

Preliminary Report to the Unitarian Universalist Board of Trustees
from the Special Review Commission
October 15, 2005

In a message sent out on September 1, 2005, Gini Courter, Moderator of the UUA and Bill Sinkford, President of the UUA the following was posted:

As many of you know, at the meeting of the UUA Board of Trustees immediately following the close of the General Assembly in Ft. Worth, the board heard reports of distressing incidents involving UU youth of color. The board subsequently authorized the issuance of an open letter concerning the incidents.

In order to continue the process of gathering information on this series of events, we have appointed a Special Review Commission. The following Unitarian Universalists have generously agreed to serve on the commission:

Hafidha Acuay (Portland, Oregon)

Rev. José Ballester (Houston, Texas)

Rachel Davis (Teaneck, New Jersey)

Janice Marie Johnson (Brooklyn, New York)

Rev. Margaret Keip (Grants Pass, Oregon)

The Special Review Commission (SRC) had its initial meeting at UUA Headquarters on September 3rd and 4th. Our charge to the SRC from the Moderator & President was as follows:

To review the trajectory of events which impacted the Unitarian Universalist community of color, especially the youth of color community, leading up to and during the Ft. Worth General Assembly. The goal is to identify learnings about the structures of racism and agism both within and outside our faith community, which we must address in our journey toward wholeness. We expect no recommendations about the behavior of specific individuals; institutional learning is our goal. We request that the SRC offer a preliminary report to the UUA Board of Trustees at their October meeting and a final report at the January Board meeting.

With this charge as our guide we began formulating our work plans and establishing our timeline. It was necessary for us to establish a trust relationship since no one on the commission knew everyone else. We took the time to explain our backgrounds, particular identities, specific concerns, personal issues that might impact our review process and any information we had concerning the events prior to, during and immediately following the Ft. Worth General Assembly.

With the aid of Kay Montgomery, Executive Vice President of the UUA and Recording Secretary of the UUA Board of Trustees, we began a systematic review of the material and reports we had on hand and prioritized our tasks.

- 1) Given the reported events it was necessary to establish a sequence, beginning with the Closing Ceremony on June 27, 2005 and then moving forward and backwards in time.
- 2) From the material and reports we attempted to establish the identity of individuals whose knowledge and/or experience of these events were deemed critical.
- 3) Further review began to establish a clear trajectory of events stretching back, but not limited to the Youth of Color Leadership Development Conference (LDC) sponsored by the Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries Youth and Young Adults (DRUUMM YaYA) held in Dallas on June 17 to 20.
- 4) Within this trajectory we identified key individuals who might possess information helpful to our understanding of plans, events and results.
- 5) We established a list of individuals whom we would interview and assigned the various members of the commission to specific individuals.
- 6) We determined there was a need to gather all relevant material being sent directly to the UUA or posted on various sites. An automatic reply was established for those who contacted the SRC or UUA e-mail address with information about our work.
- 7) In our initial meeting we took the opportunity to interview 5 individuals, who for various reasons were available at that time. At the conclusion of these interviews we added some other names to our list and eventually there were 35 individuals.

Throughout September and into October, the commission conducted various interviews and reported back our summaries and insights. These have yielded the names of additional individuals whom the commission has determined to interview. The commission will continue to work as charged and will make a final report for the January meeting of the Board of Trustees.

It would be premature to report the many learnings at this time. What we have learned is that none of these events happened in a vacuum and that the trajectory does not start at the LDC and does not end yet. Individuals are human, with human needs, faults and frailties. Human's will act or react depending on their particular state of mind given the current situation and often compounded by other events. Additionally, humans will act out of their own experiences, and given how diverse we are, our challenge is to affirm the life living experiences that each of us brings. Everyone has their own interpretations and even when they are contradictory, does not mean they are right or wrong. Ultimately, these events and their trajectory are not solely the responsibility of the individuals nor of any particular group or groups, but of the UUA and its member congregations.

/s/ Special Review Commission