

## SESSION 2

# Why Should UUs Talk about Race?

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### QUOTE

*With humility and courage born of our history, we are called as Unitarian Universalists to build the Beloved Community, where all souls are welcome as blessings, and the human family lives whole and reconciled. – UUA Leadership Council, 2008*

### INTRODUCTION

Participants will address why anti-racism work is something our faith calls us to do. The first activity shows some of the damaging effects of racism. Other activities tie our Principles and values to the work of healing a hurting world and creating justice.

### GOALS

This workshop will:

- Document the effects of persistent racism
- Give voice to UUs doing anti-racism work
- Demonstrate how our Principles support the work of dismantling racism.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Witness effects of racism through statistical evidence and personal voices
- Consider whether and how their UU faith calls them to work to dismantle racism.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes (90 min.)
Opening	5
Activity 1: State of the Nation Stations	25
Activity 2: UUs Speak for Themselves	15
Activity 3: The Seven Principles and Racism	30
Closing	15

## FAITH IN ACTION & ALTERNATE ACTIVITIES

Faith in Action: Videotaping Interviews	
Alternate Activity: Examining Racism Can Be a Spiritual Discipline	25

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment to sit by yourself. Light a chalice, make some tea, or engage in other grounding practices that feel right to you. Ask yourself, “Why am I called to lead this program? What does anti-racism work have to do with my UU faith? What does my faith teach that leads me to believe that this is just work?”

If you find writing helpful, we encourage you to start a journal with your thoughts. You might also use your journal to write some reflections after each session with the youth, as well as notes on the training as a whole.

# SESSION PLAN

## OPENING (5 minutes)

### MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Name badges and markers

### PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY

- Set up the chalice in an appropriate place where everyone can sit around it in a circle or semi-circle.

### DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Invite participants to create a name badge, as they enter.

Ask the youth to join you in singing “Gathered Here,” Hymn 389 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Light the chalice.

Welcome participants. Share this session’s quote from the 2008 Unitarian Universalist Association Leadership Council. Say in these words or your own:

In this session, we are going to explore the effects of racism in our society. Then we will ask whether dismantling racism is something our faith calls us to do.

## ACTIVITY 1: State of the Nation Stations (25 minutes)

### MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1: A Word on Statistics by Wislawa Szymborska
- Leader Resource 1: Station Cards
- Music, and a music player
- Paper and pens/pencils

### PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY

- Obtain background music to play while participants visit the stations. Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On?” and Tracy Chapman’s “Talking About a Revolution” are some possibilities. Test music player and queue the music.
- Make copies of Handout 1 for volunteer readers to share.
- Print Leader Resource 1 and cut apart the cards.
- Set up three stations.

## DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Say in these words, or your own:

You may be asking yourself, “Why do I need to talk about racism? I’m not racist.” If racism was only perpetrated by individuals, perhaps that would be a valid point. But when discussing racism it’s important to explore what racism means, beyond individual expressions of prejudice. Statistics offer a way to explore the big picture. If racism showed itself only in individual expressions of prejudice, then statistics should reflect gains in economic and social equality since we’ve made important positive steps in response to the Civil Rights Movement. Yet statistics don’t reflect increased equality. The statistics show patterns of who moves forward and who falls behind, who receives opportunities and who lacks access to opportunities. Through statistics, we can see whether racism only happens between individuals or whether it is built into the formal and information institutions of our society—institutions such as our job market, our education systems, and our law enforcement organizations.

It’s important to know the source of your statistics because numbers and percentages can be gathered and analyzed inaccurately or they can be applied to scenarios with which they were never intended to be associated. So it’s critical to get statistics from sources that have earned a reputation for offering a comprehensive analysis of complex issues.

Explain that there will be three stations where participants will find different statistics and quotes to read and discuss with their small group. Then, they will be asked to create a found poem from words, phrases, or statistics they noticed at the stations. Every group will be asked to read their poem at the end of the activity.

Say:

As an example of what we mean by the use of statistics in creating a found poem, let’s take turns reading stanzas from this poem. You may pass, if you want.

Distribute Handout 1 to participants who wish to read. Lead the group to read the poem “A Word on Statistics” aloud.

Ask: Do you think the poet based this poem on real statistics? What effect do you think he intended?

Tell the group it is now their turn to use words, phrases, and real statistics to create a found poem. Remind them that creativity is encouraged in poetry. Poems need not rhyme; participants need not worry about spelling; poems can be short, just a few lines or haiku-style. Point out that there is a difference between taking a serious issue lightly and expressing a serious issue creatively. Racism is a serious issue. Express it creatively.

Form small groups. Instruct participants to visit the stations together in their small groups and then create a poem with their small group. Allow three minutes at each station. Play background music as the groups move from station to station.

After all the groups have visited all three stations, give the groups a few minutes to complete their poems. Ask each group to have a volunteer read the found poem. After all the poems have been read, debrief:

- What were some of the common statistics or words among all of the poems?
- Which statistics were most surprising to you?
- If these statistics are examples of institutional racism, what do you think are the differences between individual prejudice and institutional racism?

## **ACTIVITY 2: UUs Speak for Themselves (15 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY**

- Computer with Internet access and a digital projector, speakers, and projection screen or a large monitor

### **PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY**

- Test equipment. Queue the three-minute video, “Multicultural video with Raziq Brown,” on the Vimeo website, <http://vimeo.com/78831574>.

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Participants hear Raziq Brown, a young adult UU, talk about the intersection of anti-racism work and his faith.

Tell participants that many UUs are committed to break the cycle of racism and reverse the trends they just heard about in the last activity. Many UUs believe their faith calls them to do this work. You will show a short video of one UU talking about his commitment and his experience.

Show the video; it is three minutes. Ask the group to form triads and discuss the following questions for the next several minutes:

- What are some of main points Raziq made? How did he describe the role of social justice and cultural understanding in his life? How is that similar to, or different from, your own experiences?

- What, if anything, have you experienced or learned in religious education or Coming of Age programs, worship, at UU camps or youth conferences, in discussions with UU ministers, or at any UU event about how you as an individual should respond to racism?

Reconvene the large group. Ask for a volunteer to speak to why the video resonated with them. Ask for a volunteer to speak to why the video did not resonate with them. Remind participants that spirituality and faith are very personal; one person's reason for doing this work may not be another's.

### **ACTIVITY 3: The Seven Principles and Racism (30 minutes)**

#### **MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY**

- Handout 2: The Seven UU Principles
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Art materials, such as costumes, musical instruments, and visual arts supplies such as modeling clay, paper, or color pencils or markers
- Journals and writing instruments

#### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Participants represent ways the Principles call us to deconstruct racism.

Say that many UUs look to the seven Principles for guidance on how to live a faithful life. This activity will demonstrate some ways the Principles ask us to right the wrongs of racism.

Distribute the handout. Divide the group into seven teams. Assign a Principle to each team. Ask each team to create an artistic way to demonstrate how their Principle calls us to do anti-racism work and create beloved community. Groups may use visual art, songs, drama or any art form they choose. Presentations should be no longer than two minutes. They have ten minutes to prepare.

Present the art. Ask what the process was like. Did anyone gain a new perspective on a Principle?

Ask participants to think about all of today's activities. What would they answer to the question, "What role does your faith play in supporting you to dismantle racism?" Take a moment for participants to answer in their journals. If time permits, invite a few responses. If not, consider asking for responses as part of the Closing.

### **CLOSING (15 minutes)**

#### **MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY**

- Computer with Internet access and a digital projector, speakers, and projection screen

- Chalice, candle and extinguisher or LED battery-operated candle

#### **PREPARATION**

- Access and preview the 2011 TedX talk by Jay Smooth, on the Colorlines website: [http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/11/jay\\_smooths\\_ted\\_talk\\_on\\_how\\_he\\_learned\\_to\\_stop\\_worrying\\_and\\_love\\_discussing\\_race.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/11/jay_smooths_ted_talk_on_how_he_learned_to_stop_worrying_and_love_discussing_race.html).
- Test equipment and queue the video to start 4:44 minutes in.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Acknowledge that taking part in this program is brave because talking reasonably about race in our country can be hard. Say that you will show a short video with some tips on conversations about race issues. Tell them they will see New York DJ Jay Smooth giving a TEDx Talk at Hampshire College in 2011.

Ask:

- What stood out for you about Jay Smooth's talk?
- Have you had difficult conversations about race before? What will make our conversations different?

Thank participants for bringing all their identities to your time together. Invite volunteers to share any last remarks about this session or the statements they wrote in journals in Activity 3. Invite the youth to blow out the chalice.

# FAITH IN ACTION & ALTERNATE ACTIVITIES

## FAITH IN ACTION: Videotaping Interviews

### MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY

- Cameras
- Computer and software for showing the video

### PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY

- If you wish to show the video to the congregation, confer with the appropriate people to make this happen.
- Consider inviting the interviewees to the screening, too.

### DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Participants film members of their congregation who are actively working to end racism.

Invite participants to create their own video of how members of the congregation feel their UU faith supports anti-racism work. You will need filmmakers, cameras, and interviewees. Create a list of possible interviewees. They might include participants in this program, religious professionals and other congregational leaders. Look for people who are committed to deconstructing racism and are actively trying to do so. Their actions might take place in their family, workplace, school, congregation, or community. Interview them talking about how their UU faith calls them to do this work. Seek diversity in age, ethnicity, and type of activities.

Watch the interviews together as a group. Afterwards, ask,

Did everyone have the same reason for doing this work? Did any of them cite the same reasons as people in the video in Activity 2? Did anyone cite reasons other than their faith for doing this work?

In what various activities are the interviewees involved?

Decide how you will use the video. Post it on the congregational website? Show it in the narthex during coffee hour? As part of a worship service? Figure out the steps needed to make it happen, assign tasks and follow through. Want to share your video with other UUs? Contact the office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, [youth@uua.org](mailto:youth@uua.org).



## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY: Examining Racism Can Be a Spiritual Discipline (25 minutes)**

### **MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY**

- Handout 3: Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning
- Journals and pens or pencils

### **PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY**

- Write these questions on newsprint:
  - What is a spiritual discipline or spiritual practice?
  - Do you agree that the responsible search for truth and meaning can be a spiritual discipline? How is this discipline easy or hard?
  - Thinking about all of today's activities, do you feel your UU faith calls you to work to dismantle racism? How would you explain this to another UU? How would you explain it to a person of a different faith?

### **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY**

Participants hear from a UU who sees dismantling racism as a spiritual discipline.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the essay on Handout 3.

Ask participants to reflect and journal on the questions on newsprint. Each person should reflect on questions that speak to them or which they feel comfortable answering at this point. Allow five minutes for reflection and journaling.

Invite participants to form triads and share their reflections. Allow a total of six minutes, two minutes for each participant. Then re-convene the whole group. Ask what stood out in the small group conversations. Were there similarities? What perspectives did individuals hear that had not occurred to them before? How do these new perspectives change their own view?

# RESOURCES

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## LEADER RESOURCE 1: Cards for Stations

Information compiled from *The State of America's Children* (Children's Defense Fund, 2012), *The Racism Review*, and *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander.

### Poverty Card #1:

In 2010, percent of children and youth younger than 18 who live in poverty in the United States:

Black: 39.1%

Asian: 14.4%

Hispanic: 35.0%

White, Non-Hispanic: 12.4%

### Poverty Card #2:

Imagine a cake with five layers. Each layer represents a higher level of income\* as you go from the bottom layer to the top layer of the cake.

Almost 66% percent of Black children in the United States are raised in families in the lowest cake layer, or bottom fifth of the income distribution, compared to only 11% of White children.

\*Income is money received, like the money one earns as a paycheck.

### Poverty Card #3

The average wealth\* of White households in the United States was 18 times that of Hispanic households and 20 times that of Black households in 2009. These are the largest gaps observed since these data were first published 25 years ago.

\*Wealth is money stored away or the value of property or possessions, like money in a bank account or the value of a home or a vehicle that you own.

**Poverty Card #4:**

“To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships.” — W.E.B. DuBois

“We can have democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can’t have both.” — Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis

**Education Card #1:**

Fifteen-year-olds in the United States rank 17th among industrialized nations in reading:

- Asian students in the United States rank 2nd, behind China and ahead of Korea.
- White students in the United States rank 7th, behind Singapore and ahead of Canada.
- Hispanic students in the United States rank 43rd, behind Lithuania and ahead of Turkey.
- Black students in the United States rank 49th, behind Serbia and ahead of Bulgaria.

**Education Card #2:**

Between 1995 and 2009, despite increases in the enrollment of African American and Hispanic students attending post-secondary institutions (such as colleges), more than 8 in 10 of incoming white students enrolled in the 468 most selective institutions (such as Ivy League colleges), whereas more than 7 in 10 incoming Hispanic and African-American students have gone to open access two- and four-year colleges.

The most selective schools spend two to nearly five times more per student and have higher ratios of full- to part-time faculty and greater access to graduate schools, even when considering equally qualified students. The college completion rate for the most selective schools is 82 percent, compared with 49 percent for open access two- and four-year institutions.

**Education Card #3:**

“But for the children of the poorest people we're stripping the curriculum, removing the arts and music, and drilling the children into useful labor. We're not valuing a child for the time in which she actually is a child.”

“Nationally, overwhelmingly non-white schools receive \$1,000 less per pupil than overwhelmingly white schools.”

— Jonathan Kozol, retired public school teacher, author, and activist

**Mass Incarceration Card #1:**

Human Rights Watch reported in 2000 that, in seven states, African Americans constitute 80 to 90 percent of all drug offenders sent to prison... Although the majority of illegal drug users and dealers nationwide are white, three-fourths of all people imprisoned for drug offenses have been black or Latino. — from *The New Jim Crow*

**Mass Incarceration Card #2:**

Studies of racial profiling have shown that police discriminate against African Americans and other racial minorities.

"In New Jersey, the data showed that only 15% of all drivers on the New Jersey Turnpike were racial minorities, yet 42% of all stops and 73% of all arrests were of black motorists—despite the fact that blacks and whites violated traffic laws at almost exactly the same rate. ...[In Maryland] only 21% of all drivers along a stretch of I-95 outside of Baltimore were racial minorities (Latinos, Asians, and African Americans), yet those groups comprised nearly 80% of those pulled over and searched. ...[In] both studies, whites were actually *more likely* than people of color to be carrying illegal drugs or contraband in their vehicles." — from *The New Jim Crow*

**Mass Incarceration Card #3:**

A Black boy born in 2001 has a one in three chance of going to prison in his lifetime; a Latino boy a one in six chance of the same fate and a White boy 1 in 17. A Black girl born in 2001 has a 1 in 17 chance of going to prison in her lifetime; a Latino girl a 1 in 45 chance; and a White girl a 1 in 111 chance.

States are spending, on average, two-and-a-half times more per prisoner than per public school pupil.

**Mass Incarceration Card #4:**

“Prison did not deter crime significantly, many experts concluded. Those who had meaningful economic and social opportunities were unlikely to commit crimes regardless of the penalty, while those who went to prison were far more likely to commit crimes again in the future.”

– Michelle Alexander, in *The New Jim Crow*

## HANDOUT 1: A Word on Statistics

“A Word on Statistics” by Wislawa Szymborska (pronounced *Vees-WAH-vah Shim-BOR-ska*), translated by Joanna Trzeciak. From *Miracle Fair: Selected Poems of Wislawa Szymborska* (W.W. Norton and Co.). Used with permission.

Out of every hundred people,

Those who always know better:  
fifty-two.

Unsure of every step:  
almost all the rest.

Ready to help,  
if it doesn't take long:  
forty-nine.

Always good,  
because they cannot be otherwise:  
four -- well, maybe five.

Able to admire without envy:  
eighteen.

Led to error  
by youth (which passes):  
sixty, plus or minus.

Those not to be messed with:  
four-and-forty.

Living in constant fear  
of someone or something:  
seventy-seven.

Capable of happiness:  
twenty-some-odd at most.

Harmless alone,  
turning savage in crowds:  
more than half, for sure.

Cruel  
when forced by circumstances:  
it's better not to know,  
not even approximately.

Wise in hindsight:  
not many more  
than wise in foresight.

Getting nothing out of life except things:  
thirty  
(though I would like to be wrong).

Balled up in pain  
and without a flashlight in the dark:  
eighty-three, sooner or later.

Those who are just:  
quite a few, thirty-five.

But if it takes effort to understand:  
three.

Worthy of empathy:  
ninety-nine.

Mortal:  
one hundred out of one hundred --  
a figure that has never varied yet.

## HANDOUT 2: The Seven UU Principles

There are seven Principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

## HANDOUT 3: Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning

By Jude Geiger

In our everyday world, through the news, Facebook, and our schools, we learn a lot about Race. From some people we learn that everything is fair and balanced, and that if only you work hard enough then you'll be given a fair chance at success and happiness. From other people we learn that not everyone is treated fairly; that the color of our skin influences how people will treat us. Some of these lessons are taught by other people about the world, and some of these lessons are experienced personally and directly. It's not enough to come to a conclusion about which view is "correct." Our UU values teach us to live out a responsible search for truth and meaning. Our fourth principle asks us to continue to examine matters that affect our lives and the people around us. It's a spiritual discipline that my faith calls me to live up to.

I'm a UU minister, a child of the 80s, white, gay and from a working class background. My Dad was in the navy with a high school degree, and my mom got her GED in her twenties after she had dropped out of high school. I was the first generation in our family to go to college, and to graduate school. It would be easy to say that everything is fair and balanced. I worked hard and succeeded in education and in my career. The class I was born into didn't hold me back. Mine is the kind of story that's often lifted up to say "anyone can make it." But it would only be part of the picture.

I grew up in an African-American neighborhood. I was the only white kid. I moved away from my parents at 19, and would come back and catch up with friends, or hear stories from neighbors about how folks were doing. By the time I went to graduate school at the age of 28, only one of my childhood peers, from my section of town, had also attended graduate school. Some were in and out of unemployment. Others had good blue-collar jobs like being auto-mechanics. Some were still living with their parents. Besides my one neighbor who went on to become a lawyer, I heard no stories of folks attending a four-year college. Something was different. I felt different in a way that I hadn't felt as a child.

I think it's important to consider how our identities shape and impact our lives. Class, gender identity, and sexuality each intersect in important ways with race. But I've seen first-hand how much easier I've had it, as a white man, to secure educational opportunities and employment over the success of my childhood peers who are black. My faith declares this an injustice that I must work to alleviate. The key to changing this lack of fairness is first to understand its causes. Examining racism – why people are prejudiced and how systems perpetuate disparity – is part of a free and responsible search for truth and meaning and is, for me, a spiritual discipline. Its end result is building a world founded on equity and compassion.