

REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, AND ACTION GUIDE
NOVEMBER 2015



Southern Witness: Unitarians and Universalists in the Civil Rights Era

Book by Gordon D. Gibson
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Introduction

In *Southern Witness: Unitarians and Universalists in the Civil Rights Era*, author Gordon Gibson explores the history of Unitarian and Universalist involvement in the mid-twentieth century civil rights movement in the Southern United States. He shares documentary information and first person accounts that allow the reader to understand both the practical work done on behalf of racial desegregation and civil rights and the courage and support required to sustain the work.

This discussion guide invites participants to make connections between the stories from that era and the work of today's Unitarian Universalists in supporting the Black Lives Matter movement, voting rights, and other civil rights work of our own time. It invites participants not only to reflect and discuss, but also to act, living out the values of our faith.

Using this Guide

This guide has plans for a single, 90 minute session as well as for a series of 3, 90 minute sessions. Handouts are included at the end of the guide. Although a single individual can facilitate the discussion, it is recommended that two people co-facilitate, sharing responsibility. Review [Accessibility Guidelines for Adult Workshop Presenters](#) and implement adaptations to accommodate those in your group.

NOTE: The second session of the three-session version calls for a guest speaker who can explain and answer questions about local civil rights and racial justice efforts led by people of color. Your minister, religious educator, or social action committee/council may have helpful contacts with local organizations or groups. There may be members of your congregation who are actively involved in local efforts; if so, ask for their guidance. If at all possible, invite a guest speaker from an organization or group with which your congregation (or members of your congregation) already has a working relationship.

Single Session Version

Goals

- Provide a process for participants to explore the legacy of Unitarian Universalist involvement in the mid-20th century civil rights movement
- Invite participants to discover insights and inspiration from *Southern Witness* that is helpful and supportive in acting for racial justice today
- Provide a process for determining action steps arising out of the reading and reflection.

Materials

- Name badges
- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Chairs to arrange for discussion
- Tables or lapboards for writing
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Paper and pens/pencils
- Markers – broad tip and narrow tip
- Handout 1, Personal Reflection Worksheet for Single Session 1 (p. 23)
- Handout 6, What We Can Learn (p. 29)
- Handout 7, Find Out More (p..31)
- 3x5 index cards
- Optional: *Singing The Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook
- Optional: Beverages and a simple snack

Preparation

- Set out name badges and markers and prepare to greet participants as they arrive.
- Set out the chalice and arrange the chairs in a circle around it. If desired, set out hymnals.
- Set out pens, pencils, markers, and index cards.
- Post session plan.
- Review and make copies of handouts.
- Title a piece of newsprint “Our Covenant” and write these points:
 - We will speak one at a time, and allow another to finish before speaking.
 - We will listen to learn and understand, rather than to preparing to debate others’ words.

- We will speak from our own perspective and experience and honor the perspectives and experiences of other people. Where appropriate, we will use I-statements to express opinions.
- Optional: Set out beverages and snack.

Opening (7 minutes)

Welcome participants. Invite them to go around the circle and share their name and their relationship with Unitarian Universalism or with the congregation, depending on your context.

Say:

To help us be fully present with one another, let's begin by focusing on our breath. Make your body comfortable, and close your eyes if you wish. Become aware of the rhythm of your breath. . . . Breathe in deeply and release your breath with a sigh. . . . Repeat the deep breath and release with a sigh three times. . . . As you continue to be aware of the rhythm of your breathing, reflect on the book, *Southern Witness*. What values led you to read the book, and then to come to this group to talk about it?

Light the chalice and share these words:

We light the chalice with gratitude for those who have gone before us. May we learn from the witness of our southern congregations as we act today in witness for our values and our faith.

If desired, sing "From You I Receive," Hymn 402.

Covenant (5 minutes)

Explain that each of the three *Southern Witness* discussion sessions will include time for personal reflection, sharing, and group discussion. Say, "We want to create together a safe place to share our own observations about the book, *Southern Witness*, and our own feelings, hope, fears and actions about racial justice work. We are going to start by agreeing to a covenant." Post the covenant. Invite additions and clarifications until all are comfortable with the agreements. Ask them to signal agreement by nodding or saying yes.

Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

Distribute Handout 2, Personal Reflection Worksheet for Session 1, explaining that this worksheet will allow them to reflect quietly before engaging with others. Tell them that after the reflection

time, they need only share as they are comfortable. Invite participants to move to tables or to take a lapboard. Then, ask them to consider the questions on the worksheet and to respond with words or drawings as they are moved.

Sharing (15 minutes)

Invite participants to turn to a person seated near them and share their reflections as they are comfortable. Allow five minutes for each person to share without interruption, signaling when it is time to change speakers. Then, gather the large group and invite observations and comments about what they learned from the process of reflecting and sharing.

Discussion (25 minutes)

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- In what ways do the stories told in *Southern Witness* provide insight, inspiration, and support for racial justice work today- for you personally and for the group or congregation?
- What are the similarities and differences between that time and now?

What We Can Learn (25 minutes)

Share this quote from Morris Dees:

To effectively change the atmosphere, local people must be convinced by the example of other local people that we must make a change. . . . day to day. (p. 168)

Ask participants to turn their attention to racial justice efforts today, including the #Black Lives Matter movement. Distribute Handout 6, What We Can Learn and invite participants to read it with pen or pencil in hand. Invite them to circle or check questions that seem particularly important to your congregation or group at this time. By show of hands, discover which questions participants selected. Allow 10 minutes for this part of the activity.

Then, distribute Handout 7, Find Out More. Invite the group to consider their selected questions and the list of available resources to talk about what next actions might be for the congregation or group. Brainstorm a list of ideas for follow-up. Then, facilitate a conversation that narrows the list to one or two follow-up actions that involve others beyond this discussion group. Make a list of steps and a timeline for the action(s) you have chosen. Be sure to plan for conversation with the parish minister, religious educator, and congregational leaders about your plans. Decide how to

request their support and guidance for moving your action plan forward. Decide how members of the group will be accountable to one another for carrying out parts of the plan.

Closing (3 minutes)

Offer this reading from the book:

Our day, no less than the civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s, contains challenges to core Unitarian Universalist values and beliefs. Today's challenges may be less clear-cut, more multi-faceted, but they are no less real. Can we, laypeople and clergy, be as effective today at carrying our faith into society for service and action? Can we today bring our experiences back into our sanctuaries for reflections and deepening? ...[T]hese stories must lead us to understand that we have so much to do. (p. 244)

Say, "We extinguish the chalice with gratitude for Gordon D. Gibson, for his work during the Civil Rights Era, and for gathering the stories and writing the book *Southern Witness*. May their lessons become flames within our hearts." Thank participants.

Three Session Version

Goals

- Provide a process for participants to explore the legacy of Unitarian Universalist involvement in the mid-20th century civil rights movement
- Invite participants to discover insights and inspiration from *Southern Witness* that is helpful and supportive in acting for racial justice today
- Invite congregations and groups to begin or strengthen partnerships with local organizations led by people of color working for racial justice
- Name some important congregational or group questions arising from the experience of southern Unitarian Universalist congregations in the mid-20th century civil rights movement
- Provide a process for determining action steps arising out of the reading and reflection
- Provide suggested resources to help a congregation or group carry out its plan.

Session 1

Materials

- Name badges
- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Chairs to arrange for discussion
- Tables or lapboards for writing
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Paper and pens/pencils
- Markers – broad tip and narrow tip
- Handout 2, Personal Reflection Worksheet for Session 1 (p. 24)
- Handout 5, Options for Action (p. 27)
- 3x5 index cards
- Optional: *Singing The Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook
- Optional: Beverages and a simple snack

Preparation

- Set out name badges and markers and prepare to greet participants as they arrive.
- Set out the chalice and arrange the chairs in a circle around it. If desired, set out hymnals.
- Set out pens, pencils, markers, and index cards.
- Post session plan.
- Review and make copies of handouts.
- Title a piece of newsprint “Our Covenant” and write these points:
 - We will speak one at a time, and allow another to finish before speaking.
 - We will listen to learn and understand, rather than to preparing to debate others’ words.
 - We will speak from our own perspective and experience and honor the perspectives and experiences of other people. Where appropriate, we will use I-statements to express opinions.
- Optional: Set out beverages and snack.

Opening (7 minutes)

Welcome participants. Invite them to go around the circle and share their name and their relationship with Unitarian Universalism or with the congregation, depending on your context.

Say:

To help us be fully present with one another, let's begin by focusing on our breath. Make your body comfortable, and close your eyes if you wish. Become aware of the rhythm of your breath. . . . Breathe in deeply and release your breath with a sigh. . . . Repeat the deep breath and release with a sigh three times. . . . As you continue to be aware of the rhythm of your breathing, reflect on the book, *Southern Witness*. What values led you to read the book, and then to come to this group to talk about it?

Light the chalice and share these words:

We light the chalice with gratitude for those who have gone before us. May we learn from the witness of our southern congregations as we act today in witness for our values and our faith.

If desired, sing "From You I Receive," Hymn 402.

Covenant (5 minutes)

Explain that each of the three *Southern Witness* discussion sessions will include time for personal reflection, sharing, and group discussion. Say, "We want to create together a safe place to share our own observations about the book, *Southern Witness*, and our own feelings, hope, fears and actions about civil rights. We are going to start by agreeing to a covenant." Post the covenant. Invite additions and clarifications until all are comfortable with the agreements. Ask them to signal agreement by nodding or saying yes.

Personal Reflection (20 minutes)

Begin by inviting participants to name some of the emotions individuals in the book *Southern Witness* describe feeling as they engaged with racial justice and civil rights issues. Write responses on newsprint. Allow five minutes for brainstorming.

Distribute Handout 2, Personal Reflection Worksheet for Session 1, explaining that this worksheet will allow them to reflect quietly before engaging with others. Tell them that after the reflection time, they need only share as they are comfortable. Invite participants to move to tables or to take a lapboard. Then, ask them to write down something about their experience with racial justice or civil rights work, both in the past and in the present. Ask, "What experiences have you had advocating for racial equity?" After two to three minutes, ask participants to bring to mind the emotions they associate with those experiences and to jot down notes and images that reflect those emotions. Then, invite them to spend two to three minutes reflecting on the stories in

Southern Witness with which they felt the most connection. Ask, “How were you affected by those stories?”

Sharing (20 minutes)

Invite participants to turn to a person seated near them and share their reflections as they are comfortable. Allow five minutes for each person to share without interruption, signaling when it is time to change speakers. Then, gather the large group and invite observations and comments about what they learned from the process of reflecting and sharing.

Making Commitments (30 minutes)

Share this quote from the “What We Can Learn from What We Did” chapter of the book:

We can learn the value of articulating and applying our values. We can strive for a praxis that can inform our reflection, and reflection that may goad us into praxis. We can learn that an informed and empowered laity is an awesome force. We can learn that having a racially inclusive constituency is important to the health, well-being, and relevance of a congregation. We can learn that we need not only to build bridges, but also to be a bridging institution, wherever we exist. We can learn that it is healthy to keep ourselves fresh and new, rather than to unconsciously accommodate the environing society. We can learn that it matters what we believe and how we organize ourselves. (p. 244)

Tell participants that in the spirit of Gibson’s statement, you would like to add another element to the covenant. The additional element is a promise to move from reflection to action, honoring and continuing the work lifted up in *Southern Witness*. Write on a clean piece of newsprint, “We covenant with one another to engage in a practice of reflection and action during the weeks when this discussion group meets.”

Remind participants of this quote taken from the newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Augusta. It described a memorial service held after the 1968 assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King:

Mrs. Eliza Paschall, Unitarian and civil rights worker from Atlanta who gave the memorial address, . . . stressed the point that even seemingly small acts (such as paying your maid a living wage, writing your congressman to urge civil rights legislation, using Mr. and Mrs. in addressing all adults, etc.) can be very important. Many came away with the realization that all of us can be a living memorial [to Dr. King] by the way we live our lives. (p. 85)

Then, ask for initial responses to this proposed addition to the group covenant, allowing two or three minutes at this point for comments.

Invite them to explore some possible actions before agreeing to this additional covenant point. Distribute Handout 5, Options for Action, explaining that while it lists several avenues for action in response to the book, there are certainly other possibilities. Invite participants to read the handout with pen/pencil in hand, checking the ones they are drawn to and writing in any additional possible actions. After a time, ask them to circle one (or more) that they are willing to commit to doing during the weeks the discussion group meets. Encourage participants to choose realistically for their daily lives and to remember that one small action can be meaningful beyond our knowledge, especially when done with intention and presence. Allow ten minutes for this part of the activity.

Ask participants to turn and form pairs to share and discuss their choices and their responses to making a commitment to act. Allow ten minutes for this part of the activity, telling pairs halfway through the time so that they can change speakers.

Then, re-gather the large group and invite comments, observations, and reflections about the additional covenant item and about making a commitment to act. Ask participants if they agree to the incorporation of the additional covenant point. If so, add it to the list of covenant points on newsprint.

Give two 3x5 index cards to each person. Ask participants to write the action(s) that they commit to do on each card. Ask them to take one card home and to tape the other on the covenant newsprint. Remind them that we celebrate, support, and honor each participant's individual reflection and action cycle.

Session Review (5 minutes)

Invite participants to think about one thing they liked about the session and one thing they wished were different and to briefly share their "likes and wishes," if they choose.

Closing (3 minutes)

Announce the guest for the next session. Offer this reading from the book:

Our day, no less than the civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s, contains challenges to core Unitarian Universalist values and beliefs. Today's challenges may be less clear-cut,

more multi-faceted, but they are no less real. Can we, laypeople and clergy, be as effective today at carrying our faith into society for service and action? Can we today bring our experiences back into our sanctuaries for reflections and deepening? . . . [T]hese stories must lead us to understand that we have so much to do. (p. 244)

Say, "We extinguish the chalice with gratitude for Gordon D. Gibson, for his work during the Civil Rights Era, and for gathering the stories and writing the book *Southern Witness*. May their lessons become flames within our hearts." Thank participants.

Session 2

Materials

- Name badges
- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Chairs to arrange for discussion
- Tables or lapboards for writing
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Paper and pens/pencils
- Markers – broad tip and narrow tip
- Handout 3, Personal Reflection Worksheet for Session 2 (p. 25)
- Optional: *Singing The Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook
- Optional: Beverages and a simple snack

Preparation

- Set out name badges and markers and prepare to greet participants as they arrive.
- Set out the chalice and arrange the chairs in a circle around it. If desired, set out hymnals.
- Set out pens, pencils, and markers.
- Post the covenant from Session 1.
- Post session plan.
- Review and make copies of handouts.
- Print three copies of the opening readings.
- Optional: Set out beverages and snack.

Opening (7 minutes)

Welcome participants. Introduce your guest and explain the person's affiliation. Ask participants to go around the circle and share their name. Invite participants to begin your time together by focusing on our breath.

Please be aware of the rhythm of your breath. . . . Breathe in deeply and release your breath with a sigh. . . . Repeat the deep breath and release with a sigh three times. . . .

Be aware of the rhythm of your breathing. Our focus question for silent reflection is:

Where do I turn when I am unsettled, uncomfortable, or hurting?

Ask for three volunteers to share three readings from the book:

It was an Oasis. . . . Almost all of my childhood memories are from the Church. The Sunday class was the only place I felt intellectually stimulated and emotionally supported. - Carolyn Fuller, who grew up in the Birmingham Unitarian Church and suffered significant isolation in high school as a result of talking to the Black student who had entered her high school (p. 159)

We had a group to come back to and nurse our wounds. We had a place to come back to talk to each other. - Dr. Page Acree, member of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge (p. 217 -218)

The Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge was important to Becky Cureau, not for taking overt public stands on issues, but for providing a place with positive experiences to offset or contrast with still-segregated waiting rooms and other demeaning experiences... Describing herself as “a proud Black woman,” Cureau preferred to be seen as herself, with race as one aspect of that self. (p. 215)

Light the chalice, saying, “We light the chalice with gratitude for those who went before us and created places where all people could develop supportive friendships, create positive experience, and model respect for the wholeness of each person.” If desired, sing “From You I Receive,” Hymn 402. Briefly review the covenant, noting that the “action” point of the covenant will be discussed later in the session.

Guest Speaker (45 minutes)

Introduce your guest speaker, explaining their affiliation and expressing gratitude for their work in your community. Explain briefly that your group has learned about the actions of some Southern Unitarian Universalists during the 1950s and 1960s civil rights era, and want to learn more about civil rights work in our own time and how your congregation or group can be (more) supportive. Ask the speaker to speak about the work and needs in the local community and the strategic priorities of the organization they represent. Ask what help and support is needed to sustain the mission. Then, if the speaker seems open to the question, invite them to share something of how they got involved in the work and what keeps them sustained when the work is hard or discouraging.

If there is time, invite participants to ask questions about the speaker’s work. You may have to be gentle, but firm, in discouraging statements and personal stories disguised as questions, reminding participants that there will be time coming to process their own stories and thoughts.

As the time with your speaker concludes, thank them graciously for their time and their willingness to speak with your group before bidding farewell.

Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

Distribute Handout 3, Personal Reflection Worksheet for Session 2, explaining that this worksheet will allow them to reflect quietly before engaging with others. Tell them that after the reflection time, they need only share as they are comfortable. Invite participants to move to tables or to take a lapboard. Then, ask participants to reflect on their action commitments of the past week and what they have learned from the speaker today.

Checking In on Commitments (20 minutes)

Ask participants to turn and form pairs to share what they choose from their reflections. Allow ten minutes for this part of the activity, telling pairs halfway through the time so that they can change speakers. Then, re-gather the large group and invite participants to share comments, observations, and reflections arising from the paired conversation.

Hand out two 3x5 cards for each person, one for home and one for attaching to the covenant. Ask participants to update or add anticipated actions to their commitment and attach them to the written covenant. Ask if any possible actions have emerged that some of the participants would like to do together.

Session Review (5 minutes)

Invite participants to think about one thing they liked about the session and one thing they wished were different and to briefly share their “likes and wishes,” if they choose.

Closing (3 minutes)

Share this passage from the book:

The events in Selma had a major impact on the Unitarian Church of Birmingham. After James Reeb was attacked and critically injured in Selma on March 9, he was put in an ambulance and taken to Birmingham. Phone calls alerted people that the ambulance was en route. Dr. Joseph Volker, vice president for health affairs of the medical and dental colleges, and other Unitarian Universalists on the staff of University Hospital quickly prepared to give him the best possible care... For two and a half weeks, the congregation dealt with the care of Jim Reeb and those around him; his death; preparation of a public

statement by the board about him; local services memorializing him; the UUA Board and many others coming through Birmingham en route to his Selma memorial service; a ten-minute board meeting that agreed to house, feed, and arrange transportation for an unknown number of Unitarian Universalists coming to join in the final day of the Selma-to-Montgomery march; and handling the arrival, feeding, housing, and dispatch of about 225 people. (p. 156)

Say, "As we extinguish the chalice may we carry this image of Unitarian Universalists living their faith in large ways and small." Thank participants.

Session 3

Materials

- Name badges
- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Chairs to arrange for discussion
- Tables or lapboards for writing
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Paper and pens/pencils
- Markers – broad tip and narrow tip
- Handout 4, Personal Reflection Worksheet for Session 3 (p. 26)
- Handout 6, What We Can Learn (p. 29)
- Handout 7, Find Out More (p. 31)
- Optional: Singing The Living Tradition(UUA Publication: Boston, 1993)
- Optional: Beverages and a simple snack

Preparation

- Set out name badges and markers and prepare to greet participants as they arrive.
- Set out the chalice and arrange the chairs in a circle around it. If desired, set out hymnals.
- Set out pens, pencils, and markers.
- Post the covenant from Session 1.
- Post session plan.
- Print a copy of the opening readings and cut the two readings apart.
- Review and make copies of handouts.
- Optional: Set out beverages and snack.

Opening (10 minutes)

Welcome participants. Invite them to begin your time together by focusing on breath. Say:

Please be aware of the rhythm of your breath. . . . Breathe in deeply and release your breath with a sigh. . . . Repeat the deep breath and release with a sigh three times. . . . Be aware of the rhythm of your breathing. Our focus questions for silent reflection are:

- What events, images, stories, and voices lent a sense of urgency to civil rights work in the mid-20th century?

- What events, images, stories, and voices lend a sense of urgency to civil rights work today?

Ask for volunteers to share two readings from the book:

You would have had to have been here and lived through it to feel how it was. In this town, there were a lot of fine people that did not think that way. But you know what Edmund Burke said: ‘All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to remain silent.’ But you see the fear. Many of the good people were afraid. – Dottie Klintworth, the Unitarian Church of Charleston (p. 51)

Obviously, the group is terribly small for a city the size of Jackson and even this small group is too dependent on several older members. Nonetheless, the group shows real spirit and concern, even though there is no outstanding leadership in the entire group...

The unassuming courage of our Jackson Unitarians should win the admiration of us all. . . . Some day we will mark with great pride this small band, who without vain-seeking or grand-standing kept alive an open membership and a courageous spirit during months and years of terror, state-wide community pressures, and religious intolerance. – Peter Raible, minister of the University Unitarian Church in Seattle, who came to the aid of the congregation after their minister was shot and forced out of town by death threats (p. 197)

Light the chalice, saying, “We light the chalice with gratitude for Dottie Klintworth, and the many others like her, who show us how to turn out values into practical action and how to feel compassion for those who are afraid. And we light the chalice with great pride and in honor of the Jackson Unitarian Church, and the congregations like them, who give us a powerful witness for keeping our values alive through actions and a courageous spirit amidst real risk to their physical safety.” If desired, sing “From You I Receive,” Hymn 402, in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Briefly review the covenant.

Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

Distribute Handout 4, Personal Reflection Worksheet for Session 3, explaining that this worksheet will allow them to reflect quietly before engaging with others. Tell them that after the reflection time, they need only share as they are comfortable. Invite participants to move to tables or to take a lapboard. Then, invite them to consider the sense of urgency as felt in the stories told in

Southern Witness. Ask them to reflect on what gives them a sense of urgency about racial justice today.

Sharing and Checking in on Commitments (15 minutes)

Invite participants to turn to a person seated near them and share their reflections as they are comfortable, as well as an update on the action commitment they have made. Allow five minutes for each person to share without interruption, signaling when it is time to change speakers. Then, gather the large group and invite observations and comments about what they learned from the process of reflecting and sharing.

What We Can Learn (35 minutes)

Share this quote from Morris Dees:

To effectively change the atmosphere, local people must be convinced by the example of other local people that we must make a change. . . . day to day. (p. 168)

Ask participants to turn their attention to racial justice efforts today, including the #Black Lives Matter movement. Distribute Handout 6, What We Can Learn and invite participants to read it with pen or pencil in hand. Invite them to circle or check questions that seem particularly important to your congregation or group at this time. By show of hands, decide on which of the questions to discuss more deeply. Facilitate a group discussion using the question as a starting point.

Then, distribute Handout 7, Find Out More. Invite the group to consider their congregational questions discussion, their actions, what they learned from the guest speaker, and the list of available resources to talk about next actions for your congregation or group. Brainstorm a list of ideas for follow-up and then facilitate a conversation that narrows the list to one or two follow-up actions that involve others beyond this discussion group. Make a list of steps and a timeline for the action(s) you have chosen. Be sure to plan for conversation with the parish minister, religious educator, and congregational leaders about your plans. Decide how to request their support and guidance for moving your action plan forward. Decide how members of the group will be accountable to one another for carrying out parts of the plan.

Session Review (5 minutes)

Invite participants to think about one thing they liked about the session and one thing they wished were different and to briefly share their “likes and wishes,” if they choose.

Closing (5 minutes)

Say, “When asked, well into his retirement, if he would do it again, Albert D’Orlando responded: ‘Yes, of course I would, for I cannot imagine another calling through which I could have given emphasis to human worth and dignity and which in doing so, would have opened the way for me to give meaning to my own life.’” (p. 210 – 211)

Continue, saying, “We extinguish the chalice with gratitude for our time together. May we continue to feel the support of each other as seek ways to give meaning to our lives and to act for human worth and dignity.” Thank participants for being part of the group.

Handouts

Handout 1: Personal Reflection Worksheet for Single Session

We move and sustain the movement of our values by being whole people—hearts loving, eyes seeing, minds learning and reflecting about hopes and fears, mouths speaking, hands moving and doing.

What experiences have you had advocating for racial equity?

With which stories in *Southern Witness* do you feel the most connection? How were you affected by the stories?

What contemporary events, images, stories, and voices give you a sense of urgency about civil rights and racial justice work today?

Are you active in racial justice work today? If not, are you willing to begin?

Handout 2: Personal Reflection Worksheet for Session 1

We move and sustain the movement of our values by being whole people—hearts loving, eyes seeing, minds learning and reflecting about hopes and fears, mouths speaking, hands moving and doing.

What experiences have you had advocating for racial equity?

Bring to mind the emotions you associate with those experiences.

With which stories in *Southern Witness* do you feel the most connection? How were you affected by the stories?

Handout 3: Personal Reflection Worksheet for Session 2

We move and sustain the movement of our values by being whole people—hearts loving, eyes seeing, minds learning and reflecting about hopes and fears, mouths speaking, hands moving and doing.

Reflect on the quote at the top of the page. How did you do in meeting your action commitment from last week? What are your feelings about that commitment and your approach to fulfilling it?

What did you learn or discover through your action? How were you affected as a whole person—feeling, seeing, learning, hoping, fearing, speaking, moving, doing?

What insights and new learning did you gain from the guest speaker today?

Handout 4: Personal Reflection Worksheet for Session 3

We move and sustain the movement of our values by being whole people—hearts loving, eyes seeing, minds learning and reflecting about hopes and fears, mouths speaking, hands moving and doing.

What stories convey the sense of urgency felt by those involved in the mid-20th century civil rights movement?

How did last week's speaker convey a sense of urgency about racial justice work?

What events, images, stories, and voices give you a sense of urgency about civil rights and racial justice work today?

Handout 5: Options for Action

Some suggestions for actions that continue the work documented in *Southern Witness*.

Partnerships

Working with integrated groups and with black leaders was a regular theme in Southern Witness. Congregations and individuals worked with local Councils of Human Relations, NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) branches, and ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union), and Urban League chapters. Many also regularly invited guest speakers who were African American or of African descent.

- **Find out** if your community has a local chapter of one of these organizations. Contact the local chapter and ask about their current strategic priorities. **Ask how you might be helpful** as a volunteer. In addition, **talk with your minister** about beginning, or expanding, a pulpit exchange/speaker invitation to leaders of these organizations.

Integration/Desegregation of Public Spaces

Many of the southern congregations started integrated preschools and summer camps for children, and/or had integrated youth groups. Integrating congregations was sometimes difficult, causing fear and conflict, and sometimes was seen as a statement of faith and commitment.

- **Consider** the racial composition of your town, city, and/or county. Is the place where you live integrated, or largely segregated by race? **Find out** how housing patterns came to be as they are in the place where you live, and **share** the information with friends, family, and those in your congregation.
- **Read** "[A Better Start](#)," Teacher's College, Columbia University, a 2015 report about segregation and disparities in early childhood education in the United States. **Listen** to "[The Problem We All Live With](#)," an archived *This American Life* radio broadcast describing what transpired when a school district near Ferguson, Missouri, was accidentally integrated. **Consider:** What is the history of school segregation and integration where you live? Are there racial disparities in graduation rates, disciplinary measures, and/or enrollment in advanced classes? What can you do to **support more equitable distribution of resources and more racial and cultural diversity** in local public schools?
- **Think** about the racial composition of your congregation's membership. What racial and cultural diversity is represented in lay leadership? Pulpit speakers? Music, art, poetry, and readings? Teachers and leaders of children and youth? **Read** "[Moving Toward an](#)

[Inclusive Vision](#),” from the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA), and **work with** professional and lay leaders to undertake some of the suggested actions.

Voting Rights

Voting rights was a central issue during the time of Southern Witness and continues to be so today.

- **Consider:**
 - What are the issues of voting rights in your local community, in your state? Where can you find information about to **help with ongoing efforts**?
 - Is your congregation or social justice committee engaged with this issue already? How? What action will you do to **support your congregation’s work** on voting rights?
 - What is one **action** you and/or your congregation will do, in partnership with local civil rights groups?

Responsiveness

The congregations in Southern Witness responded to the civil rights issues of their time and place. Black Lives Matter (#BlackLivesMatter) has been called “a new civil rights movement being born.”

- **Check out** [“Five Ways to Support Black Lives Matter,”](#) by Kenny Wiley, published in the *UU World* for practical suggestions for supporting the movement. **Watch** the Standing on the Side of Love [Black Lives Matter webinar](#) alone or with a group. Begin or continue the conversation about countering a dominant culture that devalues black people’s lives. Then, **find out** what kind of support #BlackLivesMatter activists (especially local activists) are seeking from individuals and religious groups, and **offer support accordingly.**

Handout 6: What We Can Learn

In his final chapter, “Revelation: What We Can Learn from What We Did,” Gordon Gibson makes three key observations, each of which is a starting place for reflection and action:

1. During the civil rights era one of the essential functions Unitarian Universalist congregations provided was “a safe place to decompress and to process” and to meet the emotional need “to feel accepted, and, ideally, affirmed and embraced.” (p. 241)
 - How do we as a group or congregation provide safe places to share and reflect on our personal hopes, fears, experiences, and actions for civil rights?
 - How can our congregations provide safe spaces for people of all races to do the spiritual work needed to allow them to struggle against a system that devalues the lives of people of color, acknowledging that the work is different for people for those who identify as white than it is for those who identify as people of color?
2. When Unitarians and Universalists acted and witnessed in the civil rights era, the size of the fellowships or congregations mattered less than what Gibson calls the *essence* of a congregation, which he describes: “If the congregation understood itself as a religious community existing and working in a societal context, its members actively noticed what was going on in the wider community and found places to live out their values.” (p. 243)
 - What does our congregation (and individuals in our congregation) say about the how civil rights and racial justice are in line with our values?
 - What actions do we take to live out that value?
 - Are there times when we remain silent, for whatever reasons, rather than speak up about and act on issues of civil rights and racial justice?
3. Gibson tells us what we can learn from the Unitarian Universalist stories, individual and institutional:

We can learn the value of articulating and applying our values. We can strive for a praxis that can inform our reflection, and reflection that may goad us into praxis. We can learn that an informed and empowered laity is an awesome force. We can learn that having a racially inclusive constituency is important to the health, well-being, and relevance of a congregation. We can learn that we need not only to build bridges, but also to be a bridging institution, wherever we exist. We can learn that it is healthy to keep ourselves fresh and new, rather than to unconsciously accommodate the enviroing society. We can learn that it matters what we believe and how we organize ourselves.” (p. 244)

 - How are we building bridges in the work for civil rights in our larger community?

- With which justice-making groups are we engaged?
- How are we partnering with and following the lead of communities of color?
- How do we keep ourselves “fresh and new” in the work for civil rights, individually and as a congregation? How do we keep from “unconsciously accommodating the enviroing society?”

Handout 7: Find Out More

Watch

- [Mark Morrison-Reed keynote](#) and other speeches from 2015 Marching in the Arc of Justice Conference in Selma, part of the UU Living Legacy Project. Additional videos and small group ministry and discussion guides based on presentations from the conference are part of the [Marching in the Arc of Justice Toolkit](#).

Read

- [“Five Ways to Support Black Lives Matter,”](#) by Kenny Wiley, published in the *UU World* for practical suggestions for supporting the movement.

Read and share these books, all available at the [UUA Bookstore](#)

- *The Selma Awakening: How the Civil Rights Movement Tested and Changed*
- *Unitarian Universalism* by Mark Morrison-Reed (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2014)
- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, by Michelle Alexander (NY: The New Press, 2012)
- *Call to Selma: Eighteen Days of Witness*, by Richard D. Leonard (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2002)

Offer adult faith development workshops

From Tapestry of Faith:

- “Civil Rights” and “Responding to Calls for Black Empowerment,” Workshops 11 and 12, [Resistance and Transformation: Unitarian Universalist Social Justice History](#)
- “The Water is Wide: Multiculturalism,” Workshop 15, [Faith Like a River: Themes from Unitarian Universalist History](#)
- [Building the World We Dream About](#)
- [Building the World We Dream About for Young Adults](#)

[Common Read Selections](#)

- [The New Jim Crow](#) by Michelle Alexander, 2012-13 selection
- [Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption](#) by Bryan Stevenson, 2015-16 selection

Connect and find partners

- Visit the UUA's [Black Lives Matter and Ending The New Jim Crow](#) page
- Visit and explore resources on the [Standing on the Side of Love](#) website

Explore resources for educating children and youth

- [Teaching Tolerance](#) (Southern Poverty Law Center)
- [Raising Race Conscious Children](#)