

Guide to Leading Discussion for

The Arc of the Universe Is Long: Unitarian Universalists, Anti-Racism and the Journey from Calgary

by Leslie Takahashi Morris, Chip Roush, and Leon Spencer

The Arc of the Universe Is Long looks in particular at the history of Unitarian Universalist anti-racism efforts from the mid-1980s to 2006. This guide is intended to generate conversation about race and change in the Unitarian Universalist Association. You can use it as part of a congregational program, or adapt it for individual use.

Throughout the discussion, we will be focusing on some unifying questions:

- What can we learn about identity?
- What can we learn about relationships in times of change?
- What can we learn about our Unitarian Universalist faith?

Participants are invited to engage with the material at the level that makes sense for them.

This discussion guide is organized into five sessions, as follows:

- Session I: Introduction and Part 1, The Past That Did Not Pass
- Session II: Part 2, Reclaiming an Identity
- Session III: Part 3, Revelation and Resistance
- Session IV: Part 4, Time of Paradox
- Session V: Part 5, Building the New House; Part 6, Seeds for a New Era; and Part 7, Messages for the Future

A 90-minute activity plan is provided for each session. If you have a larger group or if you wish not to be as constrained about time, consider scheduling your sessions for two hours.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns that might arise during the course of these discussions. I can be reached at 914-7373 or LeslieTM@mduuc.org

—*Leslie Takahashi-Morris*

Preparing to Lead the Sessions

This guide is designed to help people begin to explore the resources within *The Arc of the Universe Is Long*. It may stir conversations and, I hope, deep sharing with people who bring their stories to the table.

To make this sharing possible, commit to making the space respectful and a place of deep listening. The point is not to promote a certain perspective or to “teach” a body of knowledge. The point is to help people listen across difference and learn from our collective history as Unitarian Universalists.

Take the time to skim through each of the parts before you lead the group. You do not have to read each word or know exactly what is said; however, it might be helpful to have a sense of what is found in general in each section in case you want to bring further information into the discussion. The index may also be an important tool for you to look things up.

Don’t feel a need to be the “expert” if you do not feel that you are—or perhaps especially if you do! You can invite people into a mutual exploration, one in which you will learn together. Trying to be the expert tends to make people limit conversation to that which they feel they have mastery of, and this can artificially constrain the conversation.

Guidelines for Discussion

Note to group leader: Write the guidelines from the left column on a flip chart page. When you explain the guidelines to the group for the first time, you may want to make the points suggested in the right column.

Guidelines	Explanation
Try on ideas.	Consider ideas that you find yourself wanting to resist.
Practice “both/and” thinking.	When someone offers an alternative viewpoint, think “both/and” rather than “either/or.”
It is okay to disagree; it’s not okay to shame, blame, or attack.	Healthy conflict can allow us to grow.
Use “I” statements.	Rather than saying “We all believe this,” claim it for yourself: “I believe this” or “This is my experience.”
Respect confidentiality.	Confidentiality is especially important when people share their own identity stories.
Know that it’s okay to be messy.	Some of the issues we’ll be talking about here have been around for a long time; they will not be resolved by simple solutions.

Adapted from “Eight (8) Guiding Principles for Successful Outcomes Across Cultural Differences,” edited by Deborah J. Walker, Ph.D., Angela R. Bryant, J. D. and Dana Courtney, MSW,
www.commonhealthaction.org/pmdl/document/DL9/A-Visions%20guidelines%20-%20bennett.pdf

Session I

Introduction (pp. xxiii–xxviii)

Part 1, The Past That Did Not Pass (pp. 1–50)

Preparation

- Customize the [Sample Introductory Handout](#) by adding the information indicated, including the dates and location of your sessions and your contact information. Print out copies for participants.
- Before people enter the space, tape the [Timeline Dates and Quotes](#) on the floor. If you have a long space, you might set them out in two parallel lines so that participants walk in one direction to read the dates, then back in the other direction to reflect on the quotes.
- Provide markers and name tags.
- Write the [Guidelines for Discussion](#) on a flip chart page. (Note: Be sure to save this page, since you will post it at each session.)

Walking the Timeline (15 minutes)

As participants enter, invite them to make a name tag and then to walk the timeline in silence. Allow them to do this at their own pace.

Opening (10 minutes)

Invite a participant to read the opening quote from Part 1 (page 1) or another reading of your choice. Light the chalice.

Give participants copies of the introductory handout that you prepared.

Invite participants to go around the circle, sharing their names and what brings them to this class. They may also share reflections about their timeline walk at this point.

In pairs, discuss:

- What was your first encounter around race? When did it happen?

Guidelines (5 minutes)

Explain that in order to create a healthy environment for discussion, you would like the group to adopt some guidelines. Present the [Guidelines for Discussion](#) that you wrote on the flip chart earlier. Ask the group what other guidelines you might need, but suggest that they try to keep the list from becoming too long or it will be hard to use effectively.

Diving In (10 minutes)

Have the group skim “Notes on Language and Sources” (pages xxi—xxii). Invite them to share any reactions they may have.

Discuss these questions:

- Why is it important to learn more about our history and past?
- Why is it hard for us as Unitarian Universalists to think about areas of conflict and falling short in our past?

Voices (15 minutes)

Invite participants to spend a few minutes reading the following pieces:

- Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed (pages 22–23)
- Dr. Leon Spencer (page 28)

Ask participants to form pairs and explore thoughts on identity, relationship, and Unitarian Universalism after reading these pieces. As the circle reconvenes, you can ask whether a few people wish to share their thoughts with the larger group.

Reading and Reflection (20 minutes)

Invite participants to skim the Learnings section for Part 1 (pages 45-49). Now is a chance to begin to explore the three questions of the class:

- What can we learn about identity?
- What can we learn about relationships in times of change?
- What can we learn about our Unitarian Universalist faith?

Closing and Assignment (15 minutes)

Distribute [Assignments for Session II](#) and ask people to go around and give a brief answer to this question:

- What do I wish to reflect on more as I continue to read and explore?

To close, choose a quote from Part I of the book, such as “Affirmation of Hope” by Loretta F. Williams (pp. 49–50). Extinguish the chalice.

Assignments for Session II

- Skim Parts 1 and 2, “The Past That Did Not Pass” and “Reclaiming an Identity.”

Please read in advance of class:

- Dr. Norma Poinsett (pages 12-13)
- Rev. Melvin Hoover (pages 15-16)
- Establishing the Black Concerns Working Group (pages 26–27)
- Introduction and timeline for Part 2 (pages 51–54)
- “We Have No Problem . . . Again” (page 58)
- Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley (page 60)
- A Resolution at Calgary (pp. 65–80)
- Church of the Restoration, Philadelphia (page 86)
- All Souls Church Unitarian Universalist, Durham, North Carolina (pages 92–93)
- Jacqui James (pages 96-97)
- Definitions (page 98)
- Layla J. Rivera (page 102)
- Programs Tried by Congregations (page 116)
- Rev. Kurt Kuhwald (page 122)
- Part 2 Learnings (pages 145-149)

Session II

Part 2, Reclaiming an Identity (pp. 51–150)

Preparation

- Post the [Guidelines for Discussion](#).

Opening (20 minutes)

Invite a participant to read the opening quote from Part 2 (p. 51) or another reading of your choice. Light the chalice.

Review the Guidelines for Discussion.

Invite people to check in by sharing any happenings in their lives that they wish the group to know, as well as any questions they found themselves asking as they did the reading for this second session. Capture the questions on flip chart paper.

Ask if there are trends or truths revealed in the questions. Remind the group that, when addressing issues of oppression, some truths may be messy or difficult to resolve. Take some time with this part of the session, as it is a chance to really explore where people are with the material. What is most important is not covering all the readings—it is bringing all the participants into the dialogue.

Conversation About Identity (20 minutes)

Ask participants to find a partner and talk about a time when they became aware of their own racial or ethnic identity. Offer these guidelines:

- Tell the story as a story: remember details of what you were thinking, feeling, seeing, being.
- When it is your turn to listen, do so with a spirit of respect. Consider carefully before asking questions of your partner—try to simply hear the person’s story into truth.

Reconvene in the large group and discuss these questions:

- Did anything surprise you about reflecting on your own story of racial and ethnic identity development?
- What insights did you gain in listening to your partner's story?

Not everyone will have a chance to or will want to share in the large group. Gather a few responses to each question to bring a broader flavor of the conversation into the room.

Review the Timeline (20 minutes)

Ask the group to read through the events on the timeline for Part 2 (pages 51–53) in silence. After they do, ask:

- What makes you glad to be a Unitarian Universalist when you read this?
- What gives you pause or makes you sad?

If there are questions about particular events and people want to know more, ask if anyone in the group has knowledge of the events or take a few minutes and use the index to look up other references to those events.

Exploring Themes (10 minutes)

Invite the group to turn to p. 58, “We Have No Problem . . . Again.” As a group, share reflections on what this says about Unitarian Universalists’ identity and relationships within our faith.

Voices (15 minutes)

Ask participants to each find two people with whom they did not speak in one of the earlier conversations. Invite each triad to choose one of the following readings:

Jacqui James (p. 96), Layla J. Rivera (p. 102), or Rev. Kurt Kuhwald (p. 122). Ask them to discuss the reading in their triad, sharing the answers to these questions:

- Which voice was the hardest for you to hear?
- What questions does that voice raise in you?

Closing and Assignment (5 minutes)

Invite the group to regather. Share the [Assignments for Session III](#).

Ask participants to each one word or phrase that describes what is on their heart and mind. If this is hard for the group to do, model it after a few moments of silence.

Close with a responsive reading of “A Call to Worship” by Rev. Melvin Hoover (p. 150). Extinguish the chalice.

Assignments for Session III

Please read in advance of class:

- Introduction and timeline for Part 3 (pp. 151–154)
- Journey Toward Wholeness (pp.168-170)
- Tomas Firlé (pp. 166–167)
- Chapter 11, Strategies for Training—first section, about Crossroads Ministry (pp. 180–185)
- Journey Toward Wholeness: The Path to Anti-Racism (p. 198)
- Robette Dias (pp. 212–213)
- Identity-Based Organizations (p. 220)
- Rev. José Ballester (p. 222)
- “People of Color” (p. 224)
- Identity as a Spiritual Process (pp. 234–235)
- Chapter 14, “Why Anti-Racism Will Fail” (pp. 246–267)
- Part 3 Learnings (pp. 268–274)

Session III

Part 3, Revelation and Resistance (pp. 151–274)

Preparation

- Prepare a flip chart page with the Crossroads definition of racism:

Racism = Prejudice + Power

- Post on a flip chart the following “Case Study” outline:

Journey Toward Wholeness

Need to address institutional

Based on civil rights

Continuum of change

Centralized system

Thandeka

Focus on interpersonal

Based on issues of class/economic insecurity

Inner work for individuals

Small group focus

- Post the [Guidelines for Discussion](#).

Opening (20 minutes)

Invite a participant to read the opening quote from Part 3 (p. 151) or another reading of your choice. Light the chalice.

Review the Guidelines for Discussion.

Invite participants to check in:

- What is real in your life that you need the group to know?
- What questions do you have from the readings?

Take some time to allow the group to answer these questions. What will be important is maintaining an atmosphere of openness while also challenging participants to question their assumptions and to be aware of the ways these can negatively affect others, particularly those who have been historically marginalized.

Mapping Stakeholders (20 minutes)

Open this activity by reading the first two paragraphs on page 214. Discuss the idea of stakeholders:

- What organizations do you consider yourself to be a stakeholder in? (Ask for a few answers from the group as illustrations.)
- What do people expect when they consider themselves stakeholders?

Fill a piece of flip chart paper with all the people and groups that might consider themselves stakeholders in the conversation about race in the Unitarian Universalist Association in the time period being discussed. The paper should be very full and should include:

- Identity-based group members
- Congregational leaders not working on issues of anti-racism
- UUA president
- UU ministers
- Congregation members working on race issues
- Religious educators
- Seminarians
- Seminary educators
- District leaders
- District staff people
- Jubilee Working Group members
- UUA moderator
- UUA board members
- Leaders of the UU Ministers Association

- UU Musicians Network
- UUA staff people, etc.

Case Study: Signposts and Stages (35 minutes)

Ask participants to turn to “From Exclusive to Inclusive: Signposts and Stages” (page 312). Review the continuum, making these points:

- This is a summation of the model of long-term change informed by the Crossroads Ministry model. It was seen as a long-term commitment to change that went beyond personal and interpersonal interactions.
- This model required a commitment to looking at the culture of our congregations in a broader sense. It envisioned change as a process that takes years, not days or months.

You might have a brief discussion about the challenges of long-term change in a congregational culture where leadership changes frequently.

Refer to the [comparison](#) flip chart page you prepared and talk about some of the differences between what was perceived to be the Crossroads/Journey Toward Wholeness approach and the methodology that Rev. Dr. Thandeka introduced using covenant groups.

A few general comments you may want to make include:

- Many different approaches for generating real attitudinal changes in our congregations existed at the time, including training that had been started by the Black Concerns Working Group and others.
- All the approaches have merit and might work in some settings but not others.
- Rev. Dr. Thandeka’s challenge to some of the premises in the adapted Crossroads model became a lightning rod for those who felt that issues of race did not need to be addressed in our congregations. However, that was not what she was actually saying.

- In reality, the two approaches were not that far from one another, given the huge range of opinions in our Association.

Invite the group to try on some different perspectives. Ask: Which of these two positions would be more appealing (though, of course, everyone is an individual)

- . . . if you were a minister serving a small congregation with no remembered history of intentional work around race?
(Probably Thandeka's, because it does not require institutional change.)
- . . . if you were an activist of African descent who was part of the Black Empowerment movement?
(Probably the Journey Toward Wholeness position, because it addresses systemic issues.)
- . . . if you were a transracially adopted Asian American young adult raised UU?
(Probably the Journey Toward Wholeness position, because it addresses systemic and cultural issues.)
- . . . if you were a white religious educator and mother of multiracial youth?
(Probably Thandeka's, because it is more interpersonal, which is already an area of comfort.)

In the discussion, you may want to point out that institutional change is much harder than interpersonal conversation.

Closing and Assignment (10 minutes)

Share the [Assignments for Session IV](#) for the next session.

Go around the circle, asking participants to give a brief response to this question:

- What is one thing you have heard in this session's discussion that you will be thinking about further?

Invite a participant to read the words by James Luther Adams on p. 274.
Extinguish the chalice.

Assignments for Session IV

- Skim Part 4, Time of Paradox.

Please read in advance of class:

- Timeline and introduction for Part 4 (pp. 275–277)
- A Latino View of the Journey Toward Wholeness (p. 284)
- Rev. Patricia Jiminez (pp. 290–291)
- Explaining Anti-Racism (p. 298)
- Joseph Santos-Lyons (pp. 300–301)
- Chapter 18, Race, Theology and Reconciliation—introduction and first three sections (pp. 330–336)
- Rev. Dr. Kristen Harper (pp. 343–344)
- Part 4 Learnings (pp. 352–355)

Session IV

Part 4, Time of Paradox (pp. 275–355)

Preparation

- Post the [Guidelines for Discussion](#).

Opening (10 minutes)

Invite a participant to read the opening quote from Part 4 (page 275) or another reading of your choice. Light the chalice.

Review the Guidelines for Discussion.

Invite participants to check in:

- What is real in your life that you need the group to know?
- In the context of this discussion about Unitarian Universalism and race, what is the hardest thing for you to “try on”?

Recap (15 minutes)

This is a chance to briefly review where your group has been. Recall that you have covered much ground over the past three sessions:

- The Past That Did Not Pass: A long legacy of being on both sides of racial questions, including Native American conquests and slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, a particularly painful break around the Empowerment Controversies, a focus on urban concerns, and an effort in the late 1980s by the Black Concerns Working Group and others to rekindle discussions on race within Unitarian Universalism.

- Reclaiming an Identity: The attempts by Unitarian Universalist leaders, including UUA president John Buehrens, to reopen a conversation on race, catapulted into action by events in the larger world (such as the 1991 Rodney King beating in Los Angeles).
- Revelation and Resistance: The emergence of new approaches for having these difficult conversations (Crossroads, Journey Toward Wholeness) and resistance to those approaches (Thandeka and others).

As a group, discuss how our religious principles have been part of the conversations you have studied to date. While participants may come up with some examples, the reality is that what we believed as a religious movement was not that closely linked to many of the discussions.

Ask for volunteers to read aloud the John Buehrens quote on page 330 and Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley's words from the 2001 Urban Church Conference on pages 331–333. Discuss:

- What does it mean to be in “covenantal relationship” with one another?
- What do these speakers suggest about thinking about anti-racism work?

Relationships Across Generations (30 minutes)

Invite participants to review the key events on pages 275–277 and discuss any questions or observations they have.

Point out that a number of different voices were presented in the readings for this session. Invite participants to form pairs (preferably with someone they have not yet shared with) and take ten minutes to address these questions:

- Which voice spoke to you most and why?
- Whose voice was the hardest for you to hear?

In the large group, discuss:

- How is the nature of the conversation changing? (more voices, more complexity, still unsolved problems of black and white dialogue)
- Why do you think youth and young adults were so attracted to this conversation?

Case Study: Election of an African-American UUA President (15 minutes)

Remind participants that some of the readings for this session were about the experience of the Unitarian Universalist Association electing a president who is African-American and how this affected the conversation around race. Some people saw it as a victory, others as a chance for people to stop pushing for change.

Read aloud the following:

- Joe Barndt quote on pages 367–368
- Paula Cole Jones quote on pages 368–369
- Language of Reverence quote from Bill Sinkford on pages. 382–384

Conversation About Accountability (10 minutes)

Read the section on Accountability (p. 386). Discuss the idea of accountability, noting that this is a “messy” discussion with no right or wrong answers. Here are some possible questions:

- How do you hear the word “accountability”?
- How can Unitarian Universalists be accountable to people of color and Latina/o/Hispanic people when there are so few in our midst?

Ask participants to discuss in triads one thought that intrigues them about the readings from congregations?

Closing and Assignment (10 minutes)

Share the [Assignments for Session V](#).

Go around the circle, asking participants to give a brief answer to this question:

- What has left me curious?

Invite a participant to read “Word Warrior” by Christopher Donshale Sims (p. 355).

Extinguish the chalice.

Assignments for Session V

Please read in advance of class:

- Introduction and timeline for Part 5 (pp. 358–360)
- Rev. Joshua Pawelek (pp. 387–388)
- Rev. David Bumbaugh (pp. 402–403)
- Rev. Peter Morales (pp. 404–405)
- Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, New Jersey (p. 407)
- Metro New York Efforts (p. 408)
- First UU Church of Nashville, Tennessee (p. 409)
- UU Church of Cheyenne, Wyoming (pp. 410–411)
- First UU Church of San Diego, California (pp. 412–413)
- Youth Leadership (pp. 428–433)
- Resolutions of the Youth Council (p. 436)
- First UU Society of Burlington, Vermont (pp. 438–439)
- Part 5 Learnings (pp. 440–441)
- Introduction and timeline for Part 6 (pp. 443–445)
- Youth, Race, Class and General Assembly (pp. 452–457)
- The Elevator Story: A Metaphor (p. 456)
- Talking Out About Transracial Adoption (pp. 457–468)
- First UU Society of Burlington, Vermont (p. 496)
- Unitarian Church North, Mequon, Wisconsin (p. 502)
- JooYoung Choi (p. 514)
- Janice Marie Johnson (p. 528)

- Racial Barriers in UU Congregations (pp. 540–541)
- Part 6 Learnings, (pp. 542–547)
- Part 7 (pp. 551-610). Please note that you can skim much of this.

Session V

Part 5, Building the New House (pp. 357–442)

Part 6, Seeds for a New Era (pp. 443–550)

Part 7, Messages for the Future (pp. 551–600)

Preparation

- Post the [Guidelines for Discussion](#).

Opening (10 minutes)

Invite a participant to read the opening quote from Part 5 (page 357) or another reading of your choice. Light the chalice.

Review the Guidelines for Discussion.

Invite people to check in by sharing any happenings in their lives that they wish the group to know.

After everyone has checked in, have a brief discussion:

- What one observation or quote from the readings for this session do you believe has the most implications for congregations?
- Has reading this book caused you to look any differently at congregational life?

Case Study: Fort Worth General Assembly (20 minutes)

Ask participants: Given what we have been discussing in these sessions, what insights do you have into what went wrong during the Fort Worth General Assembly? Here are some possible topics to explore:

- Youth leadership that was ahead of where the Assembly was
- Lack of structures for expressing concerns (addressed by adding the Right Relations team the following year)
- Real differences in understanding—youth steeped in anti-racism language and ideas, in contrast to a majority culture that had barely thought about these ideas

Looking at the Road Behind Us (25 minutes)

Invite each participant to journal on the following three questions:

- What can we as Unitarian Universalists learn about our faith from this history?
- What can we learn about identity?
- What can we learn about relationships in times of change?

Invite participants to share their answers with one other person. Then reconvene as a large group and invite people who are willing to share a brief version with the entire group.

Looking to the Future (15 minutes)

In the full group, go around and ask each participant to answer the following question:

- What voice most closely echoes yours?
- What voice leaves you asking questions?

Questions and Answers (10 minutes)

This is a chance to raise any last questions that people have for the group to address as they can. If no one has a “good” answer to something, this is an opportunity to remind participants that “it is okay to be messy.”

Evaluation (5 minutes)

Allow time for participants to complete an evaluation form. If your congregation does not have one, consider simply asking:

- What was helpful in these discussions?
- What do you wish could be changed if these discussions were held again?

Closing and Assignment (5 minutes)

Go around the circle, asking participants to name one aspect of what has been discussed in the class about which they wish to learn more.

Invite one or more people to read all or part of “We Are Trying to Tell You” by Marta Valentin (pp. 548–550).

Extinguish the chalice.

Handouts and Other Materials

Sample Introductory Handout

The Arc of the Universe Is Long

[Insert name of your congregation or organization]

[Insert date span]

Facilitator: **[Insert name(s)]**

This class will use the book *The Arc of the Universe Is Long* by Leslie Takahashi Morris, Chip Roush, and Leon Spencer to generate a conversation about race and change in the Unitarian Universalist Association. This book looks in particular at the history of anti-racism efforts from the mid-1980s to 2006.

Throughout the class, we will be focusing on some unifying questions:

- What can we learn about identity?
- What can we learn about relationships in times of change?
- What can we learn about our Unitarian Universalist faith?

You are invited to engage with the material at the level that makes sense for you. For each class, a few key passages will be identified to read and reflect upon.

Class Schedule

Session	Date / Time / Location	Text Sections
Session I		Introduction Part 1, The Past That Did Not Pass
Session II		Part 2, Reclaiming an Identity
Session III		Part 3, Revelation and Resistance
Session IV		Part 4, Time of Paradox
Session V		Part 5, Building the New House Part 6, Seeds for a New Era Part 7, Messages for the Future

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns that might arise during the course of these discussions. I can be reached at **[insert contact info here]**.

Welcome to the Arc of the Universe class.

Please make a name tag, and then spend a few minutes taking the short history walk.

Walk along the timeline to read the dates and events, and then back in the other direction to read the quotes.

As you walk, reflect on the questions you have about the journey our Association has taken.

1965

Unitarian Universalist ministers
answer Rev. Dr. Martin Luther
King Jr.'s call to come to
Selma. Viola Liuzzo and Rev.
James Reeb are killed.

1968

The General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association passes a business resolution to recognize and finance a black empowerment group, the Black Affairs Council, at \$250,000 a year for four years.

1980

The Unitarian Universalist Association's Board of Trustees undertakes an Institutional Racism Audit to identify practices and policies that impede good race relations.

1983

*Empowerment: One
Denomination's Quest for
Racial Justice 1967–1982,*

a study of the Unitarian
Universalist Association by the
Commission on Appraisal, is
released. Per its suggestion, the
UUA Board appoints a Task
Force on Racism.

1984

Because of failed ministries in
UU churches, the UUA
Extension Department launches
the first Racial Ethnic New
Start congregations to create
places where African
Americans can minister.

1985

The General Assembly
establishes the Black Concerns
Working Group to implement
the Task Force on Racism's
suggestions.

1988

African American ministers and
religious professionals organize
the African American Unitarian
Universalist Ministry
(AAUUM).

1988

The UUA's Department of Ministry creates the *Beyond Categorical Thinking* program to help congregations envision hiring ministers from historically marginalized groups.

1988

The C*UUYAN (Continental
UU Young Adult Network) is
formed when bylaws are
adopted and approved.

1989

The new *Welcoming
Congregation* program to affirm
bisexual, gay, and lesbian
people is unveiled at the UU
Ministers Association
Professional Days.

1991

The UUA Board of Trustees
presents a basic list of changes
needed to achieve diversity
within ten years.

1992

A group of UUA affiliate organizations presents a resolution on *Racial and Cultural Diversity in Unitarian Universalism*. Delegates to the General Assembly in Calgary pass it by a large margin.

2002

The first annual “White Allies” conference, for people of Euro-American heritage who support anti-racism work, is held.

2005

The “JUUST Change”
Consultancy program for
congregations is launched.

2005

Youth of color are treated disrespectfully in incidents prior to and throughout General Assembly. The youth cancel the dance on closing night and gather in anger and sorrow.

The UUA Board appoints a Special Review Commission to investigate these and other events.

“‘Black Empowerment,’ ‘walkout,’ ‘racist’... the words we use, the language we have to describe the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s, are loaded. Why, for example, do we use the term ‘Black Empowerment Controversy’? It seems to make the anguish of that period the fault of the relatively small group of African-American Unitarian Universalists rather than the result of the white Unitarian Universalist encounter with race and racism. The term ‘White Power Controversy’ would be more accurate in many ways and would direct attention to the broad Unitarian Universalist movement and its need for healing and transformation, rather than to the small, marginalized group of ‘black’ people and their allies.

—Rev. William Sinkford, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, 2001–2009

“We are troubled by much of the language and categories used in the UUA’s attempts to achieve a more multiracial and multicultural religious movement. We are not comfortable with what scholars call the ‘black/white binary paradigm.’ Many Latinos feel left out of a discussion that is based on categories that grow out of the experience of African Americans.

“It is not that we believe racism and skin color are not important in North American life. Clearly, they are. However, for Latinos the critical dimensions are culture and language, not race.”

Representatives, Latina/o Unitarian
Universalist Networking Association

“Resistance is a natural part of any change process. It is also an indicator that people are involved in that process in significant ways. We therefore expected that we would encounter resistance when we confront racism because of the deep change this confrontation demands. . . . The bottom line is that people must engage in a process that is meaningful and transformative in order to keep moving forward. As Journey Toward Wholeness leaders, we have become more mindful of reflecting, through our own behaviors and language, a need for a common understanding and commitment; this has led some to perceive the Journey Toward Wholeness as being overly rigid and dogmatic rather than the open, inviting, dynamic process of change we are striving to co-create. This perception came in part from the inevitable process of resistance to change and from our emphasis on the power analysis approach; however, we have learned to listen to critiques offered in good faith and to be flexible in making needed adaptations.”

—*Continuing the Journey*

(Report to the 2001 General Assembly from the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee, Susan Suchoski Brown, chair)

“It’s time to start thinking about building a multiracial unity movement in our denomination, especially for youth and young adults tired of identity politics.

. . . It’s time to create a multiracial unity caucus in the UUA under the slogan: Asian Latin Black Native American White Arab Jew we must unite!”

—Finley Campbell

“I have made this work a priority in my life, because my organized UU sisters and brothers of color have asked for it. I am very clear about the things I have given up to make room for doing this very important work. When white people make themselves accountable to people of color, it cannot help but change our lives.”

—Rev. Josh Pawelek

“That’s part of our identity, to be diverse. . . . To have Asians and Latinos and blacks that were UUs. So everybody looking at it would say, ‘Aren’t they diverse!’—but leave your culture at home.”

—Rev. Mel Hoover

“Some people of color got marginalized in the UUA, because the only thing they could talk about was anti-oppression issues. It was the only thing they knew to talk about. It was their only level of service in the UUA. It was the only ministry they had, and it seemed as though it were their only interest.”

—Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt

“As an association of congregations, we are theologically immature. And the immaturity is that our theology has no place for sin, so we don’t have a place for redemption.”

—Rev. Danielle DiBona

“You have to get over not making mistakes—we don’t accept the fact that we can make mistakes. Perhaps it is our individual roots. We are still learning to be in right relation one with one another, so that we can honestly say ‘I love you. I made a mistake, let’s fix it.’ Sometimes we just need to understand that we screwed up and yes, it is hard. For me it is wonderful for all of us to be able to stay at the table of Unitarian Universalism.”

—Rev. Hope Johnson

“A positive outcome of the UUA’s anti-racism work is that it has inspired strong responses from youth and young adults. Their work in anti-racism has shown, and continues to show, energy, insight and commitment. That our youth and young adult networks are one of the very, very few places where the work of Anti-Racism is now going on leaves me disillusioned.”

—Rev. Kurt Kuhwald

Anti-Racism Journey

Poem from youth training, 2004

Being in the red zone

Overwhelmed

Examining why we censor ourselves (why we do it,

Feeling discouraged)

Transforming guilt into something else useful

Feeling like the blame is being placed by all the white folks

People of color—feeling like they have to justify every thing that they say having
to do with anti-racism work

People of color—having to censor self to white people so they don't feel bad and
feeling tokenized

People are feeling uncomfortable.