

## **Social Justice Roundtable**

Friday, April 24, 2009

Facilitated by Joseph Gayeski and Jessica York

Panel Members present:

1. Judith Frediani, Director of Lifespan Faith Development
2. India McKnight, Program Associate, Youth Ministry Office
3. Jessica York, Youth Programs Director and co-facilitator
4. Joe Gayeski, a youth from CT and co-facilitator
5. Patrice Davison, a youth from the UU Church of Tucson, AZ
6. Brody McConnell, a youth from the Unitarian Church of Westport, CT
7. Adam Gerhardstein, Acting Director of the Washington Office of Advocacy & Witness
8. Raziq Brown, a Groundwork trainer
9. Caitlin Dubois, a board appointed member of the Commission on Social Witness
10. Sherry Warren, Prairie Star District Youth and Young Adult Specialist and DRE at the Unitarian Fellowship of Lawrence, KS
11. Jill Schwendeman, Director of Youth Programs, White Bear UU Church, Mahtomedi, MN
12. Nichole Cirillo, Campaign Manager, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)

### **Gathering**

#### **Welcoming**

#### **Introductions: Name, Residence, Role, and Short Social Justice Story**

#### **Covenant Building**

- Listen with an open heart and mind
- Engage in conflict lovingly
- Forgive trespasses
- Remember self-care
- Right to share
- Oops and Ouch
- Use I statements
- Respond with questions instead of judgments
- Leave what is said and take what is learned
- Let people know if you share something and you don't want it shared outside of the room
- Assume that there is a diversity of experience in the room
- Step up, step back: be aware of the social dynamics in discussion; be aware of how much you're speaking of if not at all
- Acknowledging different working styles
- Respect that people interact differently
- Have fun
- Stay focused on the vision and larger goals of the meeting

#### **Mara and India share Youth Office/Associational History with Social Justice**

Highlights of the presentation include three Working Groups recommendations concerning social justice work:

- 1) Create more opportunities for youth at local level (more paths)
- 2) Set up a grants program to support youth initiatives

3) Urge all congregations to welcome youth on committees

### **Congregational, District and National Social Justice Events and Projects**

Group listing current opportunities

#### Congregational

New Orleans service trips  
Feeding Community  
Offering of letters  
UUSC Just Journeys  
UUPCC  
Fair-trade  
Heifer international  
Advocacy  
Community Garden  
Community Shared Agriculture  
Working in Shelters  
Social Justice Committees  
Peace Jam  
Rallies  
AIDS Walk  
Green Sanctuary  
Micro-loans  
Immigrant Justice Advocacy Movement  
No More d\Deaths  
Borderlinks  
Congregations belonging to interfaith groups  
Education around peace, justice and non violence (communication)  
Congregations donate money made in the collection plates on Sunday  
Book drives  
Tutoring  
Guest at your table  
Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression

#### Districts

Social Justice Conferences  
Voter Registration  
Disaster relief  
Fundraising concerts  
School of the Americas protests  
Sponsoring youth for the Sex ed advocacy training  
Day of Service in the district leadership schools  
Educational events  
UU Camps  
Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racism trainings  
District political lobbying days

#### National

UU-UNO: Spring Seminar, Internships, Youth VoiceSex Ed Advocacy Training  
Public Witness during GA  
Groundwork AR/AO Training  
DRUUMM Workshops at GA

Washington Office Summer Internships  
Youth Visits to the UUSC  
Chrysalis  
UU University Social Justice track at GA

**Partnered Activity discussing our goals, hopes and outcomes for the Social justice meeting and this process.**

**Group Sharing of Goals and Outcomes (this weekend and beyond)**

- Social Justice work is grounded in how it connects to our Unitarian Universalist faith
- Discuss ongoing justice opportunities in the ongoing in the Association
- Make recommendations about supporting Social Justice at congregational, district, national level
- Explore leadership development through social justice work-that youth see social justice work as an opportunity to be developed as leaders
- Make recommendations for a social justice service model to the UUA administration
- Create a system of sharing what is already being done
- Present options to congregation
- Network between organizations to support including youth collaborating with the UUSC, UUA, UU-UNO...
- Look for ways to go deeper and nurture a life-long desire for Social Justice/Experiential learning
- Having discussion, decisions, recommendations about allocating resources for youth and young adults of color
- Personal goal of gathering information to take back to the congregations
- Understand what we have, who we have and using people as resources to help change the world
- Strengthen and support congregations by helping all understand that youth ministry is done for and with whole congregation

**Lunch**

**Guest: Jamie Forbes, the Director of Youth Outreach, Westport, CT**

**Jamie's Story (all stories are brief summaries)**

I was the DRE at Westport for nine years. The Consultation process with congregation disclosed a desire for more social justice/community service opportunities for youth and greater exploration of spirituality. Congregation has a social justice coordinator. When I had to step down from DRE position (hours increased), I became the new youth outreach coordinator. I am in my second year. Youth outreach has grown tremendously. I sometimes work with social justice coordinator. Hasn't seen more congregational-wide events appealing to youth, but youth outreach events draw many adults.

In choosing events, I look for: youth having contact with community being served, high standards of responsibility for youth, well organized, dealing with issues that youth say appeal to them, and dedicated time for spiritual reflection. Diverse opportunities (many paths) offered to fit youth diverse gifts. The benefits of having a youth outreach coordinator is more time dedicated to outreach means a fuller spectrum of opportunities; I get to invite youth to "join me" in doing work; and I can focus on truly supporting youth in this work by adding elements of community building, spirituality, and leadership training. A few youth and I will give a workshop at the next district event.

**Question and Answer session**

Adam asked if the group was involved in advocacy and Jamie said not really because youth were more interested in hands-on activities. Brody, who is a youth at Westport, said working with the

justice committee does not happen much because youth often feel they don't have the contextual background.

### **Gleanings from Jamie's Story**

- Someone has to take the lead
- Don't expect everyone to participate all the time
- Bureaucratic process (committee work) could be more interesting to youth
- Include a variety of activities/interest
- Being in relationship with the people you are working with (/serving) respectfully, is important
- Knowing that you are not giving more than you are receiving
- Understanding that social justice work is not the same as community service
- Importance of having things concrete to do
- Adding spiritual element is "wonderful"
- One strong, deep experience can change your life
- Education needed too (is that piece there?)
- Not just inviting youth, but making comfortable, welcoming, safe space in committees and other areas of congregational life, is needed

### **Guests: Anne Principe from First Universalist Church of Yarmouth, ME and Jenn McAdoo from First Parish of Brookline, MA**

We both have experience taking youth on mission trips. We have written a handbook on this topic, soon to be published by the UUA as part of the Tapestry of Faith toolkit series. (They showed a DVD with photographs from trips.) Mission trips take youth out of their comfort zone and the immersion experience creates memories that will last their entire lives.

Youth want to do work that is purposeful. Some aspects we keep in mind when planning trips: youth, as a group, have different interests and varied skill sets; finding ways to bring back what was experienced on the trip to the whole congregation; trips need to be staffed so they are well-planned; supporting youth leadership. The groups create a covenant to spell out how they are expected to participate, how they will take care of each other, and support each other's spiritual journey.

### **Question and Answer session**

Brody asked if spiritual reflection was included. Jenn and Anne said it is built into their programs to happen before, during, and after the trip. Patrice asked if youth work alongside the members of the community they were serving. The answer was "not always", though they try to create opportunities for that to happen as much as possible. If youth are sponsored by a particular organization, the organization might determine how much interaction takes place. Nichole observed that sometimes people on mission trips leave feel "those are the problems other people have" and don't recognize the oppression experienced in their home communities by some members. Anne said they need to do more about oppression at home. (Jenn is doing a mission trip in Maine this summer to expose youth to issues of homelessness in their community.) Jenn replied that often on trips the issue of how the policies of U.S. affect other countries does arise. Youth also learn how to act in culturally appropriate ways, so they become better world citizens.

### **Gleanings from Anne and Jenn's Story**

- Faith development intentional aspect of trips
- Supporting acts of young adults and youth
- Powerful experience ("time hook") opens youth to learning
- Youth deal with issues of equitability ("what are you willing to give up?")
- The difference between the immediate experience vs. planting seeds of gradual transformation
- How do we attract diverse interests?
- Requires equipped people
- The importance of the family as a unit doing social justice work
- Preparation is key

- Different ways of sharing knowledge across the association

### **Sharing of Stories from Cathy Cordes, Executive Director, Partner Church Program**

Partner Church council has been around since 1993 and began as a Sister Church program between US Unitarian churches and Unitarian Transylvania churches in 1920. 85% percent of participating churches are partnered with Transylvania, some have partners in the Philippines and India, one in Uganda. 12% of UU congregations participate.

In 1999, the Partner Church council started a heritage tour. UU youth go to Transylvania. They learn about Unitarian history, they go to members of the partnership churches and stay in their homes, do service project. The age range is 15 to 18 years old. They attend two church services, one all together and (they reflect on the differences comparing UU churches in the US to the ones in Transylvania.) They journal and share in group reflection. The trip is a Pilgrimage – intentional use of religious language.

(Cathy bought a handout of testimonial from youth who have participated.) The organization also helps with the on the ground logistics for church trips for youth groups and multigenerational partner trips.

Other written material was shared. Cathy says she hopes we can help spread the word because they are not getting enough youth for the Pilgrimage.

#### **Gleanings from Cathy's story**

- Need to network, spread the word
- Pattern of youth and others not getting info on programs
- Program that functions, well-organized (we don't have to reinvent the wheel)
- Speaks to institutionalizing
- Expense is an issue that needs to be considered
- Congregations could support financially
- Some congregations make jump through hoops (make process more accessible to youth, allies can help)
- Breadth and depth in programs
- Address issues of poverty among UUs

#### **Judith's Story**

There is a need for advocacy, witness, and service. I have witnessed UU Coming of Age (COA) trips to Boston, where being a tourist and shopping for souvenirs, snacks, etc, were very big elements of the experience. I have also seen young Methodist youth on a weeklong service/mission trip where there was no shopping – just days spent in service and evenings filled with multigenerational fellowship and reflection. I want UU youth to engage in mission trips like that. Some are doing mission trips to the Gulf coast and with the partner churches. Leadership development and spiritual development (UU identity faith development) are encouraged by mission trips and social justice.

It's important to add social justice to our worship life as well as adding worship to our social justice. Including social justice themes in worship services and brining it into congregational life can enrich the worship experience. One year, when I was a youth advisor, the youth group picked out a worship theme of "troubled youth". Because the theme was picked out months before the service and the youth were invested in the theme (they picked it out), the group spent several months working on issues of incarcerated youth. It moved beyond worship and deepened the entire year. The worship service was very powerful, with an adult speaker who was imprisoned as a youth and spent decades in prison.

#### **Question and Answer session**

A conversation evolved concerning whether UU youth could have common, institutionalized experiences. (Nichole was particularly interested in this topic and we continued to explore it throughout the weekend.) Judith suggested we might need to look to technology to help create virtual experiences. Another theme explored during the questions was how to partner with communities to get away from an "us"- "them" mindset. It works best when each community asks the other "What does your community need?" Raziq observed that unlike most faiths, when UUs do mission trips, we don't invite members of the community being served to visit our congregations. We don't welcome them into our faith. If we don't want anything back from the people we serve, we have no reason to engage with them.

#### **Gleanings from Judith's Story**

- Interface between experience and reflection
- Connection between worship and social justice
- Connection between time and depth
- Social justice work as an opportunity to practice our faith
- Focusing on individual interest

#### **Joe's Story**

I have not participated widely in social justice activities. One community service I participate in is serving food with my youth group at a homeless shelter for two years. I am interested in other opportunities. My youth group discussed the youth resolution at the last GA and made changes in our youth ministry, including moving the youth group to Sunday night. The move has encouraged youth to attend worship and mix more with the rest of the congregation overall.

Spreading the word about the social justice opportunities available to our congregations is one of my goals for this meeting. I'd like to see a periodical to help youth find resources to be a part of these opportunities.

#### **Gleanings from Joe's Story**

- Structure matters
- Youth attending worship could lead to more multigenerational connections
- Secretly youth want to come to church (might need push)
- Clear expectations (OK to set)
- Worship services might need to change to welcome youth
- One person matters
- The resolution had impact
- Reaching out is a 2-way street

Saturday, April 25, 2009

#### **Opening Words from Jewish tradition by Joe Gayeski**

A man asks God what hell looks like and he shows him a room with a pot of stew in the middle. All the people are in agony and hungry because they need to eat with long ladles and can't reach their mouths with the stew. The man asks to see Heaven and God shows him an identical room but the people are feeding each other with the long ladles.

Check-in (one word), add to covenant (no additions), add to goals (no additions)

#### **Sherry's Story**

Joe's story made me think of a Sesame Street skit. It involves a tree of nectarines with two beings underneath, one with long arms and one with short arms. Neither were able to eat alone, but with cooperation were able to help feed each other. I feel that I'm getting more than I'm giving and I feel privileged. Look for those tidbits, they are everywhere even on Sesame Street. Cooperation is a timeless theme. I saw this episode in the 1970's, the Jewish story is from Medieval Times. I'm sure I had ah-ha moments, but they were so slow. I don't share the story

with youth because they would think I was a dork. With the youth, I would use Joe's story. Storytelling, use of narrative, is a good way to share values.

One year, the youth group at Lawrence, KS consisted of five males. Parents asked me to teach them life skills. I decided to start with food. We started working with a food pantry, Just Food, in our community and also Link, an interdenominational kitchen. Youth learned to shop and cook, but also learned about hunger, homelessness, and other ills of society by engaging in community service and learning about justice issues. The youth who cooked the meals wanted to eat first but I told them they had to be hosts and eat last if at all. That's just one example of how the service projects helped them look at things differently.

#### **Gleanings from Sherry's Story**

- Sometimes simple stories explain best
- Meet people where they are developmentally
- Snuck in social justice with life skills
- Importance of cooperation
- "If you're doing it alone, you probably should not be doing it." (quote shared by Adam)

#### **Brody's Story**

I started giving service when I was a little kid at the Universalist Church of Phoenix. We would go to the soup kitchen and help feed 100 people. I participated in AIDS walks, raised money, etc. I played piano for elderly people at a nursing home for my Coming of Age program's service requirement. Next, I participated in the Youth Service.. I participated in a service trip to New Orleans. My work at the UU-UNO has taken most of my time recently. I am a youth rep there and I've learned a lot. The UU-UNO collaborates with other offices of faith at the UN, the Jewish group for example. I got involved with the UU-UNO through my mom and being invited to the Youth Seminar. I was in charge of logistics for 50-60 youth and that was a learning experience. There is a wide range of ages (intergenerational) and interest/involvement levels at the seminar. There is a lot of youth input.

I did a night in a homeless shelter in NYC as part of the Youth Service Opportunity Program through the Westport congregation. I have been active in outreach at Westport. I would like to see the UUA, UUSC, UU-UNO and other justice organizations collaborate. My mom is an activist and influenced me a lot.

#### **Gleanings from Brody's Story**

- You're never too young to start in social justice, or too old
- Value of youth-adult collaboration
- Exchange of experiences (playing piano provides something, but he also received by hearing the elders' stories) – 2-way street
- Let people be resilient, don't be paternalistic, allow them to maintain their dignity
- COA is an example of a place where there is some institutionalized social justice in our faith
- Power of a role model/mentor to influence youth (Brody's mother)
- Making social justice a family value (Tapestry of Faith curricula have a "Taking it Home" part)

#### **Jill's Story**

We have an Offering of Letters (OOL) program at the White Bear Church. It supports the UN's Millennium Goals. The OOL, which is sponsored by the Christian organization Bread For the World, is trying to make it relevant in U.S. like it is in Europe. We've gotten over 1250 letters done over the years. It takes 8 letters to change a senator's mind. We set up writing stations so people write it on the spot. Calling it an offering makes it part of the worship.

We also participate in PeaceJam, which inspires youth activists. The youth spend time studying general peace issues and learn about a Nobel Laureate from the curriculum. This year, we are working with Kiva microloans and raising money for impoverished entrepreneurs. It's been good for youth who weren't involved in the youth group itself to come to PeaceJam. We're a suburban white church and the conferences are in the inner city so they experience cultural differences.

They get to see Nobel Laureates like Desmond Tutu and the Dali Lama. They get to hear their stories and see that they are regular people. It's valuable to connect their stories... Interfaith work is important and it's good to work with existing programs. The local conference costs \$50 and the church pays for it. Youth contribute if they are able. The youth present their projects (Kiva loans) to the Laureates and they give feedback. 35 (interfaith) congregations send delegations of 4 youth to these conferences.

### **Gleanings from Jill's Story**

- Don't reinvent the wheel
- Reverent/spiritual language (OOL) transforms how social justice work is viewed
- Youth ministry is the work and responsibility of the whole congregation and the whole congregation benefits from it
- Interfaith work

### **Adam's Story**

I grew up at First UU Church of Cincinnati. My COA group was social and fun, but having an adult mentor was influential. I did a gap year in Kenya and it gave me a sense of purpose and made me want to make a difference and I have the resources and privilege to be able to. My congregation raised money while I was in Kenya and helped me and when I got back the commitment grew. I sold some photographs I took to my congregation and got contributions for a non-profit (Global Roots) I started that was for Kenyan youth pursuing education. I went to college in Cincinnati but was not involved with church. I found a Christian campus ministry instead that filled my spiritual needs. Later, I went through a rough time and received pastoral care from the minister of my old UU church. When, as a young adult, I decided to join a UU church, I was told I didn't have to give money because they knew I was just starting out and that I would give back in other ways. That was an "ah-ha" moment for me. I started working at the UUA Washington Office for Advocacy which is a great opportunity. All Souls Church ministers to my reality and the real world. It's interesting to work with youth and see how I have transitioned into the adult world. I have become the Acting Director of the office now and am working on the Standing on the Side of Love campaign. I am proud to be able to work in these leadership roles and see that UU youth are so far along. Our generation has a lot of skills and knowledge to give to our Association. I was rebelling against education and community but I found great appreciation for both of those things in Kenya.

### **Gleanings from Adam's Story**

- Growing the faith beyond the congregation
- Staying connected to congregation
- Follow-up work (houses being built in New Orleans, bring it home and see that houses need to be built in Boston)
- Importance of mentors
- Context of care (pastoral, emotional, etc.)
- Making sure that youth are always welcome back to faith home
- Need for young adult ministry
- Congregational funding

### **Jessica's Story**

I want to share some ways that Tapestry of Faith, our new, core, curriculum, supports justice work and some of the issues we've talked about this weekend. Faith in Action is now part of the template of the way we are writing curriculum. Neighboring Faiths and other programs address issues of interfaith understanding and service. You heard about the Mission Trip Handbook. I think that we will be incorporating mentors into future work. We have open slots still open for high school and junior high curriculum.

We've talked about adults mentoring youth, but it can go the other way, too. Julian Sharp was a youth mentor for me. When I arrived at the Birmingham church, he was pointed out to me as a natural-born leader. He helped me get the youth group started again after it had been stopped

for OWL. My work with Julian and the youth group he helped nurture set me on the path I'm following now.

My personal issues around social justice often focus around class. I feel the most the most disparity with other UUs because I was raised working class in the projects of Birmingham by a single mom. My mom didn't encourage political activism in me because she was struggling just to survive, but she was a leader in the community who provided love, guided by her Christian faith. I was taught that by example. As a POC in Unitarian Universalism, it's nice to get together with other UUs of color but there is always the difference of class. I frequently don't feel that I can express joy and raise my voice in UU worship services and that's a cultural clash. Once, in a meeting, a parent made a statement about "when we were all in college". Another parent said he did not go to college. It was a lovely culture clash and a learning experience for all of us about the class (including educational status) assumptions so frequently made in our congregations. Often, these culture clashes are teachable moments, but sometimes you want to just be instead of teach.

I went on a Heifer International trip to Honduras and saw great poverty there. It made me see my own privilege. We saw a Mayan community struggling to rebuild their lives and it was very moving. We were able to take showers at the hotel and realized what a great privilege that was. Going to Honduras, I thought I would gain intellectual insights and didn't realize how it would affect me emotionally.

#### **Gleanings from Jessica's Story**

- Expanding love for people
- Power of mothers
- Broadening understanding of social justice: It's a way of being with people
- Elitism within UUism is falling short on our principles
- Having strong enough faith to transcend and welcome
- Complexity of people's situation
- "Mercy is not getting what you do deserve, grace is getting what you don't deserve, justice is everyone getting what we all deserve." (quote shared by Sherry)
- Realizing privilege
- Youth mentorship (2-way relationship)
- Choose your battles, know when to step up or step back

#### **Janet Penn and Aaron Birnbaum from Interfaith Action, Inc. Youth Leadership Program**

Aaron is a sophomore in high school. Janet is the founder and director of the organization: Interfaith Action in Sharon, MA.

Janet: I started the program after defamation in some synagogues in the 1990s. At first, it was mostly Christian and Jews, but some Hindus were interested in joining and the number of faiths grew. We were incorporated as a non-profit in 2004.

Aaron: *Core principles in folder.* (Brought folders of additional information for everyone.)

Example of not being afraid to fail: We only had 15 people registered for our conference but we didn't give up and in the last 2 weeks, we recruited 65 more people to attend. Some of the projects I have been involved with included mailing books to people in prison and Sacred Seasons, which brings faiths together during the holiday season. We have bimonthly meetings on Sundays now. We start with an icebreaker. Senior youth plan the meetings. We have each meeting in a different house of worship and we learn a lot this way. Interfaith has given me a lot of confidence and I can't believe I'm now organizing conferences. We do talk about conflict, like the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but in a controlled respectful environment in "dialogue" which is talking in a circle without being able to attack others. We do specific outreach to groups that are underrepresented, not to tokenize, but for balance. It's a lot by word of mouth now. Dealing with

other religions developed my identity as a Jew. Explaining my religion to others and thinking about it in new ways made me realize its importance to me.

Janet: Teens are often more interested in hearing another point of view than adults, and are better at listening instead of talking on and on. It's difficult to build bridges with the Muslim community in Sharon, but they keep trying. Having teens themselves plan everything makes it easier to recruit attendees because they plan what is interesting to youth. In interfaith work with adults, we show films and highlight Sharon citizens who are doing good work in the world. The community focus brings people together over something they have in common instead of always talking about differences.

#### **Gleanings from Janet and Aaron's Talk**

- Youth empowerment works
- Need to make it fun/interesting
- We are each so much more than our religion
- Older youth mentoring younger youth
- Youth ownership of the program (adults letting go, this presentation modeled that and is following through in every step)
- Recognizing and creating space for pluralism
- Personal understanding and connection more important than religious literacy
- Social justice work in community
- Interfaith work strengthening religious identity
- Leadership development
- Importance of thanks/feedback

#### **Patrice's Story**

Our church is very isolated. I didn't even know 25 Beacon Street or all of these programs existed. Even though we're small, we still do a lot of community service. We only have about six youth and it's amazing to hear that there are groups with 60. We did a service trip to Nicaragua and it was a very unifying experience for us. We worked with the Pobreto organization, founded by a Catholic man from Spain, that does after-school programs. We were there during a hurricane and we were rained in with my mentor's adopted Nicaraguan family. Spending time with them was really touching.

A group of youth and adults went to the "No More Deaths" camp and it was really scary to think that the family in poverty we had met could be dying crossing our border. We put food and water in the food box for people. There was a man with huge blisters and he was in a lot of pain but all he wanted to do was to give back. He kept trying to find ways to help us. The privilege thing was really hard. It's kind of weird to be accepted so lovingly by a community (like the kids hugging us) just because of where you live. Many people don't agree with the work of No More Deaths and that's been hard. For example, people point out that immigration is negatively impacting the environment. The land and ecosystems around the border are damaged by all the human traffic. Humanitarian aid is never a crime. I get a lot of "It's OK if you're doing it, but I don't agree with it." Our church is a strong supporter on this issue. We spoke about the experience at church but not at service. We did a lot of the spiritual connection in the briefing and debriefing.

#### **Gleanings from Patrice's Story**

- Different levels of suffering, but still suffering
- Sometimes very small groups can do profound work
- Community and congregation can have conflicting views
- Power of institutional support for prophetic social justice ministry
- Sharing at district assembly
- Speaking truth to power (part of our UU heritage and legacy)

#### **Nichole's Story and Talk about the UUSC**

UUSC is looking for opportunities to work with youth. We are an affiliate of the UUA, not part of it. We are a domestic and international human rights organization. We work on economic justice,

environmental justice, rights in humanitarian crises, and civil liberties. We work on gender a lot in several countries, such as women's shelters in Iraq. The living wage, women in Darfur camps, right of return in Uganda, Muslim Americans' experience with Homeland Security, etc. are all issues we're working on.

We work on the I-to-I basis by giving funding and expecting to learn best practices in return. We are developing a Social Justice Institute and bought a building to be a house where UU youth can come to learn about social justice. For youth now, we have 20-40 youth groups come through on Heritage Tours and talk to them about what they're doing. We also have a civil rights journey through the South (Birmingham, Selma, etc.) every year. We have work camps domestically and abroad. Guests at Your Table and Justice Sunday are other programs.

I see a lot of classism in my work, especially around climate change. McDonald's and Wal-Mart are the targets of campaigns, yet people overlook that they provide essential services to the poor. Climate change is an area where the wealthy are doing more damage than the poor are, so it might be a good issue to engage those who have greater privilege. There is a philanthropic slant to social justice. We need to do a better job of connecting with the UU-UNO and the UUA in related work.

#### **Gleanings from Nichole's Talk**

- Congregations should own UUSC work, be more informed
- Programs under-utilized
- Multiple entry points
- Connections to our faith (Faith in Action)
- Give and take (2-way relationship)
- Finding group doing good work and supporting them, learning from them
- Look to reach out and increase youth involvement

#### **Ideas for Next Steps**

- Website with listings of sj projects happening across the Association, discussion boards, and mentorship connection opportunities. If someone wanted to start a project, they could come to the website and contact folks doing similar work (not reinventing the wheel). People could celebrate their successes and encourage each other. Affiliates could advertise their programs. Sherry, in particular, had many ideas about all the bells and whistles it could include. (See attachment "Sherry's dream website"). Brody wants to use the website to help promote more cooperation between congregations, UUSC, and UU-UNO. When the website is launched, there should be a comprehensive publicity campaign.  
Every group included this suggestion. An interesting conversation ensued when Raziq reminded us that 1) technology is always advancing. If we decide to build a FaceBook page, what happens in two years when youth are using something new? 2) "The Internet is not magic" and we should not forget the power of recruiting one-on-one.
- Create a pamphlet or guidebook on youth service. Two groups had this suggestion; one said it should be a multigenerational guidebook with sections on doing the work with children, youth, elders, etc... I added a bit of RDO language to the event and asked if they wanted a "resource" with "best practices". Everyone agreed. See below for more discussion on what should be included.
- Grants program to help fund youth sj projects. Funding would make programs accessible to all, despite economic status of family or congregation. These might take the form of matching grants to inspire youth to seek other support. Could inspire some youth to dream big, like the non-profit Adam started with help from his congregation. The group asking for this said it understood that it could take a few years for such a program to accumulate significant funding.

- Trainings should be a combination of education, spiritual grounding, and work. All service projects should always include these elements, too.
- Because we believe social justice work is strongest when it's done in community, continue to hold gatherings for youth interested in social justice education, training, and practice. The Association is undergoing a restructuring. Yet the panel members from one group hope it will always support youth sj gatherings on the district, regional, and national level. These gatherings might take different forms, but are still necessary to support youth not receiving congregational support and for the benefit of face-to-face networking.

### **Best Practices**

- Mentorship
- Think about how the people you're helping will feel before you do it (education before service, I-to-I service, giving but also receiving, ask people what help they actually want)
- Seek out existing organizations/programs because what you're trying to do might already be being done (especially other UUs)
- Get involved with interfaith work
- Keep the social in social justice (it should be fun and meaningful, better to do it together)
- Get it out there that we are UU when we do social justice work and that it's why you want to do this work
- Youth ownership and empowerment

We started a statement about what **UU Youth Social Justice Ministry should be...**

... a way of being in the world

...cognizant of everyone's multidimensionality

...I to I work, where both parties can name what they give and what they receive out of the relationship

...based on expanding love

...supported by congregations, districts, regions and the Association, financially, programmatically and in other ways

...the responsibility of the entire congregation