring many hopes and dreams to the beginning of the relationship between a church board or committee and that church's youth, these hopes and dreams might not all necessarily be realized simply by having a youth dutifully attend each meeting. The following five guidelines are designed to guide church boards and committees in making the most out of intergenerational church work.

#1 Equality: This is the most fundamental requirement: if a board or committee wants its youth member(s) to take their commitment seriously, the youth themselves must be taken seriously. Imagine being on a board or committee yourself, devoting lots of your time and energy to that group and then ultimately not having a voice in the decisions that the body makes. If your state does not allow youth to be voting members, the opinion of the youth on each vote should at least be recorded in the official minutes and voting members should pay careful attention to the youth's positions.

#2 Training and Mentorship: While any leader on a board or committee should optimally receive training to help them perform their duties to the best of their abilities, this is especially true for youth members. This includes helping youth learn the basics of how decisions get made and discussions get regulated, as well as the specific knowledge and skills needed to effectively serve on the particular church body.

Having a person on the committee who is already experienced with youth work and youth empowerment who can be a mentor to the youth can be tremendously valuable in this process. In addition to providing any extra information the youth might need, such a mentor can regularly check in with the youth as to how their experience on the board/committee is going. From here, the mentor can work with the youth to find ways to improve the quality of their experience on the board/committee and act as

an ally and advocate for the youth. Accordingly, competency in ministry with youth should be one of the key qualifications nominating committees look for in adults when selecting members for boards and committees.

#3 Group Commitment: Having a youth on the board/committee is only one step amongst many for a group that wants to become truly allied with youth. What does this mean?

"Perhaps most importantly of all though, the visions and voices of youth are essential to the very survival of Unitarian Universalism itself."

First of all, while the youth member might be "the expert" on youth affairs, this does not mean that they should bear the unreasonable burden of being the only person expected to raise issues,

concerns or ideas relating to youth and youth ministry. It should be every person's responsibility to raise the question of how the actions of the board or committee can best serve youth and UU youth ministry.

Secondly, some committees and especially boards may believe that the work they do is apt to be boring or uninteresting to youth. Certainly, some issues may be more interesting to youth than others and this will vary from youth to youth. Boards with strong commitments to youth and to issues which are of concern and interest to youth have a remarkable tendency to be much more interesting for youth to participate in. Consider these questions that a church board might ask itself:

- 1) Is the health and vitality of the church's ministry with youth an active concern of the board or does this seem largely irrelevant to its business?
- 2) Does the church have a progressive, future oriented vision, striving to create new and innovative ministries to meet the changing needs of culture and society?
- 3) Is the board concerned that all of its affairs and those of the congregation live up to UU values of justice and right relations? Is being a liberating presence in the world important to the board and the congregation as a whole or is this expected to be the sole responsibility of the church's social justice committee?

It may not be coincidence that



many of the things youth are apt to find most interesting have also been identified by experts as hallmarks of flourishing congregations. Furthermore, when youth develop a strong sense of investment in a congregation and when their participation is fostered in ways such as are outlined in this pamphlet, even seemingly mundane issues can become considerably more engaging.

#4 Seek and Celebrate Contributions: Seek out the particular skills, abilities and areas of expertise of the youth on the board and find ways the board/committee can benefit from those gifts.

Once again, this is something which should happen with every member but it's particularly important for youth. Youth programming and training provide youth with amazing skills, knowledge and experiences that most any UU group could benefit from. Youth are often quite knowledgeable concerning group building and group dynamics, anti-racist and anti-oppressive analysis, fun "energy breaks" and much more. Be proactive! Seek out the unique ways the youth member(s) can contribute to the board or committee. Celebrate and express appreciation for these contributions.

#5 Pay Attention to Process: Who's talking and who's not? Despite the very best efforts and intentions of a board/committee to be welcoming to its youth member(s), the position of youth in this situation can still feel strange and sometimes intimidating. Pay attention to whether or not the youth is getting a chance to express their thoughts and feelings and if not, look into what the group can do to create a more welcoming environment. Special care may need to be taken to ask the youth for their thoughts or to simply provide more silence and open space for the youth and any other less vocal members to voice their thoughts on their own.

Also, many UU meetings end with

a "check-out" in which those present in the meeting can each briefly share their thoughts and feelings about how the meeting went. This practice is excellent particularly for work with youth because it provides a space to hear and identify any additional issues which, when addressed, could further enhance the experience of youth working on a church committee or board.

For more information on making youth a vibrant part of your congregation's life, contact the UUA Youth Office at (617) 948-4350 or yruu@uua.org

My Little Bird

By Carly Gayle

My little bird, she was a parakeet.
So happy like a kid at Christmas,
So soft, so eager, she brought me joy, she loved me.
My little bird, she didn't know what would happen to her soon.
One day my little bird got sick. I thought it was
A cold (they get them all the time) so I was not too scared.
But then it got worse. She wouldn't eat,
She shivered, she lost her spark.
My little bird, she didn't know what was about to happen.
Right then my little bird was very sick.
She couldn't move at all. So scared,
Like a criminal whose fate was about to be decided
And there wasn't a good chance.
Unlike a criminal, she did not deserve her fate.
At the emergency vet they were sympathetic,
But there was not a thing they could do for her.
My little bird, she didn't know what was happening.
That night, my little bird, I held her in the dark,
Paralyzed, about to go and leave this world forever.
She screamed a scream of pain, loneliness, longing,
And despair, and she went limp.
My little bird, she didn't know what had happened.
I couldn't think. My little bird, so soft, so eager
Who brought me joy, who loved me,
Was no more here but somewhere else I didn't know.
I cried for all the time we would not,
Could not spend together anymore.
She is gone, but not where it counts.
I search my memories and there she is.
I see her and her love and I smile.
Her tiny heart still beats strong inside mine, my little bird.



What Does It Mean To Be Hot?

By Claudia Kern, Chair
UUMFE Board of Directors

It's getting hot in here! What does it mean to you to be living on a warming planet? This is a question that UUs across the country have been considering as they have studied both the science and the moral implications of global warming for the past two years. The Study Action Issue, "The Threat of Global Warming" was adopted at GA 2004 when UU youth agreed to move their support from a proposed SAI on extinction of species to the proposed SAI on Global Warming.

Two years later, UUs across the country are completing work in their congregations to create the most powerful faith statement on global warming that any religious group has yet articulated. Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth (formerly the Seventh Principle Project) encourages YRUUs to participate fully in this process both in your congregations prior to the March 1 deadline for submitting congregational comments and at General Assembly this year.

Global warming is about your future. As the future leaders of our faith, what can you do to create a sustainable planet?

- * Download the draft UUA Statement of Conscience (<http://www.uua.org/csw/>) and read it, and the UU Ministry for Earth response and alternative (<http://uuministryforearth.org/globalwarming/SOC.pdf>) . Watch for the final Commission on Social Witness draft that will be amended and voted upon at GA, and be prepared to participate in both processes.

- * Sign on to the UUMFE Global Warming list serv to share your opinions, ask questions, and offer ideas (<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/globalwarming>).

- * Blog with leaders of the youth climate and energy movement at <http://itsgetting-hotinhere.org/>

- * Check out the Campus Climate Challenge at <http://www.energyaction.net/main/>.

- * Join UUA President Bill Sinkford on his cybermarch to Stop Global Warming by signing on under his name at

http://www.stopglobalwarming.org/sgw_marcher.asp?18763

- * Get to know UU Ministry for Earth. Join us with a special student membership or simply let us hear from you about how you see your relationship with this living system we call Earth. You can visit the website at <http://uuministryforearth.org/> or call 301-588-0944

We are working to build a sustainable and just future for all life on Earth, but we need you.



Katrinaid Coffee House

By Sam Bryson-Brockmann and
Will Stevens

The coffeehouse is a fundraiser that the Unitarian Universalist Youth on Long Island have used for a number of years. The most recent, Katrinaid, raised \$2,000 for the UUA UUSC Gulf Coast Relief Fund and was run by Yuuth from the South Nassau UU Congregation in Freeport, NY. This amount was doubled to \$4,000 by the goodwill of the Shelter Rock UU Congregation in Manhasset, NY.

The youth coffeehouse is an organization of a number of bands that donate their time and music to create a benefit concert; in our case we had six bands including ours. The concert is held

at a UU Congregation, a cover charge is collected and beverages and snacks are offered. My friend Will and I contact the bands and organize the event. We also advertise and collect the donations from other UU Congregations around Long Island, New York, as well as the community around us. We hope to have many more coffeehouses; I love music and I love helping people. This goes to show how empowered youth can accomplish anything they put their minds to. Mixing your passion with fundraising can be a big success. In our case we chose mixing music with

a great cause, and Will and I were able to achieve our goal. Never underestimate the power of yourselves, empowered youth.

“Mixing your
passion with
fundraising can be a
big success.”

*Sam Bryson-Brockmann and Will Stevens are
two youth from South Nassau Unitarian
Universalist Congregation in Freeport, NY.*



Her Disappearing Daughter

This German folktale was the Story for All Ages at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockford, Illinois, on February 5, 2006, and an integral part of the following sermon.

There once was a woman whose partner died, and left her with their daughter to raise alone. She feared for her family, of course - she wanted nothing more than to provide for her daughter's future, so she was constantly working, planning for the day when her family would have everything she wanted it to have. As early summer came, she took her daughter and a number of baskets to a strawberry patch in the woods to gather berries to eat and sell as she did every year. That summer, the clearing was filled with berries - big, red, ripe, juicy strawberries with a smell so wonderful that they could barely stand it.

They picked all the berries they could, setting them gently into their baskets, and then putting the full baskets at the edge of the clearing. When they turned back, they saw more ripe berries everywhere. It didn't look as though they had picked a single one. They walked toward the center of the patch, looking around in confusion, and found a hole in the ground filled with gold and jewels. A voice, strong like the wind and soft like leaves rustling, said, "For many years now, you have gathered the berries you needed without harming this place. Take what you can of this treasure in three handfuls, but no more, lest you lose some other precious thing."

The mother held her skirt into a basket, and grabbed three handfuls of gold and jewels. Just as she dumped the last handful into her skirt, she saw a ruby larger than the largest strawberry she'd ever seen: deepest red, and shining with

light in way that makes it look like it is full of delicious strawberry juice. She knew that if she took that one stone, she would have all the money she needed and would someday have the life she dreamed of for her daughter and herself. She couldn't imagine what else she had that would be worth enough for anyone to take it from her in exchange.

She took the ruby.

At that moment, there was a flash of light and a thunderclap. The hole in the ground vanished, and three faeries appeared as her daughter disappeared. With one voice, the faeries said, "Because you have stolen the heart of our treasure, we will keep your daughter, the heart of your family, with us. Return here at midsummer, and perhaps your daughter may return to you." Then the faeries disappeared, too, and the strawberry patch was the same as it had always been.

The mother, of course, was distraught - crying and wailing and wondering what she would do. She returned home, sorrowful, understanding that without her daughter, she has no family and all her efforts had been wasted. At midsummer, just a few weeks later, she returned to the patch with all the treasure she had taken and poured it out into the middle of the patch. She waited and waited, but nothing happened. As she stood to go home, she heard a voice behind her say, "Mama?"

She turned to see her daughter surrounded by treasure, but she ignored all the glitter and sparkle, instead running to her daughter, scooping her up into a hug. When they were finally able to let each other go, they saw that the treasure was gone, but that there was a basketful of strawberries with a bow on it at the edge of the clearing.

They left with the basket, and came to find that the basket was always full of big, ripe, red, juicy strawberries, even in the middle of winter, and that the smell always filled their home. And, sometimes, just when they needed it most, a beautiful ruby would appear among the berries.



Youth Ministry Award Winner: The Church of the Present By Rev Adam Robersmith

In early 2006, the UUA's Task Force on Ministry to and with Youth sponsored two Youth Ministry Awards - one for youth and one for adults. The youth winner was Miles Howard from Winchester, MA, whose documentary about his youth group's work in New Orleans (obviously) could not be printed here! The winner of the adult award was Rev. Adam Robersmith, who currently serves the UU Society of Geneva, IL. The following is his award-winning sermon.

Can you imagine a ruby, so large and luminous that it looks to be filled with clear, crimson, strawberry-flavored light? Can you imagine the mother's dilemma, knowing that taking it is wrong, but that having it would be one more assurance that the future could be alright? Can you imagine losing what is most precious to you because you were so fixed on the future that you forgot that you had a present, a now to value?

This mother and her disappearing daughter are not so different from many of us. It is easy to say, "When I have that new job, everything will be fine." "When I pay off my debt, then life will be simple." "When I make that change, get to that other place..."

I think we humans are like that in our congregations as well: "When we reach our membership goals, then we'll be OK." "When we raise enough in the pledge drive..." "When we bring in enough diversity..." "When we have made it through our search and have found a new minister..." "When

we get to this next stage in our long-term plan, then everything will be fine."

I wonder though, what is it - who is it - that disappears while we are reaching for the ruby? What do we lose - who do we lose - while we wait for the future to arrive?

We cannot live in the future. Tomorrow's dinner won't satisfy tonight's hunger. Providing for your family's future doesn't matter if your family disappears today. Just when this woman has enough treasure in her skirt to provide for her family for the rest of their lives, she forgets the daughter for whom she struggles in favor of an ever grander dream.

It's a good dream - there is no doubt about that. For those of us who have experienced poverty, a dream of overwhelming abundance is understandable. You can hardly blame someone for trying to make it happen; but what is lost can be even more valuable than what might be gained. Here, a mother loses her family, her daughter, the most precious thing in her life.

Like the woman in the story, we too must look to our future - we are always preparing for the people who will someday come to our sanctuaries and for a world that needs us. I encourage us all to do that work with an eye to strengthening our congregations in this moment. I encourage us all to think about the process of growth and change as work that can embrace possibility and build community.

In *Belonging*, a study of membership, the UUA Commission on Appraisal writes:

"Magic cannot create the warm fuzzy ideal that most people associate with community. Real community can only be built through hard and unglamorous work. Like any effective relationship, it requires commitment. Only by making a commitment to a community can we hope to build a community.

In this time of change and opportunity, I encour-



age us all to build communities that have no disappearing daughters.

* * *

Recently, I was speaking with my mother, an Episcopalian, and she told me that she had attended a youth event in her denomination as a support person. Bishop Scantlebury of the Chicago Diocese was there, and spoke to the youth gathered from all over the region. He said,

"Never let anyone tell you that you are the church of the future. You are not. You are the church of the present. You are the church, here and now."

...our children, our youth, and all our adults must attend the same church, must be a part of one congregation.

You are the church of the present. You are the church, here and now. What an important idea! What an important thing for everyone to hear, and especially for our young Unitarian Universalists to understand.

I remember when I was young, and heard people saying things like, "You are the future." I remember thinking to myself, "What? I'm not here right now? Didn't I just do the dishes? Didn't you notice me in Sunday School? I don't matter yet?"

It strikes me that this is one of the ways our own children disappear while we reach for a ruby. We need our youth to be an integral part of our congregations. We need our children to understand that they, too, are the church. They, too, are the community. We need to tell them that they matter now. That their energy and wisdom and experience is needed in the present.

I want our eldest Unitarian Universalists to hear this as well. You are the church of the present. You matter now. You, too, need to know that your energy and wisdom and experience is needed in the present.

In times of transition, strengthening the whole of the community - from youngest to eldest - cannot help but make the coming path clearer and easier to travel. I believe, in order to strengthen the whole of the community, that our children, our youth, and all our adults must attend the same church, must be a part of one congregation.

If the experience of the children and youth is deeply segregated from the experience of the adults, if the presence and voices of our young people are lost to everyone else, then we have no church. If we do not teach all our members, of all ages, why the child and youth experience matters, then we tell the children and the youth that they are irrelevant.

If we do not teach all our members, of all ages, why our traditional Sunday worship has value by including them in our services, then we tell our children and youth that worship is irrelevant.

In order to be the church of the present, the congregation that is growing strong and healthy now, we must find ways to bring all people in the congregation into relationship with each other.

Logan Harris, a youth leader in our movement, writes:

"The youth that I talked to all felt passionately that there were just some things a youth group has to do to be strong. One of these is to be active in the congregation."

She goes on to speak of creating intergenerational worship that includes the younger members of the church, particularly the youth in the planning and leading of the services. She suggests placing a bulletin board of youth events in the main hall of the church, so everyone can see what is happening, or encouraging youth to join committees, fundraisers, and social action events.

What is a youth group without these active con-



nections to a congregation? How will our young people understand the value of our worship, our institutions, without experiencing them?

Our Commission on Appraisal recognized this problem in Belonging:

"All too often our congregations are not successful at engaging our [children, youth, and young adults] in the life of the larger congregational community. We fail ourselves as well as our younger UUs when we overlook their contributions and their unique needs."

I find it interesting that a sentence earlier in the same paragraph said: "Youth and young adults present unique and important opportunities for they are the future of our movement." In truth, we do not know the future of our movement, and who it may include. The children, youth, and young adults are the church, now. We are, all together, our movement. Now.

When we bring children and youth into the work of the church in social justice, leading and planning worship, and other forms of service - including committee work - we honor our community. When we encourage all our adults to take an interest in the education and spiritual growth of our children, we honor them and their place in our congregations. When we bring our elders in as mentors and learners, when we build a community of all of us, we are the church of the present.

When we segregate the contributions and value of people by when we think they will be able to be of use, we have failed to value their worth and dignity. We have failed to see them as whole people. We have failed to live out our covenant.

* * *

I believe that, in order to be and to strengthen the church of the present, we need to value,

educate, and integrate all the members of our congregations across the whole spectrum of ages, the whole of life.

The director of Lifespan Religious Development for the UUA, Judith Frediani, writes:

"What would a congregation engaged in lifespan religious growth and learning look like? It would be the ultimate committee of the whole: a community in which everyone is seen as teacher and learner; in which every age and stage of life is equally valued and equally supported by whatever tangible and intangible resources it has to offer; a community in which no decision is made about the life of the community-whether in the areas of worship, physical plant, fundraising, budgeting, social action, the arts, education, or any other-without consideration of its impact on and opportunities for every member of the community."

What a wonderful dream - that Unitarian Universalist congregations could be places of radical acceptance and deep valuing of everyone within the congregational community...and I would dream also that living that life, that faithful, religious life, would move beyond the bounds of congregational community and into our everyday worlds, at work, play, politics, school, the grocery store.

This dream, though, is not some ruby-hued temptation for the future, some impossible gift from the faeries that we must wait to have dropped upon us. This dream is one that we can work to create now. This vision of our congregations is one path to strengthening the church of the present so that we can meet the future united in our covenant and community.

You, in this room, this sanctuary, right now, are the church of the present

In her essay, "Religion as Relationship," the Rev. Patricia Hoerdt writes: "Unitarian Universalists covenant together. It is our voluntary agreement with each other; it is our freedom to promise mutuality. It is our pledge to respect



"individual religious rights" and it is a commitment to action. Our covenant is a pledge to bond together to pursue common goals.

Fundamentally, our religious growth and learning need to be concerned with relationships: our relationship to each other, to our living faith tradition, to the world we live in, to all of being. We need to offer experiences of belonging and a sense of purpose to those who believe and participate in our communities and educational programs that build these vital relationships."

In the end, that's really what all of this is about. Relationship. Deciding which relationships you value and how you will express that. Our relationships with that-which-is-larger than ourselves - whether that be humanity, nature, love, the Holy, Deity - are only one part of a deep religious life. Our relationships with each other and the world around us are other important parts of a deep religious life. All are necessary in order to live out our covenant.

* * *

You, in this room, this sanctuary, right now, are the church of the present. Those people who cannot be with us today because of illness, infirmity, or circumstance are the church of the present. Those who are elsewhere within this building, in classes or conversations, are the church of the present.

As you consider where you may be going in your congregations, what paths lie ahead of you, what the future may bring, remember that everything about the future can change faster than you can blink. What you can do is strengthen your communities in the here and now - consider what is coming and plan for it as best you can, but live in the present moment. Value everyone who is here, because each person matters right now. You need not have any disappearing daughters.

When we bring our children, our youth, our young adults, our mid-life adults, and our elders



*Clips from "With Our Eyes Shut",
Miles Howard's award winning
documentary*

all into one community, one body of faith, we embody the hopes and dreams of many, many people who have gone on before us. We become a religious community bound not by fear or doctrine, but by love. We become a place that can support each person in their quest for meaning and truth.

We no longer wait for our young people to become the church of the future.

We all become the church of the present.

May it be so.

*Delivered to the Unitarian Universalist
Church of Rockford, Illinois, on February 5th
2006*

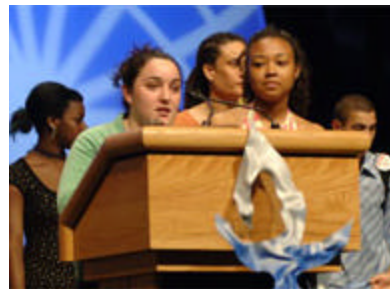
A Responsive Resolution on Racism and Classism

By Zoe Engberg

On June 25, 2006 at General Assembly a responsive resolution on racism and classism was passed. The resolution stated, "Resolved, that the Delegates to General Assembly are charged to work with their congregations to hold at least one program over the next year to address racism or classism, and to report on that program at next year's General Assembly." The resolution was not on the GA agenda, but was written by a GA delegate, offered as a responsive resolution and supported by over 600 congregations. It was passed in response to a report of the Special Review Commission appointed to review the events surrounding the 2005 GA in Fort Worth, as well as reports presented by officers at the 2006 GA. These
Summer 2006

reports concerned events at both General Assemblies that affected People, and especially Youth of Color within our UU community.

During plenary on Sunday, June 25, Gini Courter, the UUA Moderator, yielded her speaking time to two youth, saying "I rose to talk about some instances of privilege and power, and following that conversation our Youth and Young Adults of Color and their allies wanted to bring a list of what they would like me to tell you. I realized they needed to have their own voices, because they are delegates, and they are a part of our Assembly, part of our community." She then introduced UUA Trustee-At-Large Julian Sharp, who encouraged the delegates to listen to the youth speakers, who he then presented. Hannah Eller-Isaacs and Zarinah Ali spoke of how they felt that youth had been disrespected and labeled as troublemakers within the community. Youth felt that their voices were not heard and that their work with anti-racism was not taken seriously. They said that there was not support for anti-racism programming, and that GA volunteers had been patronizing and demeaning to Youth of Color. Courter then resumed the podium, and commented that there has never been a Study/Action Issue or Statement of Conscience that said that we needed to study racism in our



congregations. She commented that this issue seems to be something that we find difficult.

The responsive resolution calls on congregations to address racism and classism within their communities. The UUA and YRUU have a variety of resources that congregations can use to follow through on this resolution. For a detailed list, you can go to the website that the UUA has set up specifically for this resolution - <http://www.uua.org/actions/responsive/06racism/>. One of these resources is an Anti-Racism Movie Guide, complete with movie titles and discussion questions. An excerpt of the guide can be found on the next page. For the complete version, contact the Youth Office or go to the website above.



SLAM

Taken from the YRUU Anti-Racism Movie Guide

Overview/Description:

"SLAM" portrays the experience of a young African American man caught in the Washington, DC correctional system. Set in a real prison, using real convicts as supporting cast, "SLAM" explores the institutional, cultural and internalized aspects of racism in a current urban African American community. "SLAM" also explores the use of poetry as a way towards liberation through consciousness and community building.

Things to think about:

Think about the way the prisoners are treated, and the way they treat each other, why do you think this is? (Keep in mind that most of the actors in the prison are actual inmates)

Also think about the power that words and poetry have.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some examples of institutional racism in this movie? What are some examples of cultural racism in this movie? What are some examples of internalized racism in this movie? How do these examples impact Ray, Lauren, and the communities that they live in?

- In the Civil Rights Movement, white people and African Americans often worked together on systemic issues such as segregation and voting rights. In the Black Power Movement, however, African Americans often asked for a separate space, so that they could work on issues that dealt with internalized racism and rebuilding their communities. How do you feel about this need for people of color to have a separate space to work on internalized issues? How can white people support people of color in their community building? Do white people need to get together and talk about their own issues around racism?

- What implications does this movie have for white anti-racists? Where are the places in this film in which white people who want to make change have the most power to do so? What things could your congregation do to support Ray, Lauren and their community? How would you go about doing this?

- What power did poetry have in the movie, and how did it help Ray through the experience he lived through? How has art helped you survive through difficult times? Can you relate Ray's use of poetry to other situations you've been involved in or know about?

Darfur, STAND, and Community Building

By Anna Bialostosky

I had thought that genocide was a horror of the past before September of 2004, when I heard for the first time about the genocide happening in Darfur, the western region of Sudan. My shock, sadness and anger made me an easy candidate for joining the chapter at my high school, Schenley, of the nationwide student organization Students Taking Action Now: Darfur, or STAND, that my friend Rachel Beck formed. Throughout tenth and eleventh grades, I was a member, guided by Rachel's capable and enthusiastic leadership. Starting in the fall, I will be co-leading STAND with my friends Adrienne Webb and Sophie Date.

Unfortunately a grave need still exists for STAND and other anti-genocide campaigns. The Darfur genocide began in 2003 when a rebel group in Darfur, left out of gains in a peace agreement ending a civil war in the south, captured an airport in protest. Soon, the Janjaweed, militias sponsored by the Arab-run government, began attacking African villagers in Darfur. They kill and rape innocent civilians and burn homes and crops. So far, 400,000 people have died and 2.5 million have been displaced, many of whom have fled to refugee camps in Chad, Sudan's neighbor to the west. However, the refugee camps provide no safe haven; the situation in Chad has declined so much that some people have fled back to Darfur. The international community has taken no significant action to end the genocide. China and Russia refuse to approve any United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a multilateral force to be sent to Darfur because of their interests in Sudanese oil and weapons. Sudan continues to refuse to accept any UN force that might be sent in. The Abuja peace talks in June led to no real amelioration of the problem. In the past

focused its energies primarily on awareness, but this year that must be combined with a strong focus on political activism to directly urge the United States government and the United Nations to take action.

For the upcoming school year, Schenley STAND has quite a few ideas for projects. In past years STAND has used presentations about the genocide in freshman history classes, bake sales, bracelet and t-shirt sales, door-to-door awareness campaigns, letter-writing and a benefit concert at the local JCC (One Night STAND, run by STAND United Pittsburgh). New projects include encouraging attendance at the Darfur march in New York City at the UN on September 17, a Stop Genocide in Darfur poster contest and awareness project, working towards school board or Pittsburgh-wide divestment from Sudan (research is still being done), and an editorial campaign. Sophie, Adrienne, other STAND members, Pittsburgh STAND chapters and I have not yet decided which plans to work on. However, one thing is certain: we need to increase and maintain membership by making Schenley STAND more welcoming to students in different grades and of a variety of backgrounds. Although appealing to the outer community is vital to the mission of STAND, the inner community of the club must be strong in order to accomplish its goals.

"Feeling a connection
with the people working
alongside you is so important
to maintaining a commitment
to a cause."

two years, STAND has
Summer 2006



Building up the STAND community at Schenley will be a challenge. Students are tracked, meaning that you rarely have classes with people outside your level or type of class. As both a magnet school and a neighborhood school, de facto segregation occurs within the tracking system. High-powered tracks are primarily composed of white students while mainstream students are primarily African American. The track-

ing system makes communication between people of different races, different socioeconomic levels and even different grades minimal and difficult. In the first year of STAND, the club membership base was large and relatively diverse; many people had been inspired to take action by the initial presentations that had been given in every history class. By the end of last year, however, only about ten people regularly came to meetings, and all of them were white, higher-tracked juniors and seniors. Why did this happen? Perhaps the shock people felt at learning about Darfur had worn off. Meetings were held during a lunch period, so many people who wanted to come were unable to do so. Finally, the communication between people of different tracks necessary to make STAND a thriving organization was hard to facilitate.

The revitalization of Schenley STAND has been an important issue for Adrienne, Sophie and me. Several logistic solutions seem promising. If meetings are held after school, then people with all lunches will be able to attend. Many students who have shown interest in joining do not have email addresses, so we plan to use a bulletin board at the entrance to school for announcements. We think that other possible remedies may prove to be even more effective, especially for keeping new and current members involved. Although the genocide in Darfur is clearly a crisis that requires serious action and attention, combating it cannot always be done with all its gravity pressing on everyone's hearts. We hope to nurture an environment where having fun is a regular occurrence. As well as discussing the current situation in Sudan and any projects in progress, getting to know other members well and, of course, eating food are a couple things which will become important parts of meetings. Feeling a connection with the people working alongside you is so important to maintaining a commitment to a cause. Lastly, we hope that by giving STAND members leadership positions, they will feel that they are truly helping the people of Darfur. This sense of accomplishment makes the small steps taken when working towards a goal, even one with the enormous magnitude of ending a genocide, seem important.

I know that meeting our goals for STAND in
Synapse 22 this year will be extremely

challenging. Many obstacles will present themselves, but the sense of determination, responsibility and the passion we feel for stopping the genocide in Darfur will help us persevere.

Anna Bialostosky is a senior at Schenley High School and also an active member of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Pittsburgh's youth group, as well as a YAC member in the Ohio-Meadville District.



drawing by Luke Orndorff

Beautiful by Lizzie Schiffman

I once heard a story
About a man who
Cut off his nose
Stuck a chicken bone up there
To save his face.

He's prettier now
He thought they'd say
And faces turned
And voices whispered
And he was.



About Cultural Theft

(or any other name...really)

By Topher West, with Lydia Pelot-Hobbs

I was at a Spirituality Development Conference in the spring of 2003. We were doing an activity on cultural appropriation. We were doing a continuum activity* with cultural appropriation and respectful cultural sharing on the opposite ends of the room. Different actions were read out and we were to move to where in the spectrum we felt the action lied. At some point someone brought up the concern that "the united states kkkongress had an appropriations committee and therefore appropriation wasn't inherently bad."

The person was caught up in the words.

Appropriation is the taking of something and using it as if it is

your own. Some people say cultural appropriation and some say cultural misappropriation. I don't see much of a difference at all.

Non-Indigenous people who wear mohawks or white kids who wear dreadlocks are stealing pieces of a different history, culture, struggle and taking it as their own. Cultural misappropriation also occurs during worship, when quoting authors, books or using songs without giving the creator credit or the piece context. You can name it cultural theft, cultural appropriation, misappropriation or cultural imperialism because the words reflect the same racist dynamic of domination, false sense of entitlement, and true ignorance.

Institutional racism creates power relationships

along assigned racial lines giving power and privileges to white people. In a society that is built on white supremacy, white folx stealing from other cultures lifts up white people while it pushes down People of Color. The stealing of cultures among People of Color hurts People of Color communities, but it continues to uplift white people. To continue building a movement of resistance, respect for cultures and people must become the normal course of action.

YRUU is struggling to become an open, accountable community.

"Cultural misappropriation... occurs during worship, when quoting authors, books or using songs without giving the creator credit or the piece context."

We must stay rooted in ourselves and the effects of our actions. Our communities are filled by what all we bring with us. What

culture(s) do you come from? How can you/do you celebrate that? How can we share our culture(s) with each other? What are effective ways that you have been challenged about stealing from other cultures? How can you challenge others around you who practice cultural imperialism? The exercise at the Spirituality Development Conference, I believe, was trying to raise these questions; was trying to agitate for accountable worship and lifestyles. Hear the lessons beyond the words- hear the lessons of respect, accountability and social justice!

It is not only in the language that we use, but also in our actions that liberation is found.

It is not always an option to be grounded in our inherited spiritual traditions, but it is always possible not to steal from other's inherited spiritual traditions.

Topher West is a member of the anti-racism trainer organizer collective and Lydia Pelot-Hobbs is a radical student organizer for various groups at Oberlin College. They would like to thank Joo Young Choi and Beth Dana for crucial editing help!

*** Continuum Activity:** an activity in which there is an imaginary continuum line in the room, with one side of the room representing one extreme, the other side representing another extreme. To represent how you feel about a given issue, you can stand closer to one side or the other, or in the middle.



Do It Yourself Chalices

By Beth Dana
Drawings by Joo Young Choi

It has happened to all of us. We're planning a worship service - at a conference, a retreat, a youth group meeting - and there's NO CHALICE! What can you do? Be creative! Here are some ideas for how to create a chalice out of objects you'd typically find around a house or church.

Simple Yet Spiritual:

Arrange votive candles in a circle on an altar. You can also place other sacred objects or stones in the middle of the circle.

The Terra Cotta Flower Pot Chalice:

If you have a flower pot and a flower pot base, you've got a chalice! Turn the flower pot upside down and balance the base on top of it. Put a votive candle in the base. This type of chalice can either be glued together with a glue gun, or kept separate so that it's more portable. Terra cotta flower pot chalices can be personalized by painting or decorating them as you wish! Decorate them to represent your own UU identity. Write words around them like "Truth, Love, Justice."

If you choose not to glue or attach the base to the pot, you can use it during a check-in. Every person takes a turn holding the flame on the base while checking in, passing it around the circle. When everyone is done, the flame goes back on its base in the center of the circle. (Idea thanks to Steve from the reach-I email list for Religious Educators)

The People Chalice:

Got three people? You've got a chalice! Caution: This chalice does not and should not involve fire. It's a very creative solution, however, to this common dilemma.



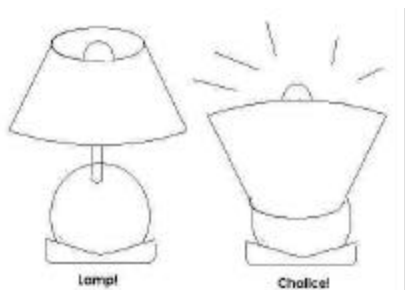
The Kitchen Cupboard Chalice:

All you need is a cup and a bowl. Turn the cup upside down, and place the bowl (right-side up) on top of it. Then place a votive candle in the bowl.

The Gigantic Chalice:

If you like to do things *large scale*, you

can create a chalice out of a bird bath! This can be a spur of the moment solution, or a more long-term chalice for your youth group. Everyone can contribute by painting or drawing something meaningful on it. What a lasting spiritual model of teamwork! (Idea thanks to Nan Moore, DRE in Chatham, MA.)



The Lighting Fixture Chalice:

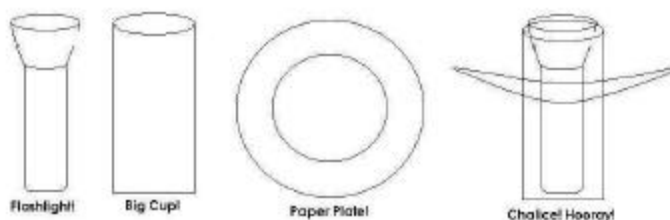
This chalice is extremely simple to create. All you have to do is find a traditional lamp, with a base and a lamp shade, then turn the lamp shade upside down. Let the glow of the light bulb shine like a flame!

The Build-At-Home Altar:

All you need is a chalice table, a chalice pillar, and a chalice top. The chalice table could be a bench, a step stool, or a desk. The chalice pillar could be a vase, a brick, or a block. Top this with a cup or a bowl, and you've got a chalice! Personalize your altar with plants, rocks, or other objects. (Idea thanks to Laurel Burdon, DRE in Brookfield, MA.)

The Camping Gear Chalice:

With a flashlight (the flame), a big cup, and a paper plate you can create a chalice in your own kitchen! Place the flashlight, light shining up, into a big cup. Then cut a circle in the middle of a paper plate just big enough to fit around the outside of the cup



The Lego™ Chalice:

If New York City toy store F.A.O. Schwartz can make a 7-foot tall Empire State Building out of Legos, why not make a chalice? You can make it as simple or as elaborate as you want.

The Tea Party Chalice:

"Once when the roads were covered with ice and too dangerous for us to drive to church, one of my elementary school aged children turned a tea cup upside down and placed a saucer on top and placed a small votive candle on the saucer to serve as our chalice." Learn from the creativity of young children, and create a tea party-themed chalice! Tea cups and saucers come in all sizes, colors and designs, so these chalices can be very unique. (Idea thanks to Josie Rosenthal-Goodman.)

Good luck! And may you never be without a chalice.

*Beth Dana and Joo Young
Choi work in the Youth Office.*

Adventures of a Religious Activist

By Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward

The scene: an "identity development" workshop, earlier this year. Our instructions were to write the words "I am" on the top of a piece of paper, and finish the sentence however we wanted. My crumpled sheet was covered in words (queer, white, womyn, sister, etc.), but I found myself most intrigued by the last two: "Religious" and "Activist". My understanding of these two parts of my identity have (thankfully) become fused, though that wasn't always my experience.

As a college student, I yearned to fill the gap in my life that youth group and district YRUU events had filled during high school. I divided my time (literally, down the middle) as a member of my campus' religious and activist communities. I sang in Catholic mass, organized a small group ministry program, and helped plan an interfaith student retreat. In my "other life", I coordinated activism workshops, wrote heated editorials to the student newspaper, and raised funds to send delegations of students to national political demonstrations. During the week, I was fueled by meeting after meeting, strategizing and debating with others working for justice. On Sundays - if I wasn't too tired by then - I took time to nurture my "inner" being, my spiritual core. Yet I always felt torn between these two communities, these two "parts" of myself.

Most of us are taught to engage in "binary (either/or) thinking". We're told to choose between a mere two options (head vs. heart, male vs. female, us vs. them, etc.) to describe the most complex, fluid aspects of our selves and the world around us. Challenging those binaries is one of the most important - and

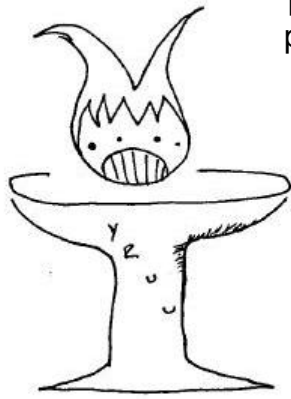
complicated - tasks I can engage in. If I haven't confused enough people by wearing my chalice and cross together on a necklace, I've certainly perplexed others by being a "religious activist" - a person of faith doing social action, and a person of action grounded in spirituality and religious beliefs. Why is this a mystifying concept? It seems unnatural and impossible for me to even think of treating spirituality and social justice as separate concepts.

I'll let you in on a little secret: I got burnt out - really burnt out - during my first few years of doing full-time social justice work. I sort of knew this was happening: friends and family worried about me, more experienced activists cautioned me. I still felt the weight of the world on my shoulders and the never-ending responsibility to do something - In fact, I wanted to do everything, and I rarely took care of myself. (As someone raised as female, I already had a tendency to internalize a lot of self-blame and guilt). It took me a long time, after a lot of anguish, to truly understand that if we don't take care of ourselves, we can't be sustainable in taking care of others.

"I used to think that being an activist - whether religiously/spiritually grounded or not - was only about self-sacrifice. This is a dangerous ideal: dangerous for ourselves, dangerous for others, and even dangerous for those we long to support and stand in solidarity with."

Part of what makes long-term engagement in social justice work challenging is that the very society we live in makes it difficult. So many of us are overworked or overscheduled; we juggle so many commitments and responsibilities that we'll always be neglecting something, whether it's our health, spirit, family, friends, need for fun or need for sleep. (Sleep? What's that? I used to tell people my motto was "I'll sleep when I'm dead" - yikes.) I've heard words like "self-care" get thrown around for years but didn't know what they meant until I had people in my life who





truly showed me; people who balanced their priorities, affirmed and loved themselves, and believed that being an "activist" was just as important as - and intimately connected with - being an artist, a parent, a friend, a lover, and so much more.

I used to think that being an activist - whether religiously/spiritually grounded or not - was only about self-sacrifice. This is a dangerous ideal: dangerous for ourselves, dangerous for others, and even dangerous for those we long to support and stand in solidarity with. Social justice work is about giving and struggling, and often involves challenge and hurt. Yet we cannot create justice without love (including self-love), care, fun, music, joy, play, and yes - sleep.

And there's one more thing that (in my humble opinion) we need in order to work for justice: faith. I'm not suggesting that activists - or anyone for that matter - need to identify as religious, or have a particular spiritual practice. Faith is something that transcends religious institutions or denominations: it is a feeling of trust and hope in something that may not even exist yet.

During an Anti-Racism workshop I once facilitated, I asked participants to respond to the question of whether racial justice work was a matter of "faith". The passionate responses overwhelmed and humbled me, particularly the following: One participant (we'll call him Sean Capaloff-Jones) gave the fervent reply: "Anti-racism work has to be

a matter of spiritual work. To imagine and work toward a world in which justice truly exists is a measure of faith in itself."

Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward served as a YRUU Programs Specialist in the Youth Office from June 2004 - June 2005. She is currently pursuing the newly-established Master of Arts in Religious Leadership for Social Change at Starr King School for the Ministry.

Like what you're reading? Some of the articles in this issue of *Synapse* are compiled from our Fall 2005 Spirituality and Winter 2006 Leadership issues, both published online at <http://www.uua.org/yruu/synapse> Check out more great articles there!

Reflection

By Richard Blissett

The water ripples in the midday sun
Cold, wet sand sparkles under my bare feet
A light breeze colors the day
But even the wind cannot distort my reflection
Even the waves cannot change the body I see in the water
If it is my own
For I do not see me
I see you
As the sun moves through the sky
It reveals the shadows in the water
I can see her too
And I can see them
And even he is there
And soon I realize that it is me
I've only been seeing my colors
You gave me eyes
You said "see"
And I saw
So I wonder if I am me
And I also wonder
When the sun reflects in the water
And the sand makes you feel safe
Do you see me?



God is Love: Spirituality and Social Justice

By Rob Keithan

First and foremost, we're Unitarian Universalists. This, despite our many differences in experience and background, is the one distinct identity that we all share. For this reason, our UU identity needs to be at the forefront of our social justice work, because that is who we are.

Before we move forward, though, we need to look back. As the old saying goes: "it's hard to know where you're going if you don't know where you've been." In particular, we need to understand a little of our theological history, especially as it relates to social justice. Consider the words of Frances David, court preacher to John Sigismund, the Transylvanian king whose 1568 Edict of Toleration made Unitarianism possible.

Arguing that people should be allowed to choose among these faiths, he said, "We need not think alike to love alike." Even now, this is a profoundly radical statement with serious political ramifications.

The founders of modern Unitarianism in the early United States continued this tradition, emphasizing the oneness of creation, and of particular importance the need to interpret the Bible within its social and historical context. In doing so, these early 19th century Unitarians set themselves apart by emphasizing the value of using critical reason and human experience to evaluate religious teaching and tradition. Our social justice work stems directly from this: when you observe the world you see oppression, and your faith is manifest by working to end this oppression. It's the Protestant work ethic, theologically applied to activism.

From our Universalist side, we get a theological imperative that is more spiritual: the doctrine of universal love. The radical idea that God loves all people, and does not condemn people to Hell, forever changed American Protestantism. It's hard to overstate how radical and transformative their message was, especially for someone like John Murray, who was preaching in religiously conservative New England. At that time, most Christians were taught that Hell was a very real--and very likely-possibility, not only for them but for most of the world's population. Only the elect had any chance of getting into heaven. Rejecting this selective, fear-based theology, Murray said, "Give them not Hell, but Hope and Courage."

Let me tell you how this plays out for me. The centerpiece of my religious journey is figuring out exactly who I want to be and then living accordingly. While this may seem entirely individualistic, so much of who I am and how I live is connected to the world around me that I absolute-

"What I've come to realize is that my personal journey - I daresay salvation - is tied deeply to both relationships and societal transformation."

ly must look beyond myself for answers. For example, a major step in figuring out who I want to be is figuring out who I am now. In order to do this, I must look at the people and forces that have shaped me, from

family and friends to institutions and systems. To see how the larger social forces operate, I must do this work in community. Otherwise, I have no way of knowing what's a larger trend, as opposed to something that just affects me. In addition to building relationships with others-which have a great value in their own right-this process necessarily results in seeing a great deal more oppression and suffering than you would otherwise.

What I've come to realize is that my personal journey-I daresay salvation-is tied deeply to both relationships and societal transformation. On the latter point, I've recognized that social forces and structures of oppression have a huge impact on how I live, so I must address them as part of my personal spirituality. Without relationships, this work would be impossible, unfulfilling, and frankly, boring.

I often find myself repeating the words of the Rev. Donna DiSciullo, for-

Summer 2006



merly Director of the Young Adult and Campus Ministry Office, during a Bridging Ceremony at General Assembly. "God is love," she said. "It's a simple theology, but not a simplistic one." The three words "God is Love" are, to me, perhaps the shortest and most profound expression of the connection between spirituality and social justice. These words express both a radical theological belief and set a high standard for ethical living. We may all define God differently, but the implication is still the same: we believe in the power of love, and how we treat each other matters. I seek to live my life accordingly, and I'm grateful that Unitarian Universalism gives me the space and support to do so.

Rob Keithan is Director of UUA Washington Office for Advocacy, and a former YRUU Programs Specialist (1995)

This I Believe, Like a Candle Flame

By Ellen Rockett

When I was in 8th grade, my parents started going to the local Unitarian Universalist church, and I came along. Never having been to a church and not being religious, it was a new experience for me. There are a lot of jokes about UUs, who have no common creed, just 7 principles regarding how we should treat each other fairly. "The UU church is where atheists with kids go." Although we have no common belief other than "the inherent worth and dignity of every person" and the other six principles, the UU church provides a community built from its members' very lack of common creed.

As a youth in the Unitarian Universalist church, I have discovered my spiritual (although not so much my religious) side. I go to weekend-long youth conventions - two hundred teenagers with only their teenagerness and UUism in common, and I find a home in the differences between us. When I see these youth sharing their joys and their concerns with several hundred other people

in a caring, supportive environment, I have hope for the human race. Because these people who stick out like

sore thumbs everywhere else have come together, suddenly they are all sharing in their uniqueness instead of being ostracized for it. Because of them, I have a belief in myself to be different, allowing me to believe in my own choices.

When the weekend is over, I come home to a world where there are walls and people don't share their hearts out. But still believe in my family and my fellow students, who are almost family. When I'm at home, I light candles and sit in the dark - it's very relaxing. Just pondering the night and the wick away. At school I have a lot of people I know, some better than others, some better friends than others. High school is tough. Everyone has different views, and not everyone has learned that the way they express those views can hurt other people. But what gets me through each day is my belief I feel through the warm dark and the flame that I lit the night before. This I believe, that if my race of fellow teenagers pooled their love and care like the warm puddle of light from a candle flame, we could commit miracles.

With this to warm me, I can feel the primary principle that I believe in. It doesn't matter if there is a supreme being, it doesn't matter if there is only a supreme physics equation determining our universe. Either is equally possible, but in the belief that I hold, neither matters here and now. I can make the world better if I just believe in my fellow humans, their "inherent worth and dignity" that guarantees them all rights and respect, no matter how far-out-there they are. And I know some pretty far-out-there people.

*Ellen Rockett is on the Web at
www.rockettium.net*



"This I believe: that if my race of fellow teenagers pooled their love and care like the warm puddle of light from a candle flame, we could commit miracles."

The Religion That Caught My Eye

By Thomas Rylett

Many people have their different places outside of home and school where they can go and learn life skills, connect to others like them, and have a grand old time in general. I found a place for myself in Young Religious Unitarian Universalism (YRUU), the youth body of Unitarian Universalism.

A Very, Very Brief History of Unitarian Universalism: Unitarian Universalism is an interesting religion. Its main symbol today is a Chalice, which can be just a lit candle or lamp in a bowl. Before the 60's Unitarian Universalism was two separate Christian faiths. Today it is a liberal faith based on many sources including Jewish and Christian traditions and other world religions. Unitarianism was not a powerful force in Christianity since neither Catholics nor Protestants were sympathetic to it. Unitarianism rejected the Trinity of God and did not view Jesus as divine. Therefore Unitarians were burned at the stake along with witches and homosexuals. Universalism held the view that God was merciful and would not send anyone to hell-that all people would be redeemed. Neither of these religions were particularity strong in Europe. Unitarianism was strong in England and Transylvania and both religions took off upon reaching the New World. The Unitarian faith became quite large in the United States, with members such as Thomas Jefferson. It's a bit of an oddball religion and, in the 60's with the fusion of the two faiths, began to move away from its roots to try and create new traditions.

How I Got Started: My connection with Unitarianism started in 1999 when my parents, both architects, were hired to build the new

Unitarian church in Mississauga. When I first started with the Unitarian 'Sunday School', we took part in a sexual health/drug education program. I really learned a lot, and they didn't use tacky videos in unrealistic situations.

When I entered Grade 9 at school I also entered the most life-changing organization I have experienced, Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU). Within a few months of beginning, my church in Mississauga hosted a mini-con (a one night youth conference) and I was hooked for the rest of my life.

At high school I felt out of place, having come from a liberal alternative middle-school of 60 kids, to a school of 2,000, but in the YRUU community I felt safe immediately. At the Mini-con I was standing outside the door of my church and a guy in a cloak walked up and greeted me. It was a bit scary, quite new, but hey it was cool. A few weekends later, I found myself going to a conference in Ottawa by VIA rail. When I walked into the UU church in Ottawa, I had my arms pinned behind my back and a V drawn on my forehead with red and black sharpies. At first I was shocked and I didn't know what to do and I looked around. Others looked back at me with sharpie marks on their faces and then I found out that the 'V' was for

"The sheer range of different activities that worship encompasses means that it can't be put completely into words other than to say it's about community, sharing and love."

Con-Virgin (i.e., my first official youth conference). I suppose that means that by now I am a slut. With all of this I felt like I had come home.

"No, We're Not a Cult": Since I am very enthusiastic about this part of my life I tell many people about it, and inevitably I get 'so you're part of a cult' or 'so you're part of a sex cult.' I wish I was part of a sex cult, but I'm not, we just become very comfortable with being around other people



and not being afraid to talk about things that are important to us.

The
wor-
ship at
night
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"We strive to always question our beliefs so nothing is outdated or redundant."

nects and fuses this community through spirituality, and the openness and freedom to be who and what we are gives people confidence and allows you to begin to truly 'find' yourself. Although it's hard to explain worship I'll give it a shot. They are usually at night, in the dark with only a Chalice as light, and involve introspection from readings from around the world, meditations, as well as connections outward through people sharing stories of happy or sad things. The sheer range of different activities that worship encompasses means that it can't be put completely into words other than to say it's about community, sharing and love.

Youth Governance: The Committee Lives On: This is not to say that being YRUU is all fun and games. There is much more to this youth community. One recent Calgary youth project was the creation of a rainbow banner over 500-feet long, to support same-sex marriage. This banner was taken to PRIDE parades all across Canada and was sent to Ottawa for rallies on Parliament Hill.

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists is a continental group and there are youth governance committees at each level. This makes the youth community more grassroots and youth driven, and lets you get involved with people from across North America. I have had the privilege of being on some of these committees. For Quebec, Ontario, and the Maritimes I am on the Youth Adult Committee, and am the representative to the New York State equivalent. This has let me give back to this great community through work, as well as giving me great experience in working in groups.

One of the things I love about being part of this religion is the way that we keep on looking at our views. We strive to always question our beliefs so nothing is outdated or redundant. Currently the Unitarian Universalist Association is

reviewing the youth structures, since it's been 25 years since the last indepth restructuring. These are exciting times for me since it means that we get to restructure away problems in the system, and I get to be the Canadian on the Taskforce and get to know a lot of American youth.

I love being a YRUU. It has given me so much during my teenage years. It's not for everyone, but I couldn't go without it.

Love

By Zarinah Ali

I sat very briefly in my room....briefly, that was all it took for me to realize the answer to a question that had been steadily forming in my brain. Why the hell am I still on this planet? Maybe that question was a little vague.

Recently I have been in the lowest emotional state I have ever been in my entire life, and I have been at some drastically low points in my short 15 year life span. So it is quite a mystery to me exactly why I am, very slowly, emerging from this emotional state rather unharmed and well, OK??? I have been in emotional states not nearly as low as the one I am coming out of, and been considerably more damaged (not necessarily in the physical sense) from it all. The answer it seems, is my faith, which has been developing rapidly for the past year and a half or so. Yes you read correctly, a sanctified Unitarian!!

For the past week or so, as I've been on the rise from my dismal attitude shift, I have been feeling somewhat unstable so to speak. In other words, I'm not entirely sure what's going on inside me emotionally. I try not to dwell on it too much because it tends to give me a slight case of acid reflux, which only adds to my frustration. The instability is more often than not, a negative instability but today I briefly, very briefly pictured a chalice, my symbol of love, and that love replaced the acid and instability in my swelling heart and chest. I cried not because of frustration fear, and anger, but because the inten-



sity of love in my spirit and pumping through my veins. It all became clear. I suddenly understood why I was surviving the lowest low of my life and coming through it unscathed. Safe. Hopeful. Even now as I try to convey the way I feel in writing and put the extensive love that runs rampant through my body, on paper, my eyes fill because it is so entirely OVERWHELMING to be in direct connection with my soul and spirit. To be experiencing this pure, raw, real love, not from a book, not from somebody else, no not even from church, but to be experiencing it from MYSELF is so utterly spectacular and amazing.

A while ago, even as I was building this faith of mine, I never would have believed you if you told me that I was bound to be a spiritual person. Half of the reason for that is because I didn't entirely understand what it means to be spiritual, and how unique spirituality is to every individual. Oddly enough, my name "Zarinah" is Arabic for "of God". I had a conversation with my mother on Sunday about how she came to give me this name. Apparently she had a few "mystic experiences", as she called them, that filled her with a divine intuition that her child, me, would be an extremely spiritual person, and have an awesome connection with the Almighty Creator/Spirit, who some, including her, call God, and is what I call Love. My mother was a devout Muslim at the time, and when she came across "Zarinah" she knew instantly that it would be the name of her newborn child.

I am steadily growing into my name, slowly but surely. I've always envied the deep connection that other religions seemed to have with their Higher Being/s. They seemed to find salvation, and never ending happiness. My mother's inner channel with her God, her Allah, always astounded me. Why couldn't I have that? Why are other churches let in on some "secret" of how to get this connection that led straight into their spirits and fulfilled it constantly. They seemed to automatically have it, almost. I was slightly frustrated and angry at my church as well as my religion and I started to branch out. I visited

other, Christian, churches. I started reading the Bible, intending to read it from beginning to end, and even dusted off my old Qur'an and read through some of the translations. Although I found some of the stories from the Bible interesting, my spiritual being was more confused than enriched and I laid off for a while. Various experiences since then such as my coming of age and several conferences I attended (including Con-Con and Chaplain Training) have attributed to my beliefs I now carry and my rather new spiritual

stability. For once, and possibly the first time in a long time, I feel that in the future I won't need to depend on others for happiness and well being, rather on what's inside of

me. I have my savior, my deep connection, my never ending happiness. **Love.**

Zarinah Ali is a Youth from Chicago, Illinois

Did you take the Youth Ministry Survey?

In January and February 2006, a survey of UU Youth was conducted as part of the Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth. About 1400 youth, ages 12-20, participated, sharing their experiences with youth ministry in many forms. The survey results are now available online at

<http://www.uua.org/TRUS/youth/ymsurvey.html>.

To find out more about the Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth, including the upcoming District Gatherings, you can visit their main page at <http://www.uua.org/TRUS/youth>.



Getting the Call to Ministry When Your Phone is on Mute

By Jeff Liebmann

The daily routine of work, caring for loved ones, and maintaining a home may at times seem like driving on a highway. We enter the highway at young adulthood and pick up speed through the years until we take the exit ramp into our retirement. We may switch to different lanes along the way to provide us with some variation on our journey. But, the idea of leaving this familiar route and destination for another whose direction is unclear frightens us.

Being part of a religious community can reveal other roads to travel. Our church experiences can initiate a process of reflection about our lives. Our service to and with others can give us the conviction

to consider new directions. Ultimately, our church family can help us muster the courage to take the exit ramp onto a different highway of life. For example, when I agreed to become a youth advisor, I never imagined that I might one day enroll in a seminary and seek to enter into the Unitarian Universalist ministry.

My Call to Ministry: My first call to the ministry happened in Lamoni, Iowa in the summer of 1999. It was a sunny Saturday morning and the week long Young Religious Unitarian Universalist Youth Council meeting had just ended. The members of the Council were gathered in the parking lot of Graceland College preparing to leave for our homes. Youth Council is the continental governing body of YRUU and the week had been filled with hours of hard work and late night resolution formation and election sessions. I stood next to a young woman I had known for three years and had worked with on Youth Council for both years of my term. As our departure approached, we looked at each other and - realizing that our service together on Council was ending - began to cry.

Now, generally speaking, the men in my family do not cry. But, that day, I cried. We hugged and cried some more. And then, something inside of me just . . . broke. For the first time in my life, I sobbed. Our emotional outpouring spread and others joined in. For twenty minutes, a group of us hugged and came together in a way I was at a loss to explain.

In the weeks following this emotional event, I analyzed my feelings and what had happened to me. Many clichéd metaphors flooded my mind - a door had opened; a dam had burst; a wall had crumbled. I knew that my outburst had somehow changed me. I knew that I would never be quite the same person I was before going to Iowa. And, I knew that this heralded only the beginning of my transformation.

In my time with the youth of our church, I have experienced other moments of transformation. Most, thankfully, have not been as cathartic. But, each one moved me closer to becoming someone else - to taking the pieces of that broken "whatever" on the asphalt in Iowa and building it into a new "me." Eventually, I decided to take that exit ramp to pursue the Unitarian Universalist ministry.

Many people contributed to the ongoing process of crafting a new "me." The most significant impact to my reconstruction came from our youth. While specific youth stand out, it is really certain general attributes shared by many of our youth that most influenced me. In my ministry with our youth, three of these attributes typical of today's teens demand our attention and consideration. Because, we in the adult community can benefit from examining these attributes and

"This community obviously shared a history and a level of intimacy that would stretch my personal boundaries to their limit. "



how they reflect our own attitudes and relationship with our denomination.

Openness: Modern society provides enormous benefits to those of us with the financial resources and the historical privilege to enjoy them. But, freedom exacts a heavy price. We feel insecure about our jobs, the safety of our loved ones, our health, and our future well being. To cope with these fears, we protect ourselves. We set aside money and buy insurance; we install locks and security systems and software; we build bigger police forces and jails; and we pass more laws defining permissible behaviors. But, most of all, we erect walls that dampen the impact of others' actions toward us and mask our innermost feelings from the observation of those around us. We adults spend a lifetime following rules, adapting to customs, and learning paradigms to navigate in our society. In effect, we mute our life phones to ring tones that are risky, or dangerous, or unknown.

Our youth, on the other hand, recognize few limits to what is possible in their lives. They challenge us, our assumptions, and our paradigms. Adolescents today embrace tools, technologies, and experiences. While most adults satisfy themselves with the default ring tones that come standard with their phones, youth seek out their own melodies for both their phones and for their lives.

Authenticity: Many of you share with me the joy (and immense frustrations!) of refinishing an older house. One of my favorite tasks is stripping off multiple layers of wall paper, paint, and other finishes to uncover an original surface. Quite often, we find that the best intentions of generations of owners never improved on the beauty of the wood grain of the first surface.

Nature's Beauty

By Andy B Sobczak

The sand sticking to my toes,
Evidence of the ocean's woes.
The feeling is o' so sweet to me,
It's just as sweet as pollen to a bee.

The waves are crashing all around,
It is such a monstrous, beautiful sound.
I lose myself within the beat,
I want to dance and move my feet.

I stick my face towards the sky,
I loose myself in the smells that pass me by.
The ocean's smells and noise are in the air,
The earth's lifeline, Neptune's flowing hair.

For me nothing can be better,
Than enduring all of nature's weather.
Spending time within her womb.
Doing all that is her boon.

The sights and smells draw me in.
The feelings that surface are what brings me back again.
Nature calls, so I must follow,
To all her halls, so restful and hollow.

In the early 1900's, a psychologist named G. Stanley Hall wrote a book called Adolescence. Now, the notion of a pre-adult stage of life was not new. But, Hall crafted a new notion, defining those in their late teens as incomplete adults suffering from a psychological pathology of youth. He saw the "storm and stress" of this period of life as something best conquered under the careful guidance of adults. This work almost single-handedly defined how society would view teenage youth for the next century and even today. It laid the theoretical groundwork creating structures to control youth (like the modern high school) and to delay their entry into modern adult life. One can argue that these structures protect youth and prepare them for maturity. On the other hand:

- our society now judges a teen's intelligence and value by test scores, ignoring the many and var-



ied gifts they have that cannot be measured or quantified;

- our society provides youth few opportunities for meaningful work that compensates them fairly;

- our society withholds many freedoms and responsibilities from youth that adults enjoy, but incarcerates youth in body and in spirit through a racist judicial system and a classist economy that fosters poverty and abuse;

- our society floods their minds with images of unloving sex, pointless violence, and substance abuse, with few balancing images of human compassion, of the power of loving community, and of the wonder of exploring the mysteries of our existence.

In spite of all these oppressions, our youth exhibit an invigorating authenticity - an almost raw electricity. In a sea awash with commercial exploitation, fear mongering, and stereotypes, our youth stay afloat on the energy of their self identity. Teenagers rightly resist adult efforts - some well-intentioned, but some not - to cast a net over youth or to chain them to anchors. They seek to chart their own true course through the waters. They resist our attempts to paint over, or to wall paper, or to board up their authentic grain.

Joyfulness: The first time I was asked to sponsor youth at a weekend district youth conference, I was reluctant. What did I know about teenagers? I had no counseling experience. My own children were still in elementary school. That Friday night, I saw carloads of youth spill out into group hugs. This community obviously shared a history and a level of intimacy that would stretch my personal boundaries to their limit.

On Sunday morning, the conference ended with a "hugger-pillar" - when everyone joins hands in a circle, then comes together into two parallel lines, and hugs everyone else goodbye. After my experiences during that weekend, I did not think twice about joining in.

That is the power of joy in our youth community. In 36 short hours, those youth changed me from someone reserved about physical contact and sharing into someone who thought nothing of hugging a relative stranger. Over the years, I have laughed with youth and I have cried with youth. I have witnessed amazing creativity and moments of spontaneous emotion-

al combustion. I have met youth clinging to life on the power of the joy they shared with their peers and as a member of this faith. Youth have reminded me how to live life with unbridled passion and joy.

The Power of Love: How have the openness, authenticity, and joyfulness of youth affected my ministry? When I first joined a Unitarian Universalist fellowship, I adopted our commitment to support a free and responsible search for truth and meaning as my battle cry. As a humanist, I found comfort in a church that endorsed reason over creed; science over superstition. But, a funny thing happened in my personal search for what is true and right in life. In that parking lot in Iowa, my exposure to the openness, authenticity, and joyfulness of youth revealed feelings in myself that I could not explain; sensations that I could not quantify. Something within me awakened that was fundamental and frightening. And, like Pandora's Box, once freed from captivity, I could not force these feelings back into their old confines.

It was some time before I began to realize what this force may be. C. S. Lewis once wrote a book called The Four Loves, based on the four words for love in ancient Greek. Lewis distinguished love of family from love of friends from romantic love. The Greeks referred to the fourth love as agápe - the unconditional, self-sacrificing, active, volitional, thoughtful form of love that Lewis equates to Christian charity. Agápe is a "pure," ideal type of love - the love shared between souls. To many Christians, agápe is the love of God toward humanity.

Since my personal theology does not include a god, understanding agápe represents the next big step in my ongoing transformation, both as a person and as an aspiring minister. I know that agápe exists, because I experience it. I know that our youth possess it in abundance, because it manifests itself through their openness, authenticity, and joyfulness. But, I know that it often loses its potency for adults - perhaps as other forms of love take precedence. I hope that my ministry with youth will continue to help me as I merge onto this new highway of life. I also hope to return the favor by helping them to draw their own routes and to share those new

maps with the adults in our community.

So, to you here today, I invite you to embrace your inner adolescent. We adults need to break out of the protective shells we so carefully craft and reinforce throughout our lives. Embrace your inner adolescent. Open yourself to experiences long set aside as inappropriate or risky or undoable. Embrace your inner adolescent. Peel away those years of meticulous effort to cover up your authentic self to others. Embrace your inner adolescent. Hold onto whatever in life gives you joy and prioritize everything

else toward that end.

We are all ministers in this community of agápe. So, hug someone you have never hugged before. Tell them something about yourself that you have never shared. Unmute your phone, and turn up the volume on your ring tone, so you can hear life's call. And listen to the message - wherever it may lead.

Jeff Liebmann is a youth advisor and a seminarian. He delivered this sermon at the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh, PA on May 7, 2006

You Matter

By Joanne Giannino

How many of you dream at night? How many remember your dreams? Do you find them useful? Confusing? Amusing? Instructive?

I had a dream Monday morning. I was waiting to meet with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, the committee that interviews prospective UU ministers before they can be ordained (my real appointment is this coming fall). In the dream, I walk into a dark-paneled room, it is softly lit by sunlight reflecting warmly on the wood, there must be a window. The committee tells me that they are giving me three more hours to get ready. I feel ready but say ok, thank you and I turn to walk out of the room. A man bends over in his chair and whispers to me, I love you. I am surprised by his comment, and think to myself, "we have got to stop meeting like this." I go into the waiting area and when I return three hours later I realize that I am ready for the committee's questions but I do not have a sermon to preach. I had forgotten about the sermon. Oh, well, I think, I'll wing it. I've been thinking about why I don't do much art anymore, how my ministry has changed since I've been in seminary, so I'll just start there. The chalice is ready. I stand behind the pulpit. I wake up.

I woke up thinking, oh, I do have a sermon to write. This one, for today. I had better get started. And so my Monday began. I did my usual weekday things, got my youngest son off to

school, did my spiritual practice of prayer, reading and silence, and began slogging through the books I had been reading on coming of age in religious community (in honor of our youth). I had already written some things of my own, but began my usual gathering of learned quotes from learned scholars like Parker Palmer, Judith Duerk, James Fowler, Paul Rasor...(some of you know these writers?). But by 1 p.m. my fingers ached and still no sermon.

What am I trying to say? I asked myself. I don't know yet. Trust the process. So, I took a break: made the bed, had a snack. Then I remembered my dream. What did it mean? Could it have anything to do with this sermon, or was it just anxiety over my readiness to be a minister - in time, by the fall, in front of a committee of real ministers, real scholars, real preachers, real Unitarian Universalists?

The man bent down and said to me: "I love you." I love you. Why did he say that? Why now? Well, I realize that as I have been watching this amazing process of coming of age unfold here at FUSF, and as I have been a part of the process of working with these young people, these young people who are so eloquent about who they are and appear to have such confidence in themselves, that I am grieving something the religious community of my childhood and youth did not give to me.



No one said, this is an important time in your life, a formative time and we are here to help you figure out who you are, what you are made of, what makes you come alive, what gives your life meaning, and what you might do with your gifts. No one said, this is our religious tradition, the history of our movement, and you are now a part of this movement, your ideas matter, we welcome your ideas and we look forward to seeing how the gift of your presence changes who we are. No one said, we affirm your inherent dignity and worth and you are a vital part of the interdependent web of all existence. You matter.

And, that my, friends is what Unitarian Universalism says to its children and youth, to its young adults, to its adults and elders, to those who were born here, moved here, and/or joined here at any age. My dear spiritual friends, it matters into which community we are born. It matters in which religious home our parents choose to raise us. It matters in which faith we choose to commit our lives when we are old enough to make those decisions on our own.

In the dream, I said, I was ready to meet the committee, I was ready to answer their questions but I didn't have a sermon to preach. I had forgotten about the sermon.

A few years ago, when I was a Director of Religious Education and a relatively new but committed UU religious educator, I told a close friend, I said; if I ever say I want to be a parish minister, just shoot me. I could never be...but it was only a few years later that I felt myself called to deepen my commitment to our faith. I entered seminary and then there I was saying I would become a minister. And now five years later I am just about to meet with the MFC. I am ready for their questions about UU history, religious education, congregational polity, and even my own spiritual practice. But I forgot about the sermon. I love you, he said. We have to stop meeting like this.

Like many of our coming of age youth, I am at a crossroads in my life. Making a learned, even developmental transition, coming into who I was born to be, coming into my own voice, writing and giving the sermon...Our coming of age youth have

spent the last year intently working towards making and marking a transition from childhood to young adulthood within this religious home. Now they have special knowledge of UU history and theology. Now they are prepared with the experience of putting hands to work in service to others, and now they have a deepening understanding of themselves, through the process of asking, with the support of those around them: Who am I? What gives meaning to my life? Who is it that I was born to be? They stand ready before us today and over the coming weeks to be seen and recognized for who they have become so far, and we stand (or sit) before them to see who we have and will become because of their coming of age here, with us, as we are interdependently connected to each other and all of creation.

Each of us come here with something special to offer. We are called to come. Our gifts are awaited for. And when we arrive, if our native gifts are nourished and respected, and we have the chance to become our full selves, our community changes because of us, and then we are changed, and then we change the group again, and so on and so on, each nurturing the other, self and group in a dance of becoming.

Not all of us had that growing up, but once we found such a place, we knew we were home. Some of you are so lucky to have been born here - to have come early! Know that. Cherish that.

Tuesday morning I heard the cat scratch at the bedroom door. My husband Russell got up to let him out. These thoughts came to me. The integrity of the church called Unitarian Universalism depends on nurturing the fullness of the individuals who make up its whole.

“Each of us come here with something special to offer. We are called to come.”

Our third principle says that we - Unitarian Universalists - support each other on our spiritual journeys. We are not isolated beings. We are individuals embedded in a particular religious culture that chooses to

honor the gifts born in each of us. The seven principles are no random set of beliefs - The principles themselves are inherently connected, interdependent and deeply spiritual statements of our own deeply theological faith. A deep faith with a



long and distinguished history.

Carol (our parish minister) said, last Sunday at a newcomer orientation for a couple of our newest friends, that Unitarian Universalism is a non creedal and non dogmatic faith with a deeply theological name. Unitarianism - God is one. Universalism - God is a loving God who delights in the children of creation.

I love you. We have got to stop meeting like this.

There is a deep abiding love for each of us, often becoming evident in ways we never dreamed possible in our waking hours. Often becoming evident when we are at a crossroads - surveying where we come from, asking, "Who am

I? What am I to do with my life? What are my gifts?" Often becoming evident at times when we are confused and wish we were more prepared for this experience called life.

There is a deep abiding love for each of us, in this fellowship where we are formed, where our unique native gifts are welcomed, even waited for.

We are so glad you are here. We can't wait to find out who we become because you have arrived!

Amen.

Joanne Giannino is a Ministerial Intern at First Universalist Society in Franklin, MA, where she gave this sermon on March 26, 2006.

Maybe Then I Will Nod

By Emanuel Olano

The things I believe and the things that I don't have been hard to say even when it was wrote

Don't be misled, just try to listen hard, life is an obstacle to see who gets far

People are poor, there has been war, people don't understand what we're living for

You can be sore, or you can be a superstar, but if you make the wrong decision you can be scarred
So watch out what you say and be careful what you do, 'cuz people on this earth are known to criticize you

You can be labeled as going to heaven or hell, but to me that's dumb, I believe you are what you spell, you are what you tell, you are who you help, you make your own decisions and you are what you sell

And in the end people come out what they came to be

Your fate is your decisions, take it gracefully

I have never really believed about a man in the sky, I do when I cry, but that's because I need somebody's eye

I still respect the fact that there could be a god / or a higher being, but that's 'cuz I hear about him a lot

He could be real, but in the end, why do we kill, why do we steal?

How are we to heal when our nations being corrupted by war?

Here, let me break this down to the core

America's always been thought of as a dominant country / an American dream is something we wont see

In America we got food that's trashing and rotting / In other countries we got people that are actually starving

In America we got houses with more than two levels / In other countries people's houses are made of some sticks and some rubble

Americans in a way have denied that the world is not perfect / Our vision is different, I say our vision is worthless

So when people ask me if I believe there's a god / first let me see a peace-made earth

Maybe then I will nod



The Emperor Has No Clothes

By Sarah Guyer

The emperor has no clothes on. Most of you know this line from the famous children's tale The Emperor's New Clothes by Hans Christian Anderson. The story begins by introducing the emperor, who loved expensive clothes. One day, two tricksters came into town and told everyone, "We make magnificent cloth, but stupid people and people who are not good at their jobs cannot see it." Well, of course the emperor wanted some of this fine cloth. The tricksters worked for days. Well, acted like they were working. During those days, the emperor would send one of his trusted advisors down to see how the work was progressing. Well, of course they could never see it, but they acted like they could, afraid to be thought of as stupid or useless for their jobs. Finally, the emperor's new clothes were finished. He went to go see them, but surprise, surprise, saw nothing. Horrified, the emperor was determined to keep this knowledge to himself. He walked down the streets of his kingdom, while the footmen acted like they were holding onto the train of his coat. People all around cheered and spoke about how magnificent the clothes were, everyone acting like they saw the cloth. Finally the emperor walked past a little boy, who simply stated, "But the emperor has on nothing at all!" All of a sudden, everyone began laughing, for the little boy was right. The little boy had the courage to point out the truth.

The first night we discussed what our topic for today's service was going to be, I had just come from Quiznos sandwich shop for dinner with my family. When we were there, my dad ordered a sandwich and asked for sweet peppers on it.

Well, they made the sandwich and he tasted it. Instead of sweet peppers, they were hot peppers. He went up to the guys working there and said, "These are hot peppers, not sweet peppers. I asked for sweet peppers."

And the man said, "No, those are sweet peppers. No one else has ever had a problem with them."

I tasted the sandwich and, surely enough, they were hot peppers.

This is what I had first decided to speak about: How many times in life do we notice something wrong and ignore it for convenience's sake and just to avoid confrontation? How often are we afraid to say, "The emperor has no clothes"?

Many of us can think of examples in our everyday lives when people are afraid to point out the truth or expose lies because they are trying to fit in. People are often afraid to say, "The emperor has no clothes on." Even if it is just a sandwich that is prepared wrong, ignoring something can also affect issues that are a whole lot bigger and worldwide.

All over the world, there are issues that someone needs to say, "The emperor has no clothes. Something is wrong here."

- The truth about AIDS in Africa
- The treatment of women in the Middle East
- The poverty that is occurring all over our world, and even in our own country.

Sometimes it is even within ourselves that we are afraid to point out the truth. And sometimes the hesitation and unwillingness to step up can seriously affect the lives of people around us.

"If we are responsible for everyone, then are we really fulfilling our duties as Unitarian Universalists if we don't speak up?"

In my health class this past week, we were talking about the signs and symptoms of someone who is considering suicide. My teacher explained that often friends see the signs

but are afraid of being wrong and embarrassing themselves, just as the people in the story were. The Emperor's New Clothes is really about bravery. You have to have courage to say what is wrong. You have to have the courage to stand up and maybe embarrass yourself.



As Unitarians Universalists, we don't have the fierce dogma and structure of other religions. But we do have 7 principles that bring us together.

Whenever one of our advisors asks us if we know the 7 principles, we always seem to remember the first and last. The first is "the inherent worth and dignity of every person" and the last is "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

These two principles seem very different: one deals with the person and the other addresses the group. However, I believe that by being part of this web of interconnectedness, it is my responsibility to respect and stand up for the individual. In short, we are all responsible for the welfare of everyone.

If we are responsible for everyone, then are we really fulfilling our duties as Unitarian Universalists if we don't speak up? If we aren't willing to say, "Hey, the emperor has no clothes on" can we truly call ourselves Unitarians?

I ask everyone here to have the courage to speak up next time they see something wrong. If we are only trying to fit in, as the people in the story were, then no one will ever speak up, will they? We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person and that means that everyone should be able to speak up.

I believe that by being a UU youth it is even more of our responsibility.

In the Emperor's New Clothes it is a young boy who ultimately shouts out the truth. Maybe it is up to the youth of today to do that same thing. Maybe it is time for us to shout out the truth about AIDS in Africa and the horrors

that women in the Middle East face everyday.

Already, companies like MTV have created programs and websites where teens can learn more about AIDS and the effect of it all over the world. Last November, musicians asked their young audience to go out and vote. The campaign was called "Vote or Die". This past summer, musicians also participated in Live 8, which pushed for wealthy countries to give money to Africa.

In the story I wonder what happens next? I wonder what my generation will be able to accomplish. It is not enough to expose the truth and to take a stand even if it is unpopular. We have to be willing to give our time and our energy. When kids at school help to serve food in a food shelter or help with Habitat for Humanity or participate in a project for Journey Home like our youth groups are going to do tonight, we are making our own small attempt at making the world a better place. The Emperor may have no clothes on and it took a little boy to point that out. I hope that my generation will be able to follow suit and have the courage to say, "The emperor has no clothes on."



drawing by Joo Young Choi

Lost and Found: Please Claim!

By Katie Dahlhausen

I lost my favorite pen.
I found an easy way out
I lost contact with her about a year ago.
I found happiness in a rain puddle
I lost my hermit crab. I thought it was for good.
I found my grandma's old house key
I lost my mind
I found out that he really meant it
I lost the post-it note that had his address on it
I found the perfect pair of jeans
I lost my voice at a concert once
I found out that she was vegetarian too.
I lost myself in a daydream
I found my individuality

How Many Licks Does it Take to Get to a Tootsie Roll Pop Center?

By Sara B. Caldwell

I am one of the newest members to my local UU chapter but in reality the whole thing of calling myself a UU is new in an of itself. As a young adult I feel it is valuable for me to get involved in the ways that are most beneficial to me and to the people that I care for. In part that is why after joining my UU congregation I wanted to get involved at some level. As a college student, getting involved and giving back revolves around my use of time, not money... so I decided to spend my time helping out with the UUSO web site. Saying that, upon reading the Synapse web page the other night I took a moment to reflect on this publication's theme. My first thought, 'A can of worms.' Spirituality can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people, but I would like to think that it is just all different ways of trying to get to the same thing.

I make mazes. I've been making mazes for the past seven years; I'm not quite sure where my fondness of mazes came from as it does not run in my family, but one day in art class all those many years ago I had to - along with the rest of my class - make a simple maze... "and make it look pretty" I remember the teacher saying. Okay, so I got done with my horse maze in one class period while my classmates got done with theirs after two or three. When I realized that I could intertwine my love of

animals, the sciences, and art through the use of mazes, I was hooked.

Fast-forward to 2001. I finally had created a web site. Sure I was behind the times but I didn't care. It seemed apt that I would call it 'Great Mazes' and post some of my mazes for people to download and solve. 'After all' I thought, 'if people have as much fun solving them as I do making them, then this is great.' Besides just posting mazes, I began to take maze requests. That's where the real joy began. Month by month I ended up doing quite a few free maze requests. Mazes were being used for birthday parties, church newsletters, school activity worksheets, non-profit organization mailings, web sites, all sorts of stuff. I got to see first hand how the power of the internet can be a wonderful thing. It was a good feeling having known that I did something good for someone that I had never seen, never talked to before, never connected with other than through my mazes. These mazes could bring happiness to someone for a moment in time and to me that itself was spiritual. That communication between me, the maze maker, and they, the maze solver, was really something spiritually unique and wonderful.

But of course mazes are meant to confuse, not enlighten. The joy comes at the end when you reach the destination, not when you are in it trying to figure out which way to go and in turn,

"Life isn't like a maze. I don't know what will happen when I reach my destination, whatever that destination may be...I can't go back in time and retrace my steps in an attempt to make a left turn when I went right."

getting even more confused. Life isn't like a maze. I don't know what will happen when I reach my destination, whatever that destination may be. I can't be confused now in hopes of reaching the end later AND THEN being happy. I can't go back in time and retrace my steps in an attempt to make a left turn when I went right. I go where I go and we all go to our own liking.

In contrast, as a labyrinth builder I've come to know that labyrinths can at most be used as a spiritual tool, for a unicursal



path doesn't give justice to the infinite number of possible directions one could take in a lifetime. With most spiritual tradition regarding labyrinths, upon arrival at the center of a labyrinth one meditates or makes some action signifying that s/he has made it to the center. The person then turns around and walks back out of the labyrinth, retracing their steps through to the entrance. Yet that person may not be the only person on the labyrinth.

form. We are all just trying to get to that Tootsie Roll Pop center, to complete that maze, or to find a new place with use of a labyrinth. The way in which we get there is the *all-important variant... religion.

My relationships between myself, my family, the people that I care for, and the living things that I appreciate and respect, have helped lead me to where I am. To me, my spirituality is based around my continued understanding and journey with interpersonal relationships.

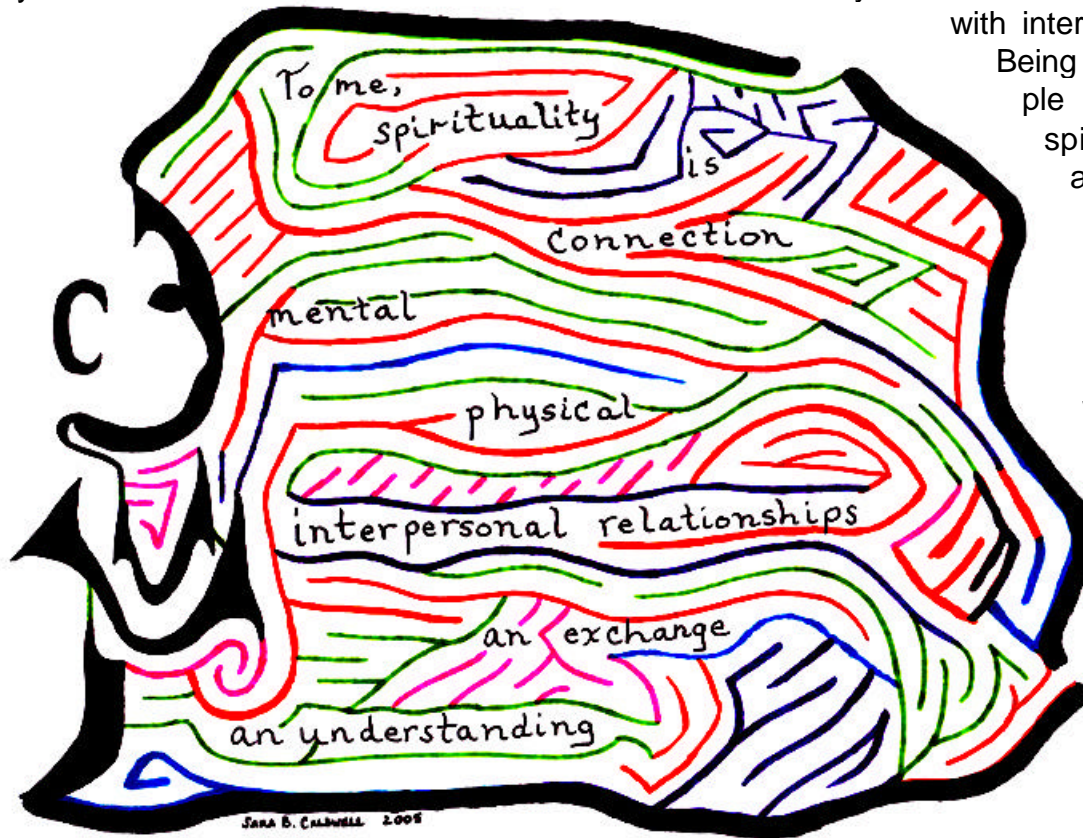
Being able to speak to people through my mazes is spiritual, just as being able to develop lasting friendships with someone regardless of their age, sex, creed, or race is spiritual. To the rest of the world I have befriended some very diverse types of people. I guess you could say my acquaintances and (especially) my good friends make up a very eclectic part of my life.

But I say spirituality has no bias, so

then why should we? (UUs have

this at the heart of any matter.) I haven't

changed my philosophy since declaring myself a UU because I suppose I have always been a UU in principle. Yes, spirituality can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people, but I believe that the only religion that embraces spirituality under a very wide spectrum of definitions is UUism. This to me could be a double-edged sword, but yet it isn't because of our notion of communication toward understanding and tolerance. I love every bit of good wholesome connection-building and understanding I can get. In this way I am selfish - and in this way I hope you are too.



Encountering another person walking the labyrinth can be a strange experience because when you are set on walking that one path, staying on that line, becoming spiritual with yourself and the things around you, here comes some other person about to be in your way. In my experience it can really catch you off guard. Trying to walk around someone or let someone pass while walking a labyrinth isn't as nonchalant as it may seem. The instant of passing bodies is spiritual. It is of a connection very much unlike passing someone on the street.

Spirituality to me cannot be put directly into words, placed in a box, or blanketed on the general population of the Earth. But I believe that it is available to everyone and everything, in its same and yet very different

Sara Caldwell is a youth at the UU Society of Oneonta, NY





Forgotten

By Kimberly Katilius

Rays of light streamed through the cracks in the dirty windows. The shadows played against my patient's face, making her look older than her eighty-three years. Her wrinkles were defined and her grey eyes held that certain sadness brought on by age. Thin cracked lips curved up into a small smile as she

*drawing by OMD
Worshippers*



noticed my presence. She lifted a shaking hand plagued with arthritis, beckoning my soul to comfort her broken one. She was desperate like so many elderly people in this institution for some kind of human contact. Their own children now raised and gone, are too busy with their own lives to visit. She took out an old worn picture. The color in the picture was faded leaving an ancient tea stained shade unknowingly tainting the people within it. She pointed to a young girl with

dark hair braided into pigtails standing in front of the ocean. The young girl was beautiful; her eyes were full of magic and excitement. Another smile came to her but this time it was found in her eyes. I started to change her fluid bag. "She's beautiful Rosalie, was that little girl you?" I asked calmly. She nodded, "Ya, she was, she was me." Rosalie had had a stroke a few months ago damaging the tissue in her brain on the left side and leaving her incapable of communicating. She began to talk again. This time it was slower and less pronounced. "We beached... we beaching... we..." Tears formed in her glazed over eyes as she tried to form the words that were playing in her mind. "I... sorry." I heard her whisper before she sat still lost in the phantoms of her past. Gingerly I laid my hand over hers, feeling the soft touch of her wrinkled hand. "It's okay, well get you back to your normal speech pattern. Right now try to form the words in your head and we'll talk when I come back tomorrow." Her eyes had lost their warmth. They returned back to their lost cold stare. It was as if she didn't exist when I wasn't by her side.

Staring at the blank computer screen, I moved my hands towards the keys, ready to fill out my report for the day when a desperate cry echoed through the hallway. I continued to type waiting for an assistant to help the crying man. Another cry sounded, his words digging deep into my heart. I jumped up from the computer following the lingering plea. He lay on his bed flailing his arms and legs around as if he were drowning desperately trying to claw to the surface. The poorly painted room reeked of urine the elderly man covered with it. I ran to his side and helped him back into his bed. Laughing could be heard from across the hallway. The man lay there lifelessly; his eyes glazed over letting him enter into his haven. "An assistant will be right in to help you." I spoke the words hastily; he wouldn't hear them.

The assistant sat in a broken chair tainted with rust. Her long fingers ran through her dark graying hair a dying cigarette in her hand. "What are you doing? Go over and help the man across the room." A spark of defiance lit in her cold green eyes. "Don't tell me what to

do." She waved her cigarette hand trying to dismiss my presence. A wisp of smoke twirled up from the butt wildly dancing towards the plastered ceiling. Anger filled her being, her words laced with a defined hate she got from life. I strode closer to where she sat. "You will go into that room and you will help that man. It is your job." Jumping up from where she sat, she pointed a finger at me. Her sun-wrinkled face scrunched up, "I have to work two jobs to support my three kids. Don't you dare tell me I can't take a break!" I sighed deeply. "Whatever you do in your spare time is your own business but when you're here you are going to take care of these people. I'm going to have to report you if you continue to neglect the patients." A forlorn look played across her face making me feel a pang of regret. The soft buzzing of my watch echoed through out the room, pulling us both back into the flow of life.

Naps and Before

By Eddie Cain Irvin

What a fight

it's all right

it's all right baby

and i can smell again

your scent is proof of that

and so now i remember

but i've forgotten how you grab me

how you grab my head and run and tag you're it
all around the yard

until the sun goes to bed

a cool summer evening

I misunderstand

and that's all right

it's all right because i get lost

and my complaint is not grounded on anything real

but what

can i do

When all i have is how i feel when you cry

when you cry baby i can't

Listen to tears

'cause sad and me are nemeses

it's not you it's the water falling

and your tone of voice

when its half cracks

and you're talking so gently

i expect the wind to carry off your words

almost a stage fright

but the butterflies don't stay in

Chrysalis Training Program

The Youth Office offers a variety of trainings for youth and adults, focusing on a wide range of issues important to youth ministry. We currently offer six trainings in our Chrysalis Program (Basic Advisor Training, Advanced Advisor Training, Leadership Development Conferences, Spirituality Development Conferences, Chaplain Trainings, and Groundwork: Anti-Racism Trainings).

For more information about these Chrysalis Trainings, visit

<http://www.uua.org/yruu/training>.



My Sabbath

By Elizabeth Cortez-Neavel

It was winter time, and my mother had arranged for my younger sister and me to travel to Denver, Colorado and on to Boulder to visit with her Aunt Barbara and Uncle Tom. Barb and Tom had a son and daughter, my mother's cousins, a woman named Tamara and a young man named Joshua; aged twenty-seven and twenty-five respectively. All four of this lively family visited us almost every Thanksgiving holiday to renew our bonds of kinship and deepen our laughter lines; lines that delved brilliantly deep into the faces of our elder relatives. But this winter holiday we would shorten the period of time between our embraces, and have less to talk about when the question "So what is new?" was asked. My sister and I boarded the plane ourselves, on to adventure in a snowbound state, accented with glorious mountains and potential memories. We were going to go visit them during the Christian - and now American - New Year holiday.

The vacation from our befuddled, undecided Texas weather was welcome. Although the area surrounding my Great-Aunt's home held only small patches of hardened snow - ice-like until a boot hard enough overcame its crusted exterior and sank into the softened crystals beneath - my young sister and I would exclaim with wonder the word that we had, during the past four years, only said following the phrase "I wish it would..."

We greeted, lounged about, and shopped with Barb's side of our family tree for a few days, waiting with bound enthusiasm and reserved energy for our trip into and under and through the Rocky Mountains. After a New Year's Eve excursion to Denver to witness semi-amusing fireworks and very amusing tipplers, four and a half glasses of three different kinds of champagne, a scuffle over what suitcase to take with us on our three-day pilgrimage to pay overdue homage to the snowboarding deities, and the rental of four snowboards (one for each traveler under thirty) Summer 2006

and all temporal items needed to please said deities, we embarked to our long awaited Jerusalem.

When you snowboard it is as if the sky is begging you to swim in it but the ground is too greedy to let you go for long. The white, hard-packed powder crunches under your board as if a million micro-icicles are falling upside down into the sky, and the piece of waxed plexi/fiber-glass is all that is stopping them from floating into the oblivion of illusion blue, and sometimes veiled gray. Some might liken the fleeting of the human-made board-that-is-one-with-the-bearer to flying, but I disagree, the sensation is as if you are just about to take off and shed the mortal skin but have not yet attained enough speed to; so always you push yourself faster and faster. Even if you leap into the cutting air, you are once again earth-

bound in a matter of seconds, your angel wings not yet spanning their true length. I have likened it to angels; some might say snowboarding is like God.

My great-cousins are Tragers. They were

born from the daughter of a German-Jew, who traveled to America with her husband, who fought in the American revolution, whose children's children were respectable and in the whiskey business (meaning when alcohol bans were enacted, they turned to the faith and became prominent Rabbis and Rabbis' wives). Their children have become authors and college professors and married into many, many good Jewish and non-Jewish families; the more endearing Tragers producing multiple branches of the family tree. My cousins and Great-Aunt and Uncle withhold and maintain their heritage and its practices. They keep kosher when at home, but aren't truly Orthodox; they are more liberal minded and accepting, but aren't too reformed.

It must be rapturous to belong.

Friday night found our muscles sore and our bodies exhausted, but

Synapse 45

"When you snowboard it is as if the sky is begging you to swim in it but the ground is too greedy to let you go for long."



our first day of snowboarding had been a success, and our hearts were elated as we fruitlessly tried to keep our hunger in check as we lay on the floor by the remote-controlled fire. The owners of the condominium we had rented kept their weekend home a bit over-warm, but we welcomed the extra heat to thaw out our numbed, icy limbs. And Friday night is the Sabbath.

Great-Aunt Barb had set out two slim, white tapers in a make-shift aluminum wrap candle holder and was holding a lit match to each one in turn. The rest of the family sat erect - or wobbily stood on weary legs - as all, except Elena and myself, began to bless the lit candles and the grape juice substitute now being decanted into the hand-crafted glasses:

*Baruch ata adonai,
eloheinu, melech ha'olam,
borei p'ri hagafen. Amen.*

*Blessed is Adonai, ruler of the universe, who
makes the fruit of the vine. Thus it is and may it
always be.*

Tears filled my eyes. They came of their own accord, I did not understand why, but I knew they had been hiding behind my eyes, waiting for my lately all-too-sensitive emotions to call them from their elusive mystery down the smoothness of my cheek onto the dry carpet below. I sipped my 'wine' and brushed at my damp face.

Barbara broke the half-loaf of bread, its egg-buttered crust shiny and its creme-colored insides cottony and soft.

*Baruch ata adonai,
eloheinu, melech ha'olam,*

*asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'ratza vanu b'shabat
kodsho b'ahava uvratzon hinchilanu,
zikaron l'ma'asei v'reishit.*

*Ki hu yom t'chilah l'mikraei kodesh, zecheh litsiy-
at mitzraim.*

*Ki vanu vacharta veotanu kidashta m'chol
ha'amim.*

*B'shabat kodshecha b'ahava uvratzon hinchal-
tanu.*

Baruch ata adonai, m'kodesh ha shabat.

Amen.

*...because Adonai selected us and blessed us
from among all the peoples...*

It must be rapturous to belong somewhere; it must be glorious to have a set history; it must be empowering to be chosen, selected, blessed.

I know now why I wept then.

After I tore and bit into the holy bread, the ritual - not unlike the Christian Holy Communion (where you eat of the Christ's flesh and drink of the Christ's blood) despite the Jewish belief that the Messiah has not yet come - dampened my spirits, not only with my quickly banished tears, but with my ache of loneliness; my faltering grasp of the knowledge I held about my place in the world.

I know now that my subconscious had been mourning the rebirth of my desperate desire to believe in something simple and beautiful and easy to set values upon. I had been mourning the rebirth of my yearning for a religion.

Ever since I was old enough to realize I was different, I knew the reason why I was so; I did not follow the other religious trends that my fellow classmates were born into, for I wasn't born into any of them. I was agnostic. So as I learned about Middle Eastern religions and European religions, I began to believe myself connected to different aspects of them; I began to explain my views on the afterlife and before-life, and on my past lives as a camel. I was in fifth grade, and I still believed I could heal wounded trees, and

*"It must be rapturous to belong somewhere;
it must be glorious to have a set history; it must
be empowering to be chosen, selected, blessed."*

commune with nature. And I could, only no one else would believe me, so I lost faith in my imagination and creativity; the closest thing to a religion I had.

I remember those short, confused times, and my recollections of that Friday night in Breckenridge, Colorado, and realize that I ached foolishly, yet not with a foolish cause. I may not have felt a part of the simple, weekly Jewish ritual of the recitation and meaning of the Kiddush, but earlier that day I had kept



my own Sabbath, and had been at one with something so simple, so beautiful, and so facile that the magnitude of it had eluded me. I had let myself be sustained only in the moment as I lifted my wings and flew across the steepening multitudes of hard-packed snowflakes - all intricately individual, yet all alike in their frostiness - not knowing that my almost-numb feet were still earthbound.

I had been intoxicated by the pain in my thighs, the pain that screamed to me "You're alive!" So enfolded in the elation that my heart felt rushing across the earth and falling and flipping up and racing again through time as if it were nothing and everything being spent at once - so ensnared was I - that I had failed to realize that I was more myself than I could ever be (except when writing, of course). I was my own goddess, my own sacred deity, and the beautiful simplicity I belonged to was not only the human race, but the entire earth which we inhabit.

I know that now. I know that although I may ache and long for a human-made "Religion," I am

my own, and everything I do is a ritual that reminds me of the sacredness of myself and the people whose lives I touch. I know that I likened my experience in the snow and on the mountain to the angels, when I should have remembered I am part of the god in us all.

That day, that yesterday not so long ago, I learned to skim the ocean of snow, ricocheting between earth and sky; gliding just before the wind and just after the sun. But it is now that I learn I can truly fly.

Thus it is and may it always be.



You
By Sam Haas

No one else but you,
Cared for me through the times of my need
No one else but you,
Laughed at my jokes and saw me through my pain
No one else but you,
Cried with me in sorrow and held me by your side
No one else but you,
Became close to me while others pushed away
No one else but you,
Had the courage to come say hello to a shy figure
No one else but you,
Gave me love and compassion
And for this I will love you forever
Even though we can never be together
You will always be my one little treasure.



Worship Service to Celebrate Identity

By Jason Lydon

Preparation: Before the service, get everyone to write something short about their identities and who they are on a slip of paper.

Welcome everyone into the room and invite them to sit wherever, you may want to sing "*Come, Come Whomever You Are...*" (Singing the Living Tradition #188)

After everyone is seated, **light the chalice**, and use the Audre Lorde **quote**, "When I dare to be powerful - to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."

Play some good music, ya know, what folks want to hear. While the music is playing **pass out the pieces of paper** that people had written about their identities. Encourage people to take one that is not theirs.

Once everyone has their slip of paper **stop the music**. Read this **quote** by Richard R. Grant: "The value of identity of course is that so often it comes with purpose."

Then **invite people, one at a time, to read the story** that they have in their hands. When they finish the story invite the person who wrote it to share what purpose they find in expressing and living out parts of their identity.

After five people do this ask everyone to **get up and move around the room**, encourage people to make eye contact and smile at one another. Suggest that people move differently than they normally do, it's okay to be silly and laugh as long as everyone is being respectful. After a few moments of moving get people to **sit back down** and read another five, then move, and so on until **everyone has a chance to share**.

Close the worship with music and people leaving as they please.



As a person of Irish American descent can I now be considered a "Person of Color" and join the ranks of the oppressed?

A Response by Joo Young Choi

Anonymous wrote:

I personally feel that "cultural minority" and "cultural majority" are more accurate and find the use of color to distinguish a group a very racist thing indeed. White is a color just like any other color. Irish were "white" and were discriminate against. (As a person of Irish American descent can I now be considered a "Person of Color" and join the ranks of the oppressed.) Though color can plays a role in discrimination, culture is more the deciding factor. If a groups culture and practices are different then the dominate culture and practices of the majority, then they will not be readily accepted and will be discriminated against. Look at conflicts around the world and you will see they are about cultures clashing and rarely about the color of anyone's skin.

- Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

You have some very interesting ideas. I think it would be great for you to talk to my friend Nancy Digiovanni or my friend Ian White-mar. They are two fabulous people who have been dedicated to anti-racism and have also developed anti-racist white ally identities.

As for your comment: (As a person of Irish American descent can I now be considered a "Person of Color" and join the ranks of the oppressed?)

Summer 2006

I think that is a question you should really spend some time on.

I know for myself as a woman of color who is of Korean descent, that I have thought long and hard about my identity and the privileges the U.S. culture/government and institutions give me as a light skinned person of color.

I have come to understand that there are struggles that my friends that are black and brown have to work through everyday that I can never fully understand.

I don't need to get defensive about it, or ever feel attacked, just because I don't understand where some of my friends are coming from, because this isn't about me and my problems, I need to step aside, and quiet myself and realize, that these issues are about something bigger, bigger than just you and bigger than me. This is about how institutions perpetuate inequality and how they allocate privilege and power in an unjust and oppressive fashion.

And that the biggest thing that I can do, is support my friends, listen to them, realize that I'll never fully understand, but not let that discourage me from doing my utmost to educate myself. I need to, so I can be there as best as possible for my friends when they struggle, I need to because that is what it means to be an ally and that's what it means to

be dedicated to ending social injustice.

Last summer my friend Stefan* got shot across the back, the cops

"I need to step aside, and quiet myself and realize, that these issues are about something bigger, bigger than just you and bigger than me."



treated him horribly, blocked off his apartment and sent him to the hospital which didn't even properly dress his wounds, they had cut open his shirt, so all he had was sweat pants and a jimmy on, they forced him out of the hospital around 1:00 in the morning, he had nowhere to go, the police would not let him into his own house, because it was being investigated as the crime scene, and he was the prime suspect. The cops believed that he was the instigator, and that he was dealing drugs. My friend John was also there, and he also was shot, the cops never tried to find the men who were trying to break into the house and instead claimed that the whole scenario was gang related violence.

My friends Stefan and John* are black, John is a father and married, Stefan is also a father and a self employed poet, community organizer, and writes for local newspapers.

These two men are not engaged in gang violence, if anything they are nurturers (fathers) and peacemakers.

I realized fully that day, how the justice system is an institution and judges people of color in a very oppressive way. I started spending my time in Roxbury which is an area that is rich in culture, many blacks, latino/a, chicano/a, and some Asians live and work there. Along with it's richness, I learned more about the everyday lives of some of my friends that are also people of color, and I came to understand that there are things that they have lived through that I will never understand. It also made me realize what identity work I needed to do to put my own feelings aside so I could fully support my friends through their struggles.

That summer my friend Tony's* uncle was shot in the head during an inter-racial fight between a Chinese guy and his black uncle. Tony and I don't talk anymore, last time we saw each other he was wary of me and my asian life partner, can I blame him? No. Inter-racial hate exists for a reason, to keep people of color from creating genuine bonds and work together, to help each other.

As for my white friends, none of them dealt with any of these types of crises over the summer. As for the inter-racial gang war, there were multiple fights over the summer in Cambridge.

Synapse 50

So what am I trying to



say? Everyone has been marginalized in one way or another. It hurts to feel small.

I think that needs to be acknowledged. I think what also needs to be examined is what it means to be born with an ascribed status that makes you small.

Being born as a person of color in America or anywhere in the world for that matter, means that you will battle certain struggles.

Surely, cultural hate exists, but on the grand scale of the world, race plays a significant part in how well we live and how full and healthy the lives of our families are.

Even the value of skin is made evident by the fashionable craze of trans-racial adoption. The prices on children are still rated by skin tone. In a private adoption a white healthy child is more expensive by almost half to that of a child of color. The price for Zahara, Angelina Jolie's new adopted child is dramatically less than she paid for Maddox, and if you didn't know, Maddox was Cambodian, lighter skinned than Zahara from Africa.

I admit, in the past I struggled with the fact that people don't think that I struggle as a person of Asian descent. I have realized through time, that I can't let those types of feelings distract me from the bigger picture.

I remember the first time I heard about the idea for an African descent caucus, I was a little confused and a little hurt, I thought, what? I'm not good enough for you? You don't want to share your feelings with me? This was me at 17. Now at the age of 22, I have realized that this isn't about me, it's not whether I'm good enough or anything. It's about people taking time for themselves to engage in safe, supportive conversation.

Looking back, I kinda laugh at how sensitive I was. These days, I am fully in support of the African descent caucus, I think it's a great idea, I can't join them, and I know that trying to would be invasive, disrespectful, and rude. But I have and will continue to offer to arrange flights, collect resources, send out fliers, even just lick envelopes, mail stuff, whatever the needs be, if there is a way I can support them I'm there.

So, back to your comment: (As a person of Irish American descent can I now be considered a "Person of Color" and join the ranks of the oppressed?)

Summer 2006

I know historically Irish Americans were oppressed, but today in this world, have you ever had to check a box off on a survey or test, claiming your identity as Irish American? My adoptive father is Irish American, he and I talk about our identities, and this is something interesting you might want to look into, and that is: how it is possible to identify as white when needed and how it is possible to identify as ethnic as needed. The question is if you do identify openly as Irish, can it be switched on and off? And also what consequences have you had to work through because of that identity?

I know that Stefan and John, couldn't switch identities, from being black to being 'just' American when they went to the hospital and received bad treatment, or when they went to court and received a lecture about gang violence.

"You can join them in open discussions, you can join them in sharing resources, you can join in ending racism by working with white folks who are struggling with their white identity."

Personally, and this is just my own opinion, to answer your questions: can you be considered a person of color and join the ranks of the oppressed.

I think you would hurt a lot of people if you tried to join, say, a black caucus, just because there are things that they would want to talk about or work through that individuals in the group may not feel safe sharing with you as a person of Irish descent present. I can elaborate further on this, or direct you to some

great folks who maybe able to talk to you more about this.

As for the joining the ranks of oppressed, well, there seems to be a lot of different oppressions out there, such as accessibility, heterosexism, classism, and gender stuff. So, there maybe very well other parts of your identity that could be explored.

ranks of oppressed People of Color. The ranking system you have mentioned seemed kind of odd, and I would like to note that being more oppressed isn't some kind of strange status, like more status for more oppressions. I seem to see this a lot, or hear it a lot and it's not like that at all, at least in my opinion.

The fact that:

- One out of every two black children lives below the poverty line (as compared with one out of seven white children).

- Nearly four times as many black families exist below the poverty line as white families.

- More than fifty percent of African- American families have incomes below 25,000.

- Among black youths under the age twenty, death by murder occurs nearly ten times as often as among whites.

- Over 60 percent of births to black mother occur out of wedlock, more than four times the rate for white mothers.

- The net worth of the typical white house hold is ten times that of the typical black household and

- In many states, five to ten times as many blacks as whites age 18 to 30 are in prison.

Just goes to show that being more oppressed than thou isn't a status symbol, it is down right scary, and it is downright destructive.

And if anything it is the last thing from a status symbol.

But can you join them? Well, you can join them by being an ally, by being a supporter, by educating yourself and working with other white people, or even people of Irish American Descent.

You can join them in open discussions, you can join them in sharing resources, you can join in ending racism by working with white folks who are struggling with their white identity.

If you are interested in talking with the above mentioned friends, I can email you personally their contact info, I encourage you to read an interesting article called 'Put On a Happy Face: the differences between Blacks and Whites' which is written by Benjamin De Mott, an anti-racist white ally, and just to site where I got the facts about why oppression isn't a status symbol, it came from De Motts article.

* All names have been changed to respect privacy.



Top Ten YRUU Songs!

By Nan Moore

Singing songs in youth worship feels like the heartbeat of the community. It is the sound and the vibration that resonates in my mind, my heart, my physical being. In youth worship nothing is written down to read..... everything is about inspiration, feeling and listening. For those of us who have challenges with memorization, the learning of a song can be difficult, so the learning becomes intentional. When you sing a song over and over and over again there is a point, or a place where your mind lets go and your heart remembers.

Over the past 9 years I would say that youth worship has been one of my most sacred places that I experience authenticity and the R in YRUU. The songs are what I remember and the people I remember are those who brought spirit to the YRUU groups of which I have been a part. It is the people and places to whom I owe the memories. Thank you, everyone, for all that you have taught me and all that you have given to the YRUU community.

Here are my Top Ten YRUU songs picks!

1. I Will Be Gentle with Myself (Author Unknown)

I will be gentle with myself; I will love myself; I am a child of Universe; being born each moment.

2. Come, Come Whoever You Are (#188 Singing the Living Tradition; Adapted from the original words by Jalal al-Din Rumi, Sufi poet; Tune by Lynn Adair Ungar, UU minister)

Come, Come whoever you are; Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving; Ours is no caravan of despair; Come yet again come.

3. I Open My Eyes to You (Author Unknown)

I open my eyes to you; I open my heart to you; together we raise our arms to the sun; together may our loving hearts be one.

4. Over My Head (#30 Singing the Living Tradition; African American spiritual ca. 1750-1875; Arranged by Horace Clarence Boyer)

*Over my head there's music in the air; Over my head there's music in the air; Over my head there's music in the air; There must (*stomp*) be a God somewhere. (music, singing, trouble, gladness, angels)*



5. There is More Love Somewhere (#95 Singing the Living Tradition; African American hymn)

There is more love somewhere; There is more love somewhere; I'm gonna keep on 'til I find it; There is more love somewhere. (love, hope, peace, joy)

6. Dear Friends/Brother, Sister (Author Unknown)

Dear friends, Dear friends; Let me tell you how I feel; You have given me such treasures; I love you so.

Brother, Sister; Take you time go slowly; listen deep inside yourself; simple things are holy.

7. Spiraling into the Center/We Are the Weavers (Author Unknown)

*Spiraling into the Center (*stomp*), the Center of the Web; Spiraling into the Center (*stomp*), the Center of the Web; We are the Weavers; We are the Woven Ones; We are the Dreamers; We are the Dream.*

8. Listen to My Heart Song (Words by Paramahansa Yogananda)

Listen, Listen, Listen to my heart song; Listen, Listen, Listen to my heart song; I will never forget you; I will never forsake you; I will never forget you; I will never forsake you.

9. We Come From the Goddess (Author Unknown)

We come from the Goddess; And to her we shall return; like a drop of rain; flowing to the ocean.

10. Now Let Us Sing (#368 Singing the Living Tradition; Anonymous)

*Now let us sing, sing, sing, sing. Now let us sing, sing, sing, sing. Lift up your voice, be not afraid; now let us sing to the power of the (*clap*) faith with-in. (faith, hope, love, joy)*

Honorable Mention: **We Are Gentle Angry People** (#170 Singing the Living Tradition; Words by Holly Near; Arranged by Patrick L. Rickey)

We are gentle angry people and we are singing, singing for our lives; We are gentle angry people and we are singing, singing for our lives.

As you see, there are many songs that have authors unknown to me because these songs are passed down like old stories. Part of my spiritual journey and learning about "worship with respect" is to mention the writers of the songs when offering the song to the community. I want to become familiar with writers and learn about the inspiration of their music. When I have done my research the music has a deeper meaning and I can give the deserved honor to those who have gifted us with these beautiful songs.



One Year After Katrina: Our Commitment

By Laura Manning

Today is August 29, 2006. This means that one year ago today, Katrina crashed ashore, causing unimaginable damage in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. If the storm had come alone, and that was all the wind and water damage that affected the Gulf Coast, it wouldn't have been so bad. The most heartbreaking damage was in no way caused by a natural disaster. The levees in New Orleans broke AFTER the storm passed, and neglect by all governments (city, state, and national) is what left folks in New Orleans to die. For the past 40 years, every US president has been advised that the levees needed to be fixed, that they were not in good enough shape to protect New Orleans if a major storm were to hit. So I don't want to play the "all blame is on Bush" game. After the levees broke, it was not an inability to bring relief and get people out, it was a choice not to, and hundreds of people who came to help were turned away. This is something that is very easy to forget, especially when until a week ago, almost all major U.S. media outlets stopped covering anything happening in New Orleans and on the Gulf Coast since last October. I am writing today to say that it is not acceptable to pretend that things are okay now. Katrina was not unique. It was not a mistake that the system failed, as it was never set up to serve People of Color or folks who are poor. Katrina shows a powerful example of exactly what racism looks like when it's not so swept under the rug. I hope that people in YRUU will use Katrina and the levee break as a reminder to stay committed to undoing racism in all aspects of our lives, and in all of our communities.

I am excited to announce that the Youth Social Justice Training (YSJT) will be happening this year in New Orleans. The YSJT is scheduled to take place from February 22-26, 2007. I want to be very clear that the YSJT is not happening in New Orleans so that a large group of mostly very privileged UU Youth can go to the city, work for a weekend, see all the damage, and return to life as normal at home. This is the beginning of a long-term relationship between rebuilding efforts in New Orleans and YRUU. We are making a commitment that we will not forget about the folks from New Orleans still fighting to come home, and to ensure that the rebuilding happens in a just and equitable way. We are committing to stand alongside all the people who are working everyday in New Orleans to see that residents of each neighborhood pre-Katrina are the ones who are deciding the future of their own neighborhoods. I think that holding the YSJT in New Orleans will allow an incredible opportunity for YRUU to work with community organizations trying to reform the education system, and make sure there is a place for every young person to learn, regardless of race or class. We can learn together how to take what we learn back to our communities, and continue to support the rebuilding of New Orleans from all over the continent. The theme of the YSJT will be Education Reform and Multiculturalism, the Working Action Issue of YRUU. I cannot think of a better place to remind us all about how important this work is, and truly build alliances with folks working for justice. I encourage everyone who's interested to apply to be on staff for the YSJT. I encourage everyone to learn more about what is happening in New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast. There are lots of resources out there, and soon there will be a list of reading and ways to get involved in supporting the rebuilding on the YRUU website.

You can read the entire letter at www.uua.org/yruu/OneYearAfterKatrina.html and find the staff applications there now through October 15 and registration will be available online on October 31.



LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

**YSJT:
Youth Social Justice
Training:
February 22nd-26th, 2007 in New
Orleans!**

Staff Applications are due on October 15th, 2006.
You can download an application at
<http://www.uua.org/yruu/events/>
Registration for the training will open on
October 31st, 2006.

**Lead a workshop at
General Assembly Youth Caucus
2007
(in Portland, OR)!**

The deadline for GA Youth Caucus workshops is
November 1st, 2006.
You can download the application at:
[http://www.uua.org/YRUU/events/pdfs/
GA2007WorkshopProposal.pdf](http://www.uua.org/YRUU/events/pdfs/GA2007WorkshopProposal.pdf)

**Save the date!
Sexuality Education Advocacy
Training (SEAT) and Lobby Day 2007!**

The 2007 Sexuality Education Advocacy Training will
be held from March 24th-28th, 2007, in Washington,
DC. Check out <http://www.uua.org/yruu/news.html> for
updated information later in the Fall.

**Apply to work in the
Youth Office!**

The Youth Ministry Associate position is a one-
year program staff position for youth at the UUA head-
quarters in Boston. There are two YMA positions, which
run from September 1st to August 31st. Applications
are due January 15th, 2007, and are available at
<http://www.uua.org/yruu/youthoffice/pdfs/yma.pdf>

**Leadership Development
Conference Training of Trainers,
Spring 2007**

Applications are available for the Leadership
Development Conference Training of Trainers (TOT),
which will be held alongside the Groundwork TOT in the
late Spring!
Download an application at
[http://www.uua.org/yruu/training/pdfs/LDC-
TOT2007app.pdf](http://www.uua.org/yruu/training/pdfs/LDC-TOT2007app.pdf)

**Groundwork: Unitarian
Universalist Youth and Young
Adult Anti-Racism Training and
Organizing Program**

Check out the Groundwork website
for applications for this new and important organization!
The Training of Trainers (TOT) will be alongside the
LDC TOT in the late Spring! Applications are avail-
able at:
[http://www.uua.org/ya-
cm/Groundwork](http://www.uua.org/ya-cm/Groundwork)

**Check out the YRUU website for new opportunities -
<http://www.uua.org/yruu>**

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Read Synapse Online: If you're down with the internet, you can read *Synapse Online* at:

www.uua.org/yruu/synapse

If you'd like to save a tree and read *Synapse Online* exclusively, you can subscribe to an email list which will send out announcements about *Synapse Online*. Just go to www.uua.org/connect, create an account for yourself in our database, and subscribe to the email list ***synapse-I***.

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