

Snapshots of Five Districts on the Journey

**Becoming an Anti-Oppressive, Anti-Racist,
Multicultural Faith Community**

Dedication

We dedicate this report to the memory of the Reverend Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley who died on December 10, 2006. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley's ministry shaped contemporary Unitarian Universalist Association programs and practices in significant ways. She was a founding member of the African American Unitarian Universalist Ministry (AAUUM), board member of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation (1991-1993) and a member of the UUA Commission on Appraisal (1993-1999 and chair, 1996-1998). She served as co-editor, with Nancy Palmer Jones, of **Soul Work: Antiracist Theologies in Dialogue** (Skinner House Books, 2002), wrote the Adult Study and Process Guide to "Belonging: The Meaning of Membership" (UUA Commission on Appraisal report, 2001), co-authored "Interdependence: Renewing Congregational Polity" (UUA Commission on Appraisal report, 1997) and was a contributing author for Weaving the Fabric of Diversity, an anti-bias curriculum for adults (UUA, 1996). She wrote "A Case for an Actual Racism 101" (Christian Science Monitor, 1988) and numerous articles in periodicals including *UU World*, *First Days Record*, *Inward Springs*, the *LREDA Journal*, the *UU Women's Federation Communicator*, and others. She was a mother, a mentor, and a matriarch of this work.

*"What is our liberal faith for if not to teach respect for difference:
different ways of seeing, different contexts, different cultural orientations."*

Reverend Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley
(1949-2006)

Our Appreciation

*“The UUA’s Journey Toward Wholeness initiative follows a long history of social justice efforts by UU activists... [Our] quest for justice-making began with the individuals in the pews and pulpits... We appreciate our earlier forebears who labored and spoke out against slavery, poverty, sexism, the exploitation of others, and any attempt to thwart the human spirit and the will to freedom...”*¹

We wish to express our gratitude, respect, and heartfelt appreciation to former members of the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee for their dedication, energy, and perseverance in our collective efforts to become a truly anti-oppressive, anti-racist, multicultural faith community: the late Ruth Alatorre, Rev. Sophía Betancourt, Rachael Brown, Rev. Susan Suchocki Brown, Ken Carpenter, Dr. Ivan Louis Cotman, Rev. Sean Parker Dennison, Robette Dias, Susan Gershwin, Rev. Galen Guengerich, Rev. James Hobart, Rev. Melvin Hoover, Dr. Jacqui James, Rev. Kurt Kuhwald, Susan Leslie, Matt Moore, Christine Murphy, Rev. Linda Olson Peebles, Emily Ricketts, Rev. Frank Rivas, Dr. Leon Spencer, and Kim Varney. Our heartfelt apology to anyone we may have inadvertently omitted.

Special thanks, always, to Rev. Charles B. Ortman (Board Liaison) for modeling the work with great insight, humor, and song; to Taquiena Boston (President’s Representative) for her continual wisdom and guidance; and to Simona Munson (Program Coordinator) for her professionalism, expertise, and unflagging support of our committee.

Finally, we wish to thank all of the district leaders who shared their valuable time, energy, insight, and experiences, through both the on-line survey and interviews. Without their open, honest, and willing collaboration, this report would not be possible.



This report was authored by the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee: Carolyn Cartland (Co-chair), Rev. Monica L. Cummings (Co-chair), Bob Gross, Janice Marie Johnson, Dr. Julio Noboa, Catie Chi Olson, and Michael Sallwasser on March 20, 2007.

¹ Continuing the Journey, by the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee, 2001

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Executive Summary

Approaching the tenth anniversary of two General Assembly resolutions entitled *Toward an Anti-Racist Unitarian Universalist Association* and *Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities*, the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee has created a portrait of five UUA districts' work on oppression, racism, and multiculturalism - as well as accessibility - over the past decade.

An extensive survey of district staff and lay leaders in five districts was conducted during the latter half of 2006. Respondents discussed developments in the A-O/A-R/MC arena in their district over ten years, the extent of strategic planning, training, and activity at the district level, what it was like to do this work, and what these leaders had learned.

Our respondents identified effective practices, ways in which their districts had succeeded in doing the work of transformation at the district level and assisted with or witnessed such progress in congregations. They also offered suggestions for improvement at all levels of our Association of Congregations. Finally, the report also includes a summary of the perceived gaps in leadership, structure, and methodology which require attention and resources in order to significantly improve the capacity of our districts to provide effective and appropriate leadership to move us toward becoming an increasingly Beloved Community.

From the information collected from the districts in the form of surveys, identity documents, and interviews, the JTWTC is offering our observations of what is needed to continue the journey toward wholeness, especially in the areas of leadership, structure, and methodology. If we are to become a Beloved Community we need leaders at every level who are competent, committed, and accountable; structures that support continuous learning, leadership development, and accountability; and methodologies that are inclusive, pastoral, and transformative. We must also remain ever mindful of the interconnection between A-O/A-R/MC work and living our faith and values in the world. To paraphrase the late Reverend Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley, justice-making is soul work.

Introduction: The Study

A. Background

At our December 2005 meeting, the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee (JTWTC) reviewed our mission to strategically plan, coordinate, monitor, guide, and assess our Association as we transition to an anti-oppressive, anti-racist, multicultural (A-O/A-R/MC) faith community. This initial focus was too broad; we expended too much effort trying to be all things to all people. These efforts diverted us from providing the type of effective assessment that the Association needs in order to better understand its progress. We decided to provide a meaningful report on the status of the journey by narrowing our focus to *assess* and *monitor*, thus providing qualitative in-depth analysis of specific areas of associational life. With the Board of Trustees' approval, we borrowed from a model based on the Commission on Appraisal, choosing a particular focus area within the Association, exploring it in depth, and then publishing a report that would be made available during General Assembly.

As was our agreement with the Board of Trustees, our first area of exploration was to be the current status of the work being done at the district level. This report details our findings. It is a snapshot of how five districts are moving towards the goals stated in the two major anti-oppression resolutions passed by the General Assembly in 1997, *Toward an Anti-Racist Unitarian Universalist Association* (Appendix B) and *Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities* (Appendix C).

B. Vision: Building the Beloved Community

The current JTWTC is honored to build upon the important thought and work done by other Unitarian Universalists, past and present.

It is vital to emphasize the transformation that has taken place in our committee's understanding of the definition of "oppression." Whereas the anti-racism and the accessibility resolutions in 1997 were separate and distinct; this report reflects changes in our Association which make clear that these oppressions - along with sexism, ageism, heterosexism and classism - are inextricably linked and cannot be adequately addressed in isolation. As this committee continues to assess and monitor this transformation of the congregations in our Association, we note the intersections among these oppressions while recognizing that each oppression has its own individual history, cultural context, and unique place in society, both past and present.

This year, as we have listened carefully to district presidents, district executives and staff, and lay leaders from five districts of the Association, we perceive and have attempted to accurately portray the linked desire for Beloved Community. We seek to describe a vision of linked transformations. The districts have demonstrated a variety of efforts aiming to dismantle discrimination and oppression; many are focused on race, homophobia, class, the environment, and ableism. Some may be focused on poverty, war, marriage equality, and immigration. While not everyone sees the linkage of these barriers to valuing the inherent worth and dignity of everyone, all are determined to end some form of oppression and transform our Association and our world into a Beloved Community.

C. Design of the Study

Once we decided that we would study how the districts were responding to these resolutions, we had extensive consultations with the Director of the District Services staff group and the Executive Vice President of the UUA. As a result of our discussions, the JTWTC sent an initial on-line questionnaire to all 21 districts of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations in May 2006. These requests went to all district executives, other district staff, and all district presidents. District executives were also

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asked to forward the questionnaire to members of their district boards. Responses were received by June 2006.

The questions were designed to elicit basic quantitative and qualitative information about the nature of each district's experience and involvement with a range of anti-oppression activities since 1997. A sample of the survey is found in Appendix A – Initial Survey Sample. We received 94 responses from 20 of 21 districts.

After the responses were collected and reviewed, five districts were selected for more in-depth study. The criteria for selecting the five districts included geographic diversity, the span of involvement with anti-oppression activities, and the range of responsiveness to the initial questionnaire. These five districts are Central Midwest, Mountain Desert, New Hampshire/Vermont, Pacific Central, and Thomas Jefferson.

We received documents from four of the five districts: (1) agendas from annual district meetings; (2) copies of both current district by-laws and those dating back four or five years; and (3) additional documents and stories indicating the district's involvement with anti-oppression concerns. Our aim has been to formulate a "snapshot" of where each district is on the journey.

Members of the JTWTC also conducted extensive telephone conferences with leaders in each of the selected districts. The notes from those discussions were shared with all participants to make certain that information had been recorded accurately. We are grateful for their thoughtful participation in this process, their reflection on difficult issues, and their hope for better things to come.

D. Limits of the Study

The members of the committee are acutely aware that the information gathered from these five districts surveyed could not fully or completely reflect all the work being done within the subject districts. Many of the individuals we spoke with were relatively new in their roles as district presidents or to their district staff positions. They often had to rely on written documents or past conversations with veterans in order to respond to our questions about developments during the past decade.

Our findings do indicate varying levels of awareness of activity, interest, and progress on these issues. Ironically, individual members of the JTWTC are aware of long-standing, energetic, and creative work on oppression issues in some of the districts that went unreported in our conversations with current district representatives. We hope that this report will encourage greater awareness, organization, and effective action in the near future.

Snapshots: Becoming an A-O/A-R/MC Faith Community

Through the use of an on-line questionnaire and personal interviews, the JTWTC acquired a broad understanding of the five districts we examined. In this section, we have attempted to present a “snapshot” of the districts, to present in the respondents’ own words how they have seen their district transform itself since the 1997 General Assembly resolutions focused on racism and ableism. We asked district and staff leaders a series of quantitative and qualitative questions, many of which appear below.

1) What is different in your district today, compared to ten years ago, in the arena of A-O/A-R/MC realities? Please tell us some stories or give us some examples of transformation.

Four out of five districts provided meaningful evidence of transformation in their districts in the decade since the 1997 resolutions. Specific responses include the following:

One district described a “[n]ew generation taking up the work and bringing more sophisticated analysis (i.e. intersection of race and class)” and cited examples of change: a district executive with anti-oppression as a priority; district infrastructure in place providing material support (money and staff); a settled transgender religious professional and an increase in the number of certified/re-certified Welcoming Congregations.

Another district stated “[Our] board recently made the annual anti-racism conference coincide with its annual meeting schedule to increase members’ exposure to A-R training and issues; the district Anti-Racism Transformation Team has existed for nine years with on-going activity, and the anti-racism conference is preparing for its 17th edition.”

A respondent from a different district related changes in district board behavior and responsibilities, saying “Everyone on the Board is now in charge of representing the whole district – a change from representing specific constituencies. [We] use modified policy governance which gives the board leeway to lead... There is conviction that the working relationship between the DE and President has always been very positive and productive.”

One district gave a long list of changes in leadership and participation: an African American woman/district intern providing BCT workshops along with a gay trainer; the creation of a new Diverse & Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM) chapter; a youth advisor with DRUUMM also serving justice ministries; and now including younger Latino/a and indigenous families and women of African descent. This same district has an Afro-Caribbean consulting minister; African American district community ministry intern; African American leaders in justice ministries; an African American ministerial candidate serving a campus ministry program, and their district representative has participated in a JUUST Change Anti-Oppression Consultancy workshop.

One district reported that they are “beginning to change Eurocentric UU culture” and see an increased understanding of mutually aggravating categories of race, class, and gender. That same district believes that Nonviolent Communication is increasingly seen as a helpful process for remedying the human tendency toward blaming and shaming behaviors and language.

One district reported that immigrant rights are a hot button issue and increasingly controversial in some UU churches.

One district shared that “We are way ahead of the norm on BGLT [bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender] concerns.”

One district had a lot to share on physical accessibility issues, noting “There is now a discussion of full participation for those people served by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Where do behavioral covenants come from? How do we have participation for people with

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mental issues? A director of religious education in this district is thought to be doing very good work with children affected by Asperger's syndrome."

This same district went on to say, "Accessibility issues are still feeling effects from [the previous district executive, who] single-handedly brought the issue forward like no one else could have. Although the majority of meeting places are historic buildings, 80% are accessible. District policies mandate only holding [our] district meetings at accessible places. [One] district leader recommends to congregations' facility committees to 'Just Do It' when entertaining accessibility conformance to the ADA. Bureaucracy and inertia should not be allowed to stop progress. It's easier to ask for forgiveness than permission."

2) Have you articulated a vision of A-O/A-R/MC in your district? How is it reflected in your commitment to A-O/A-R/MC work? Is it in your strategic plan? What are your goals and strategies? How do district leadership, staffing, and programming services reflect the vision and strategic plan, including training and orientation for leadership? How are the agendas set and goals monitored?

While all districts reported that they are involved with a variety of groups focused on A-O/A-R/MC issues, four of the districts reported they do not have or do not know if they have committees, mission statements, by-laws, or policies which support a commitment to this work. In both the on-line questionnaire completed by district leadership and staff in the spring of 2006 and again in the interviews conducted in the fall of 2006, we received a wide range of responses regarding the articulation of an A-O/A-R/MC vision and its reflection in district mission statements, documents, policies, structures, investments, leadership, education, and discussion at district board meetings. Some items of note include:

One district reported that it has either invested or received grants to support their anti-oppression efforts while the majority of respondents from the other four districts replied they had not made a financial investment or did not know if one had been made. Those responses ranged from 50% "no/do not know" to 88% "no/do not know."

When asked to rate (on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "very often") how often discussions at district board meetings focus on issues of A-O/A-R/MC, responses averaged in the range of 2.8 to 8.2, with 4 of the districts averaging 6.75 or above.

Four of the five districts rated themselves (on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being "frequently") as sponsoring workshops, trainings, or other A-O/A-R/MC events an average of 5.2 to 6.5.

All five districts saw themselves as having leadership somewhat reflective of traditionally under-represented communities, as their self-ratings ranged from 2.6 to 6.0 on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being "very representative".

During the interviews, some of the responses to questions about the existence of an articulated vision statement and moving the agenda forward included those shown below.

"No, but we did – as a BOT in June of 2006 – have a discussion about creating a vision and needing to educate ourselves. We agreed to start off with reading **Soul Work**."

Another district responded, "The congregations don't look to us for support. We try to publicize [their events] and then get cross congregational support. One respondent told of wanting to bring in [a religious educator of color] for a multicultural conference and being told, 'That's not an issue for us. We don't have any Black people here.' The legacy of earlier A-R work has poisoned the well. Even those folks without direct experience of earlier A-R work have a negative impression; there is 'resentment in the walls.'"

One district replied "A-O/A-R/MC has not been a focus thus far. I think we need to begin with ourselves as leaders. There is too little data."

Another district stated "At the last LREDA conference I realized that we are not there yet... I've been on the receiving end of privilege."

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One district addressed the issue of setting goals, saying “We did not set specific goals around x number of anti-oppression workshops in x number of clusters. Our focus has been on Nonviolent Communication as a first step. It is our understanding that there is a legacy from efforts in the past that needed to be healed so we took a different tack that seems to be working.”

Another district described itself as “slowly building mutuality out of an understanding that we’re a learning organization where people at all levels of skill teach and learn from one another so we become more effective at what we really care about which is basically learning to love one another in our difference. We’re seeing increasing levels of trust and willingness to cooperate as we continue to hold a space where new things can emerge.”

3) What is it like to do this work?

We received thoughtful, honest, and open answers to this question, ranging from the optimistic and inspired to the self-critical and self-reflective. This range is in response to both the difficulty and wide variety of the work, though most respondents believed working to counter (linked) oppression is part of our call as people of faith. A sample of these answers is below.

“The board retreat in August changed me. I left the event with optimism instead of despair, knowing that reconciliation is possible.”

“Youth work is very powerful – they want ‘heart’, not just ‘head’; it’s hard, but very worth doing and life-transforming; as I do this work I feel I’m on the road to self-actualization.”

“Have not been doing much of it.”

“Having a district executive committed to this work is empowering and so is having a holistic vision and vehicle for incorporating justice work into district and congregational programming.”

“Empathy for oneself and for the other is a prerequisite. Some UUs don’t do ‘suffering’ and by-and-large are very adept at compartmentalizing, dismissing another’s pain, and repressing their own. We can quickly move into our heads and staying in the heart is challenging and scary. There is little to no reward in the dominant culture for displays of human vulnerability. Could it be that our congregations have been colonized by a business culture that by definition goes for vulgar so of course we’re afraid of showing weaknesses to one another?”

“The work of eradicating attitudes of white supremacy in religious community has to have a pastoral care component and it is ironic that we may have neglected that part in the past. Maybe this has impeded our progress more than anything else?”

“Most people are quite content to do things without a district. I would like to see UUs do some collaboration with other UU churches. I would like to see the outlying UU communities working on some project or event together. Most UU congregations are very smug and self-sufficient congregations. We do what we want to do without having to include other congregations or ask for hardly any help. Each church has their own sense of who they are. They are self-contained and self-satisfied.”

“The District Executive has a goal to work with district leaders, however the track record is not good. Since [we are] not doing much, [there is] not a lot to say.”

“Congregations are asleep or scared about interracial issues. Congregations do not feel the need to do A-O/A-R/MC work because there are not many people of color in congregations. When someone of color walks in on Sunday they are either ignored or swamped. There is a real need for the work that is not recognized. DE does not know how to respond to the need.”

“...most of the aging Baby Boom generation and older folks of their congregations still saw color-blindness as a goal, something the UU Allies for Racial Equity (ARE) and DRUUMM have long ago felt was a negative idea. [We] walk individuals through the wrongness of this idea but it is a matter of changing minds and hearts at the same time, which takes both time and patience.”

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4) What have you learned?

We asked our interviewees to reflect on their experiences doing A-O/A-R/MC work and to share their thoughts. Here is a sample of their responses.

“In the last ten years I am aware of much change in leadership, mine and others.”

“There are no blocks here ... in terms of ‘I’ve had a bad experience.’ This could be the site for breaking new ground; no attempts, no failures. We have a chance to try to engage in the work without the baggage of past negative experience, without the notion of ‘We’ve tried that already ... unsuccessfully.’”

“Both lay and ordained leadership transitions and particularly ministerial turnover can frustrate sustained commitment to any social justice work. Extra-parochial expertise needs to be available relying less on congregational stability.”

“Often it’s not what you say but how you say it that makes all the difference. Incorporating Nonviolent Communication skills and worldview has proved to be a helpful innovation. It may be that the blaming and shaming language in earlier JTW/Jubilee trainings put folks on the defensive and relationships of trust are difficult to build on that foundation.”

“Until UU methodologies incorporate a class analysis into this work, we won’t get very far. They’ve been asked to work with an incomplete analysis that is disabling.”

“Youth and young adults appear to have more fluid identities and are relatively more open.”

“A theological foundation of some kind is required of any UU social ethic.”

“UUA programmatic strategy appears to be fragmented.”

“A plan for conflict transformation needs to be in place and have been tested in preparation for congregational engagement in this important work. Changing a U.S. culture of dominance, blame, and control will take a long time and Unitarian Universalism is no exception. The current fear-based political/economic environment needs a clear UU theological analysis. Without this we are stuck in our standard of talking good deeds and doing good things while changing nothing – not self or system.”

“Ha[ve] learned what the need is, but not what the answers are.”

“Both DEs encouraged lateral learning – connecting to other examples of what to do in similar situations. If a minister brings in an issue, then ‘it has a large target painted on it’. Best practices and pre-packaged programs are considered helpful by district staff; best practices have been used ‘like a club’ to beat up on the congregation. Neither of these scenarios leads to action. What people are doing is often so personal that it is very difficult to discuss and too defined by the uniqueness of the location to be transferable.”

(5) What else should we be asking you? Other comments?

“Ask us what’s on our plate right now. Firstly, without being defensive, I say that we’re very busy with our [district] consolidation... This is the major, demanding activity that puts all else a step or two back... Secondly, although we have fantastic district staff, they are all new. I say this with no antagonism.”

“What can we do to till the ground? Please help us JTWTC. Become our strategic partners on (1) economic justice (poverty is real here), and (2) immigration issues in [our district]. We can be pro-active. We need strategic partnerships to help our board of trustees, to help us move forward.”

“We need help with our elders. They are not recognized in the A-O/A-R/MC approach. We need to honor them and we also need help to engage them. We can work on expanding access: amplify volume, large-print hymnals...”

“We need to allow people to enter conversations where they are, not somewhere else. Challenge them, but they need to be heard – so that their brains will be open to hearing.”

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“How can we move from ‘How can we become more diverse?’ to ‘How can we learn to be allies?’ ... to be more attentive... Rather than just changing the music, we can transform our understanding of unfamiliar music in this world. I agree that we need strategic partners!”

“Ours may be one of the last districts that haven’t gone at [A-O/A-R/MC] work ‘whole hog.’ There is fertile ground here. This is where and when we can direct our energies in A-R. We could actually offer a positive response to the Calgary resolution.”

“We can continue discussing this at our DRE cluster meetings. Some congregations are offering a course.”

“I’m new and ready to ramp up, remind, and educate! I suggest that we communicate to our congregations about the GA’s call for A-O/A-R/MC work this year in every congregation.”

“Pleased that UUA leadership wants all congregations to do A-O/A-R/MC work this year; we need to do a better job of getting materials out to all – like material on reconciliation and **Soul Work.**”

“Let’s start asking people why they resist! Some reasons are that folks have been called names, there’s been rudeness in the work, blame, creating a ‘victim of the week.’ Let’s act out of love; let’s want to be ‘in relationship.’”

“Another question to ask of decision-makers and leaders: how does the deepening commitment to A-O/A-R/MC play out in budget decisions at the national, district, and congregational levels?”

“The DE is organizing a conference call for all delegates to GA to discuss efforts related to the GA 2006 resolution. The purpose of the conference call is to get feedback and to give encouragement.”

“Establish an electronic newsletter to promote DRUUMM and ARE movements.”

“DE is concerned that people expect the DE to be involved in everything, which may cause issues to get bottlenecked. Thinks other leaders have or are given power to act so it is not just DE doing work.”

“DE wished she had people to give her advice on A-O/A-R/MC work. Needs reference material, experts to do workshops and resources such as list of people to contact.”

“The UUA growth marketing strategy in [our district] offered workshops in hospitality, etc. but not in racism or diversity. DE feels that workshops on diversity and racism are/were needed.”

Snapshots: Developing Successful and Effective Practices

We asked district leaders to identify some examples of ways in which their district has been “successful and effective” in doing this challenging work of transformation over the past decade. Defining “successful and effective practices” is an organic and evolutionary process, one which reflects district leadership, structure, priorities, tenure, and history. Four out of five districts we interviewed identified the following.

- ❖ Schedule A-O/A-R/MC workshops in conjunction with district annual meetings
- ❖ Plan for continuing education
- ❖ Connect, promote, and share positive work within and outside of the district
- ❖ Invite Jubilee Trainers and JUUST Change Consultants to present district workshops
- ❖ Encourage district leadership to create and fund a district anti-racism team to lead workshops
- ❖ Support and promote the Beyond Categorical Thinking (BCT) program for congregations in search
- ❖ Provide A-O/A-R/MC leadership from the pulpit
- ❖ Cultivate and deepen relationships with youth and young adults
- ❖ Recruit, nominate, appoint, and elect leaders who have an A-O/A-R/MC focus
- ❖ Advertise and celebrate our marriage equality stand to attract others and boost our own sense of identity
- ❖ Focus on tangible and timely local issues
- ❖ Rely on people who are knowledgeable about specific institutions
- ❖ Ask which communities are not part of the decision-making process and determine how best to include their leadership
- ❖ Conduct A-O/A-R/MC Process Observation at all district leadership meetings
- ❖ Review and revise bylaws to reflect all current A-O/A-R/MC priorities
- ❖ Develop district-wide accessibility strategic implementation plan
- ❖ Host Multicultural education forums
- ❖ Support urban anti-classism work like San Francisco’s Faithful Fools street ministry model

Snapshots: The Gaps That Divide Us

When district leaders were asked where the biggest programming and support gaps exist in the district that inhibits their progress in A-O/A-R/MC work, respondents articulated the following:

Leadership:

- ❖ Lack of clarity about district leadership's role in A-O/A-R/MC work. Should district leadership initiate, inspire, or only support congregations who are already doing A-O/A-R/MC?
- ❖ The challenge of leaders thinking 'because we do not have fill-in-the-blank-identity people here' is a reason to not engage in particular anti-oppression work
- ❖ Leaders that think anti-racism and people of color only refer to the Black and White paradigm
- ❖ Lack of ministerial leadership, initiative, and support
- ❖ Weak board leadership wherein congregations are not held accountable

Structure:

- ❖ Inconsistent flow of information and communication between congregations and districts in the area of A-O/A-R/MC work
- ❖ Insufficient number of trainings to develop leadership in districts
- ❖ Leadership turnover limits sustained commitment to A-O/A-R/MC work at the district level when there is no mechanism to preserve institutional memory
- ❖ Lack of disability work in districts
- ❖ Lack of general awareness about effective action and programming
- ❖ A perceived top-down approach (from UUA or districts to congregations) contributes to resistance to A-O/A-R/MC work

Methodology:

- ❖ Linkage of oppressions is something that is sometimes overlooked or not addressed when A-O/A-R/MC is discussed. Therefore addressing BGLT issues without also mentioning ableism, classism, and racism gives an incomplete analysis
- ❖ Resistance related to the legacy of the past shame and blame approach to A-O/A-R/MC work. Pastoral Care as a way of dealing with pain of the past is critical to progress. Some trainers can be experienced as lacking empathy when addressing the fears and embarrassment of whites
- ❖ The lack of a theological foundation in current A-O/A-R/MC methodologies
- ❖ Inconsistent data collection, interpretation, and sharing of information from congregations and districts

Snapshots: Suggestions from the Districts

When asked to tell us how the Association and districts could improve efforts toward becoming an authentic A-O/A-R/MC faith community, district leadership articulated ways the Association and congregations can move this work forward. These leaders said less about the role of the district:

- ❖ Internalize the A-O/A-R/MC lens by training staff and obtaining their commitment so that they can work with district leadership to bring it to the congregations
- ❖ Expand materials to focus on Latino/a and Hispanic issues
- ❖ Ensure that the UUMA and the UUA field staff and headquarters staff are promoting A-O/A-R/MC programs and awareness
- ❖ Support the work of those doing the work of dismantling white privilege and those unlearning internalized oppression
- ❖ Offer solutions which help manifest the best of our Unitarian and Universalist heritage, not emphasizing past transgressions
- ❖ Compile testimony from people who have experienced oppression to be read by the Association
- ❖ Provide “marketing” strategies. Congregations don’t know where to start
- ❖ Create an A-O/A-R/MC curriculum like *Welcoming Congregation*
- ❖ Approach this work by starting with the basics. For example, how can we claim to be against ableism if the district office is inaccessible to wheelchairs?
- ❖ Prepare for the people who aren’t yet with us
- ❖ Address two major perceived obstacles, lack of funds and competition for scarce resources of time and attention
- ❖ Be positive and cultivate a climate of success and culture of empowerment by bringing people of color to speak, share inspiring stories that make A-O/A-R/MC stories come alive, real, and present in our lives and congregations
- ❖ Identify innovative and congregation-specific action to address the long-standing reality that Sunday mornings remain the most segregated time in the week

Snapshots: Observations from the Committee

Through the long process of formulating questions, listening to responses from district leaders, organizing the data and considering its implications, we have gained much insight and understanding about what helps and hinders districts' efforts in doing anti-oppressive, anti-racist, multicultural work. The most significant of these insights are summarized below as observations and reflect not only our own discoveries, but also the statements of district leaders, some of which appear in other sections of this report.

Leadership

We discerned a distinct lack of clarity about the role districts should play in advancing A-O/A-R/MC work at both the district and congregational levels. The question that leaders often struggle with is: Should leaders initiate this work, inspire others to become active, or provide support to congregations already engaged with it?

Our sense is all three of these functions are appropriate and necessary for these efforts to take root and flourish in any district, and that it is rather a matter of proper emphasis. The particular conditions and history of each district would determine whether the emphasis should be on initiating, inspiring, or supporting, or a particular combination of these three.

One factor that contributes to this lack of clarity is the inevitable turnover in key leadership at the district level that makes it more difficult to maintain a sustained commitment to A-O/A-R/MC work. There needs to be increased efforts at ensuring continuity through orientation, training, or committee structures, among other mechanisms, so as to ensure that valuable work begun at the district level can be continued when new leaders arrive.

There also needs to be training for district staff and leadership on the concepts, programs, and resources available to do this A-O/A-R/MC work in their district which includes not only what is generated from the UUA, but also the efforts that have been made and are currently in process at the congregational level.

District leadership may also require a better understanding of the theological foundations of this work and how these spiritual concepts relate to the particular social, economic, political, and cultural realities and injustices which are evident in their districts.

Leaders at both the district and congregational levels need to understand and act upon the realization that doing anti-racism work does not require the actual presence of people of color as visitors or members. Engaging in anti-oppressive activities are part of living our faith, and certainly it is this kind of genuine witnessing to our beliefs and principles that attract a wide diversity of people to our faith. At the very heart of A-O/A-R/MC efforts is the understanding that we are indeed a spiritual faith community.

Structure

Among the structural aspects, we noted that there is not a consistent flow of information and communication between districts and congregations in the area of A-O/A-R/MC work. This impacts activities at both levels since it precludes the provision of support and resources as well as networking and information sharing across the district.

Districts should attempt to develop methods and a permanent structure for sharing the full narrative of this work at every level. There needs to be improvement in the area of data collection and dissemination for the work being accomplished at both the district and congregational levels. Although much of this lateral learning would be associated with specific contexts, enough common elements could be found that would reduce the need for congregations to completely recreate materials, practices, and policies that have proven effective in other settings with similar circumstances.

Snapshots of Five Districts on the Journey

Finally, we noted that certain forms of governance at the district level may lend themselves to facilitating A-O/A-R/MC efforts, especially those that are by nature more inclusive and participatory. This requires a certain level of mindfulness on the part of leadership and staff as to how the organizational structures themselves impact the capacity to do this difficult work more effectively.

Methodology

One of the major obstacles we discovered that hinders district A-O/A-R/MC efforts is that the fundamental linkage of all oppressions is often overlooked and not addressed properly. Addressing only one or some “isms” without at least mentioning and clarifying the realistic, historic, and functional linkages with other forms of oppressions provides an incomplete analysis.

One result of this fractured analysis is that the commonality of oppressions as well as the struggle to overcome them is not understood and acted upon. This creates artificial and counter-productive divisions among those who otherwise would be coordinating their efforts to maximize the collective impact.

There is also a related phenomenon of resistance to acquiring awareness and promoting change, especially among those who have been privileged in some way or other, because of approaches that assign blame and engender shame and guilt. Providing pastoral care is one way of dealing with the pain of past and present injustices. This care and sensitivity on the part of trainers, clergy, and lay leaders is very critical to the progress of A-O/A-R/MC work and supports the healing necessary to move forward in the journey toward wholeness.

As mentioned in the above section on Leadership, there needs to be a solid theological foundation in Unitarian Universalist principles and traditions of social justice that permeates the methodologies utilized in all of our A-O/A-R/MC efforts.

Success in this work as well as the critical growth in our faith and congregations also is enhanced by the development of Spanish language materials including pamphlets, training curricula, and basic books about our faith. It is encouraging that a Spanish hymnal is in the works, and that some translations have been done already, but much more remains to do if we will engage Latinos, now the largest ethnic minority group in our nation. For similar reasons, we also should facilitate the preparation of bilingual trainers in several key programs such as Jubilee, *Beyond Categorical Thinking*, *Welcoming Congregation*, and others, so as to make these more accessible to a wider audience.

There are also noticeable gaps in our methods and approaches in certain areas, especially regarding issues of disability, which are now only beginning to be addressed at the district level, although some congregations have taken the lead in providing accessibility to many of their members and visitors. In addition, there is a need to recruit more trainers who are people with disabilities and to develop the ‘cultural competencies’ in all leaders in the area of disability work.

Finally, it is also important to note that when we talk about responding to racism and a host of other oppressions, the concept of multiculturalism is often an afterthought.

This is an arena that is quite complex, yet very real for each human being, each of whom brings not only a bundle of identities, but also a long historical tradition of culture associated with being disabled, female, a person of color, or transgender. Resources already exist in our Association, especially in the field of education, from which we could draw to formulate approaches that will effectively address issues of multiculturalism, and the need for more cross-cultural competence on the part of our leaders and members.

Appendix A – On-Line District Survey Form

Survey of District Anti-Oppressive/Anti-Racist/Multicultural Work
by the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee

District Name: _____

Name of Respondent: _____

Respondent's Role in District:

President _____ Board Member _____ District Executive _____

Program Consultant _____ Other (please specify) _____

Length of Time in District Role: _____ Date Survey Completed: _____

Please respond to the following questions:

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being “highly aware”, how aware, overall, are:

1. District Board members of the 1997 GA resolution *Toward an Anti-Racist Unitarian Universalist Association*: _____
2. District staff of the 1997 GA resolution *Toward an Anti-Racist Unitarian Universalist Association*: _____

Please answer YES, NO, or DON'T KNOW to the following questions:

3. Our district currently has committees focused on A-O/A-R/MC work: _____
4. Our district has a mission statement which addresses A-O/A-R/MC issues: _____
5. Our district has by-laws which address A-O/A-R/MC issues: _____
6. Our district has policies which address A-R/A-O/ MC issues: _____
7. Our district is involved with social justice groups and coalitions: _____
8. We have procured grants and/or made other financial investments in district level A-O/A-R/MC work: _____
9. District A-O/A-R/MC work focuses on the following communities:
 - a) People of color _____
 - b) Latinos/as and Hispanic _____
 - c) People with disabilities (physical, psychiatric, cognitive, intellectual) _____
 - d) the LGB community _____
 - e) people who identify as transgender _____
 - f) people who are low income/economically oppressed _____
 - g) Please tell us of additional communities with whom you are engaged in A-O/A-R/MC work.

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being “very frequently”, how often, overall, do the following occur:

10. We discuss A-O/A-R/MC issues at district Board meetings: _____

Snapshots of Five Districts on the Journey

- 11. We sponsor/present workshops, educational forums, and other events addressing A-O/A-R/MC issues at district meetings:_____
- 12. People who identify from traditionally under-represented groups (people of color, Latinos/as and Hispanic, people with disabilities, the BGLT community, for example) are active in district leadership:_____

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being “most helpful”, please respond to the following:

- 13. How helpful have programs created by UUA staff been in supporting you in your district’s A-O/A-R/MC work?_____
- 14. How helpful have the programs been in helping congregations in your district in their A-O/A-R/MC work?

Please respond briefly to the following questions:

- 15. Describe the progress made by your district in the last ten years to help move toward an authentic anti-oppressive, anti-racist, multicultural faith community. Please consult with others in your district if you need additional information.

- 16. Describe two examples of district “best practices” in the area of A-O/A-R/MC activities. What has worked most effectively?

- 17. Describe where the biggest programming and/or support gaps exist in your district, if any, which inhibit your progress in A-O/A-R/MC work.

- 18. Describe how you think someone from a traditionally under-represented community might describe the current A-O/A-R/MC situation in your district with respect to inclusiveness, priority, awareness, and commitment, and how this situation has changed over the past five years.

- 19. What kinds of help could the UUA offer to you to advance your efforts in A-O/A-R/MC work?

- 20. Please tell us anything else you want us to know about A-O/A-R/MC work in your district.

- 21. Please tell us anything else you want us to know about how the UUA and the districts could improve efforts to move us toward becoming an authentic anti-oppressive, anti-racist, multicultural faith community.

Thank you very much for your time, your effort, and your thoughtfulness in filling out this survey. Your remarks and your responses will help make our work richer and more appropriate as we proceed.

Members of the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee

Appendix B - General Assembly Resolution: *Toward an Anti-Racist Unitarian Universalist Association*

WHEREAS the 1996 General Assembly resolved that all congregations, districts, organizations, and professional and lay leaders participate in a reflection-action process throughout the 1996-97 church year using the Congregational Reflection and Action Process Guide and the Anti-Racism Assessment; and

WHEREAS our Unitarian Universalist principles call us to affirm and promote “justice, equity, and compassion in human relations” and “the goal of world community”; and

WHEREAS our history as Unitarian Universalists includes evidence of both great commitment and individual achievement in the struggle for racial justice as well as the failure of our Unitarian Universalist institutions to respond fully to the call for justice; and

WHEREAS racism and its effects, including economic injustice, are embedded in all social institutions as well as in ourselves and will not be eradicated without deliberate engagement in analysis and action; and

WHEREAS because of the impact of racism on all people, and the interconnection among oppressions, we realize we need to make an institutional commitment to end racism; and

WHEREAS the social, economic, and ecological health of our planet is imperiled by the deepening divisions in our world caused by inequitable and unjust distribution of power and resources; and

WHEREAS we are called yet again by our commitment to faith in action to pursue this anti-racist, multi-cultural initiative in the spirit of justice, compassion, and community;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 1997 General Assembly urges Unitarian Universalists to examine carefully their own conscious and unconscious racism as participants in a racist society, and the effect that racism has on all our lives, regardless of color.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly urges the Unitarian Universalist Association, its congregations, and community organizations to develop an ongoing process for the comprehensive institutionalization of anti-racism and multi-culturalism, understanding that whether or not a group becomes multi-racial, there is always the opportunity to become anti-racist. Early steps toward anti-racism might include using curricula such as Journey Toward Wholeness for all age groups, forming racial justice committees, and conducting anti-racism workshops.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly urges all Unitarian Universalist leaders, including ministers, religious educators, leaders of associate and affiliate organizations, governing boards, Unitarian Universalist Association staff, theological schools, and future General Assemblies to engage in ongoing anti-racism training, to examine basic assumptions, structures, and functions, and, in response to what is learned, to develop action plans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Unitarian Universalists are encouraged to enter into relationships of sustained engagement with all people of color with a goal of opening up authentic dialogue that may include, but is not limited to, race and racism. Such dialogue should also include how to appropriately honor and affirm the cultural traditions of all people of color.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly requests that the UUA Board of Trustees establish a committee to monitor and assess our transformation as an anti-racist, multi-cultural institution, and that the Board of Trustees shall report annually to the General Assembly specifically on the programs and resources dedicated to assisting our congregations in carrying out the objectives of this resolution.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that in order to transform the racist institutions of our world, the General Assembly urges the Unitarian Universalist Association and all its parts to establish relationships with other international and interfaith organizations that are working to dismantle racism.

Appendix C - General Assembly Resolution: *Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities*

BECAUSE Unitarian Universalists affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person; and
BECAUSE Unitarian Universalists promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
and

BECAUSE Unitarian Universalists believe in the importance of religious community; and
WHEREAS people with physical, psychiatric, and developmental disabilities are becoming more
involved in all areas and levels of the Unitarian Universalist Association; and

WHEREAS people with inabilities to see, hear, or maneuver around allotted space are often
excluded from full participation in and leadership of our worship services and other
activities because of the inaccessibility of our buildings;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 1997 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist
Association undertakes an aggressive plan to address accessibility within the Association
for people with disabilities by:

1. Establishing written policies and practices, providing staff training, and creating an
accessibility manual for the Unitarian Universalist Association, allowing the Association
to serve as a model of physical and attitudinal accessibility for its member congregations;
2. Encouraging congregations and districts to become more accessible by providing a
variety of resources, including information on the Internet; and
3. Assuring that a Board-appointed standing committee, supporting congregations in their
efforts to become more accessible, address matters of disability concerns and report
annually to the General Assembly on these issues.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Unitarian Universalist Association acts as an advocate
for the human and civil rights of people with disabilities both within its own association
and globally.

Appendix D – Creation and Evolution of Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee

As stated in the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee (JTWTC)'s report to the 2001 General Assembly: "The Journey Toward Wholeness" initiative grew out of the 1992 General Assembly resolution for "Racial and Cultural Diversity in Unitarian Universalism." The UUA Board of Trustees appointed a Racial and Cultural Diversity Task Force in 1992 which concluded its work in 1996 with a report entitled *Journey Toward Wholeness – The Next Step: From Racial and Cultural Diversity to Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racist Multiculturalism*. That report was studied for a year and accepted by the 1997 General Assembly, which passed the resolution: "Toward An Anti-Racist Unitarian Universalist Association."

The 1997 anti-racism resolution called for the Board of Trustees to establish a Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee (JTWTC). A continental committee, including liaisons from the Board of Trustees, the Jubilee Working Group, and staff, was appointed by the Committee on Committees of the UUA Board in 1997. The JTWTC defined its mission to "*strategically plan, coordinate, monitor, guide, and assess* [emphasis added] the transformation of the UUA into an anti-oppressive, anti-racist, multicultural faith community." In 2004, the Board of Trustees charged the committee to focus on assessment and monitoring for two years.

Appendix E – Glossary

ADA – American with Disabilities Act (1990)

A-O/A-R/MC –Anti-Oppressive, Anti-Racist, Multicultural

ARE – UU Allies for Racial Equity

ARTT –Anti-Racism Transformation Team

BCT – Beyond Categorical Thinking, a UUA workshop for congregations in search

BGLT – Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender

DE – District Executive

DRE – Director of Religious Education

DRUUMM – Diverse & Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries

GA – General Assembly, annual meeting of UU Association of Congregations

Jubilee 1 & 2 – UUA anti-racism workshops

JUUST Change – UUA anti-oppression consultancy program

Living the Welcoming Congregation (LWC) – UUA program for congregations who are
Welcoming Congregations

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) – a process developed by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, PhD that seeks to allow people to communicate with others effectively and with compassion. It focuses on clearly expressing observations, feelings, needs and requests to others in a way that avoids diagnostic language or language that labels or defines others

Social Just Empowerment Workshops – anti-oppression workshops designed for congregations to assess their social justice programs and to reflect what they can do to put their faith into action

UUA – Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

WC – *Welcoming Congregation*, a UUA voluntary program for congregations to affirm their welcome of BGLT people

Appendix F – Charts from Raiser’s Edge Data

Comparison of Jubilee 1 and *Welcoming Congregation* Participation by Congregations

Grouped by District, Congregational Size

Size	District	Jubilee 1 (each circle represents 10%)	<i>Welcoming Congregation</i> (each circle represents 10%)
0-149 Small	District A	●	●●
	District B		●●●●●
	District C		●●
	District D		●●●●
	District E	●	●
150-249 Mid-Size I	District A	●●●	●●●●●
	District B	●●	●●●●●●
	District C	●	●●●●●●●
	District D	●●	●●●●●●●●●●
	District E	●●●●	●●●●●●
250-449 Mid-Size II	District A	●●●	●●●●●
	District B	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
	District C	●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
	District D	●●	●●●●●●●●
	District E	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●
450 + Large	District A		●●●●●●
	District B	●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
	District C	●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
	District D		●●●●●●●●●●
	District E		●●●●●●●●●●

The information depicted on this chart was obtained from the Office of Congregational Advocacy & Witness. It represents data reported by the congregations to the office as well as data collected by the office. This is an imprecise statement of the actual A-O/A-R/MC activity in the districts. While imprecise, it is reflective of the relative level of activity.

Snapshots of Five Districts on the Journey

UUA-developed Social Justice Events Hosted by Congregations
Grouped by District, Congregational Size and Year of Event

Size	District	# of Cong	1996 and before	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
0-149 Small	District A	43	2	2	4	2	1	2		2	2	2	1	
	District B	32	3	1	3	7	4	4	2	1		4	1	1
	District C	31	1	1		3	2	3	1	2		1	1	
	District D	21	2			2		2	1	2	2	1	2	
	District E	36	1			5	1	3	5		2	4	3	
150-249 Mid-Size I	District A	8	1	1	1	2	1		1	1	3			
	District B	5	3			1	2	2	2					
	District C	8	1		1	2		1	1	2	2		1	
	District D	7			1	6	1		1	1		1	1	
	District E	15	6	2	3	2		1	2	3	4	4	1	
250-449 Mid-Size II	District A	15	5	3	3	5	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	
	District B	3	2			3	3	2	2			1		
	District C	2	1				2	2				1	1	
	District D	9	7		2	2		2		1	2	3	2	
	District E	9	7	2	3	4	1	4	1	2		4	2	
450 + Large	District A	4		1	1	1		1	1			3		
	District B	4	5		2	2	2	1	1			1		
	District C	2	1			2	1	1				1		
	District D	2	1						1					
	District E	3	2		1	1	1						1	

The information depicted on this chart was obtained from the Office of Congregational Advocacy & Witness. It represents data reported by the congregations to the office as well as data collected by the office. This is an imprecise and incomplete statement of the actual A-O/A-R/MC activity in the districts. While imprecise, it is reflective of the relative number of ARTT, Jubilee 1 and 2, Living the Welcoming Congregation, Social Justice Empowerment workshops, Welcoming Congregation, and Journey Toward Wholeness Sundays.