

# FINAL REPORT OF THE SPECIAL REVIEW COMMISSION

MARCH 2006

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

### **Hafidha Acuay (Portland, Oregon)**

*Hafidha Acuay is a young adult who identifies as an American woman of African descent and Afro-Latino Muslim heritage. She currently serves as the Communications Coordinator for DRUUMM (Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Ministries) and is active in young adult leadership at the continental and local levels.*

### **Rev. José Ballester (Houston, Texas)**

*José Ballester is a UU minister serving the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston. Ordained in 1984, he has served congregations as a settled and interim minister and directed the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's Just Works program. A Puerto Rican from New York City, he has been active in social justice issues and is co-founder of the Latina/o Unitarian Universalist Networking Association (LUUNA) and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association Hispanic Ministerial Caucus. Currently he is serving as a Trustee-at-Large on the UUA Board of Trustees.*

### **Rachel Davis (Teaneck, New Jersey)**

*Rachel Davis is a young woman of color living in Teaneck, New Jersey. She has been a UU for all of her sixteen years. A full-time student, she is also very involved in the youth group at Central Unitarian Church in Paramus, New Jersey. On her district Youth/Adult Committee (YAC) she is the Social Action Coordinator and Outreach Coordinator. Continentally, she represents DRUUMM on the Taskforce to the Consultation on Ministry to and With Youth, and is an*

*SDC (Spirituality Development Conference) trainer. She has been involved in anti-racism work in Unitarian Universalist and secular circles and is the Co-Coordinator for the Youth of Color Caucus for GA 2006.*

**Janice Marie Johnson (Brooklyn, New York)**

*Janice Marie Johnson is a faithful member of the Community Church of New York and a tireless lay leader on the congregational, local, district, and continental levels. She is a member of the UUA's Board of Review, the current president of DRUUMM and an educator working primarily in the areas of conflict resolution, anti-racism, cross-cultural issues, and religious education. Her students span the generations. Janice is an internationalist who is ever mindful that she is simultaneously of African descent and culturally Caribbean.*

**Rev. Margaret Keip (Grants Pass, Oregon)**

*Margaret Keip was the longtime co-minister with her husband Fred to the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula and then served as an interim minister with five congregations. She has now retired with Fred to Grants Pass, Oregon, where she co-leads the Pacific Northwest District's Healthy Congregations Team and consults frequently. She is white, with ancestors who emigrated to the American heartland from Germany and the British Isles in the nineteenth century.*

The President and Moderator said,

When we selected the members of the Special Review Commission, our most important criteria was to create a commission that would be able to develop a balanced view of the incidents in Dallas/Fort Worth so that our faith community could most effectively learn what we need to learn. We selected persons we knew could “stand on the balcony” to see not just the particular incidents but their implications and point to work that we need to do together. We also wanted to make sure that youth and young adults of color and ministers were at the table. We are deeply gratified that all five of the people we chose agreed to serve on the Special Review Commission.

The Special Review Commission (SRC) had its initial meeting at UUA headquarters on September 3 and 4, 2005. The charge to the SRC from the Moderator and President was as follows:

To review the trajectory of events that affected the Unitarian Universalist community of color, especially the youth of color community, leading up to and during the Fort Worth GA. The goal is to identify learnings about the structures of racism and ageism both within and outside our faith community, which we must address in our journey toward wholeness. We expect no recommendations about the behavior of specific individuals; institutional learning is our goal. We request

that the SRC offer a preliminary report to the UUA Board of Trustees at their October meeting and a final report at the January Board meeting

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

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

- 1) Given the reported events, it was necessary to establish a sequence beginning with the Closing Ceremony on June 27, 2005, and moving both forward and backward in time.
- 2) From the material and reports, we attempted to establish the identity of individuals whose knowledge and/or experience of these events were deemed critical.
- 3) Further review began to establish a clear trajectory of events stretching back to, but not limited to, the Youth of Color Leadership Development Conference (LDC) sponsored by Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries Youth and Young Adults (DRUUMM YaYA) held in Dallas on June 17 to June 20.
- 4) Within this trajectory, we identified key individuals who might possess information helpful to our understanding of plans, events, and results.
- 5) We established a list of individuals whom we would interview and assigned the various members of the Commission to specific individuals.
- 6) We determined that there was a need to gather all relevant material being sent directly to the UUA or posted on various sites. A UUA email address (src@uua.org) was established.
- 7) In our initial meeting, we took the opportunity to interview five individuals who, for various reasons, were available at that time. At the conclusion of these interviews, we added some other names to our list of people to be interviewed. Eventually the list included thirty-five individuals. Throughout September and into October, the Commission conducted interviews and reported back our summaries and insights. Ultimately, we received written messages and queries from another fifty people.

What we have learned is that none of these events happened in a vacuum and that the trajectory does not start at the LDC and has not yet ended. Human beings have human needs, faults, and frailties. We act or react depending on our particular state of mind at the time, which is often compounded by other events. Additionally, we all act out of our own experiences and, given how diverse we are, our challenge is to affirm the life experiences that each of us brings. Everyone has their own interpretations and often those interpretations are contradictory. That does not mean that one is right and another wrong.

*Stories are someone's experience of the events of their life, they are not the events themselves. Most of us experience the same event very differently. We have seen it in our own unique way and the story we tell has more than a bit of ourselves in it. ...All stories are full of bias and uniqueness; they mix fact with meaning. This is the root of their power... The meaning we may draw from someone's story may be different from the meaning they themselves have drawn. No matter. Facts bring us to knowledge, but stories lead to wisdom.*

— Rachel Naomi Remen, from Kitchen Table Wisdom

## **LEARNINGS and REFLECTIONS**

As we engaged in our task, it became evident that the goal given the SRC “to identify learnings about the structures of racism and ageism both within and outside our faith community” was both too large—given our limits of time and expertise—and in the larger picture, too small. The essence of what challenges us all is “*other-ism*,” ingrained in ancient ancestors confronting limited resources in the drive to survive. We *homo sapiens* learned millennia ago to co-labor with our tribe and compete against others who are not *us*. “Isms” are categorical exclusions of broad swaths of people from a circle of privilege and belonging.

There are two faithful options in the face of such exclusion: to expand and increase our resources, so that more beings may survive, share, and thrive, and/or to expand and enlarge our embrace to include more life and lives and liveliness in our circle of belonging. In so doing, we embody the enduring vision of beloved community that we are called to create.

*It goes on one at a time, it starts when you care to act....  
It starts when you say We and know who you mean,  
and each day you mean one more.*

— Marge Piercy, from “The Low Road”

The interviews and reports tapped into major issues around assumptions and miscommunication. They also tapped into opportunities for empathic development and honed competencies in areas of diversity around age, race, culture, and more.

Each of us, as authentic individuals, operates out of the authority of our respective experiences and perceptions. The challenge, then, is how to increase the mindfulness of our actions when we are living in the moment, how to sustain panoramic awareness while engaging the details of what's happening now. Being in community--religious or otherwise--calls us to do just that.

Racism is pervasive. It lives within the juxtaposition of righteous indignation, political correctness, and over-sensitivity in our Unitarian Universalist communities. Most white UUs are liberals and committed to the struggle for human rights. They have fought good fights and continue to do so. Not wanting to admit to racism, they very often sidestep

perceiving it. Persons of color, in turn, are tired of being teachers and translators to white liberals--serving a dominant culture once again, even as they brace themselves against the next indignity, the next wounding, the next dismissal of their presence. This treatment is so familiar that it turns us into mute witnesses. The emotions of silent witnesses run the gamut; we go from being almost unaware to explosive. Every incident has the potential to become volatile. So many questions then go unasked and unanswered. And we ask, ask, and ask again:

What have we learned--individually and collectively--about racism, except that it is a landmine? Are there different kinds of racism? Or is racism all on a continuum of different degrees? Can a person of color be a racist? Is there a difference between a white person who only says something prejudiced and someone who really believes that people of color are inferior?

How do we respond to the wounding of people of color? How do those of us who are white claim our role in this regard? Can we energize pain as a jumping point, not to suicide or oblivion, but to vaulting the chasms that separate us? Can we learn to hear what someone is saying and not be misled by the language in which it is delivered? Can we reconcile our worldviews when we collide, rather than hurting each other in new and damaging ways?

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STORY** - We on the SRC have heard differing stories of the same experience, seen from widely varying perspectives, given what each participant brought to the moment. No story told it all; no story told truth to power. Was each story true? Yes, for the one living it. What is the factual story? That question is not ours to ask. People's truths are not identical.

But what *is* ours to observe is the role of perception, of differing points of view. To seek an objective version and call it the truth is to miss the essential meaning and vital importance of differing perspectives. We illustrate this with "the elevator story" (told on pages 21-22). It offers paradoxical experiences of the same event.

Paradoxical experience ignited the volcanic event on the evening of the GA Closing Ceremony. Three youth entered the balcony area, moving about restlessly. Meeting an usher, who smiled and handed one a program, the youth threw it on the floor, walked on to another usher, asked for a program, threw it down, walked on to another usher, and did so again. To some persons--particularly adults--the youth appeared to be behaving with provocative disrespect. The youth understood their behavior differently. They were doing street theater, acting out the experience of how they had felt treated as youth, specifically as UU youth of color, at times accepted, even welcomed, and at other times thrown away like pieces of paper. "It was an act of protest, skillfully put together and humbly done, but it was a mean message; it was an evil thing to do to the ushers," one of them told us. Their enactment was a revelation of days, indeed years, of raw pain and distress, and a call to awareness that had precious little chance of being understood by most of those who would see it.

When discussing the ways we do anti-racism work, people identify three different models: The National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) model, inspired by the work of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, focuses on transforming persons. The Crossroads Ministry model is intentionally challenging in its emphasis on justice. The Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) model directs attention to transformative change within the community.

Each of these models is valid. We UUs expend far too much energy weighing them and judging their validity. We can ill afford to get caught up in the senseless debate. Would we not be more effective with anti-racism toolkits that reflect our pluralism and draw from multiple schools of thought?

The Commission found that UU anti-racism work is notably lacking in support for our youth of color. So many people, including youth of color themselves, as they have told us, are still trying to figure out if and where youth of color belong within this faith. Far too much time in youth-of-color identity groups is spent discussing white people and youth and their relation to whiteness. Positive identity development for youth of color has been dangerously deficient. While white youth have the title of “ally,” to be earned and used responsibly, youth of color lack the same opportunity. They miss any opportunity for forward motion. Their growth tends to happen by enduring and recovering from incredibly invisible and painful experiences. At youth anti-racism workshops and conferences, the progress of the group often comes at the expense of the feelings and comfort of people of color.

Unitarian Universalists hold high the premise that love can conquer every oppression that beats people down. One young adult writes,

I believe that too, but to get there, we can't ignore all those oppressions because they are very real. It is only when we start to acknowledge the oppressions that we or the people in our community have been affected by that we are able to see the struggle that we, or the people in our community, have had to battle with. And it is only when we see the struggle that we can see the resourcefulness, the creativeness, the faith, the gifts, the love, and the lives that have endured oppressive forces. It is only when we see all this that we can truly be able to love one another as three-dimensional, diverse, beautiful, laughing, crying, breathing, reaching, living, learning, and real people.

But we must get there, and the first step is we must see each other.

If you wish to love me, do not be blind to my color, my sexuality, my abilities, my class. If you wish to love me, do not be blind to systemic oppression, and do not be blind to the oppression that has affected me. My color is beautiful. The oppression must be identified if we wish to destroy it. And if you do not see the systems that tried to break me down, you will never see my soul, which has soared so high. Don't you see it? My soul has grown strong throughout the struggles, and if you do not see any of this, you will never know me. And if you do not know me, you cannot love me.

We want our youth to be able to say, in concert with poet Ntozake Shange,

i found god in myself  
& i loved her  
i loved her fiercely.

(from *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*)

Again, our programs for youth endeavor to encompass multiple goals. As one correspondent wrote to us, “we’re struggling with the question of whether our youth program is supposed to empower youth and help them develop leadership abilities and self-esteem, or to nurture them in their faith formation as Unitarian Universalists.” Fully recognizing that limited resources and immediate opportunity affect what is achievable at any given time and place, we believe the answer is both/and—a genuine reflection of our diversity and the promise of our UU faith.

The expansion of awareness, of consciousness and conscience is our religious journey. We fully expect that many categorical exclusions will continue to challenge Unitarian Universalism. Indeed, several people identified *classism* as a primary factor in the problems we have been investigating. We don’t deny that. But right now, racial and cultural diversity and youth presence at GA have each reached critical mass and claim our attention. And the reward afforded by their engagement is the living opportunity to make a difference.

Unitarian Universalists constitute a small minority in the United States and the world. It would be well to recognize that we are, all of us, at GA and as Unitarian Universalists, privileged persons. Even if one’s entire GA expenses are subsidized, that very fact qualifies. Being sufficiently blessed with freedom and being loved enough to be able to feel and think deeply about life and to dream of its meaning and seek our role in that are privileges. We ask ourselves: What may it mean to be privileged and a member of a minority within our Unitarian Universalist community? What opportunities open to us in response to that question?

Privilege comes with gifts that we can use to serve and bless the world. Can we reclaim our cherished Principles as **commitments** to our community rather than **rights** owed us. Gathered together at a GA we are a multitude. Can we use this opportunity, in community, to practice our Principles and then carry this home? Can we arrive expecting to serve, not merely to be served and fed, and depart enriched by the wholeness and holyness of the experience?

Can we arrive at GA ready to embrace all that it offers, ready with an understanding as clear and profound as that offered by Maya Angelou in her poem “On the Pulse of Morning”?

*Here on the pulse of this new day  
You may have the grace to look up and out  
And into your sister's eyes and into  
Your brother's face...  
And say simply  
Very simply  
With hope  
Good morning.*

The history we encountered is complex and convoluted and reveals more than enough responsibility to go around. Misjudgments and mistakes abound. Parsing out responsibility and levying blame are not ways to resolve them. Indeed, blame assessment attempts to distance the problem while instantly leaping into it and making it worse.

GA is the “gathering of the clan,” a meeting of the tribe. Even in the midst of the fun, learning, and excitement, each of us knows how difficult these occasions can be. We steel ourselves for five days in a strange city. GA is a time when our routines shift dramatically. We are in an artificial construct of a community. We eat differently, socialize more, live differently, and sleep less.

One of the immediate realities at Forth Worth was that individuals were overloaded and stressed and nearly always unaware of larger contexts related to what was immediately happening in a given moment. Overtaxed, individuals kept trying to work harder, cycling toward burn-out. Can we call for help without shame, without feeling that we’ve failed? Can errors become teachable moments rather than judgments against us? *Yes.*

Every one of us is human, and humans make mistakes. Every one of us will make more mistakes in the future, and this is exactly what enables change to happen. The gift of mistakes is the opportunity they provide for deep learning, so we need not replay them but can grow beyond what’s happening now.

*The eye goes blind when it only wants to see why.*

Jalal al-Din Rumi

Many will want more specifics about who and what went wrong and more detailed recommendations than this report will provide. We have necessarily stayed with a large picture, knowing that the creative imagination of many more committed minds and hearts will be vital to achieving the transformation of our movement and our world that we all yearn for.

We Unitarian Universalists have wanted to change the world without investing our *selves* and dedicating our resources to fulfilling our promise. We have expected to do it immediately and cheaply. And we have faulted each other or succumbed to despair when we have not succeeded--wounding one another and burning out bright lights along the way. The history is poignant.



## VIEWS AND TIMELINES

Our charge was to trace the trajectory of events that culminated in the incidents on the last night of GA in Fort Worth. Furthermore, we were to identify learnings about the structures of racism and ageism within and outside our faith community. One of our first tasks was to construct a timeline in order to determine the actual sequence of events. Naively, we believed the timeline would be two weeks long. We greatly underestimated.

After interviews, research, and comparison, we have come to these conclusions: These events did not take place in a vacuum and they are not unique. Regardless of the particulars, all these events have happened before in one way or another. The reactions and results may have been varied, but they too have precursors in our Unitarian Universalist history. And since we are inexorably tied together, youth and adults join in our struggles. If we are truly to reduce the possibility of repeating our actions we must both examine our past and learn from our mistakes and triumphs.

What follows is an admittedly incomplete recounting of our history. These are stories that have been repeated, and as such they have become background legends. Much of it is accurate; some of it is embellished. Some of it has been distorted, misunderstood, or redacted. Some of the data may be entirely missing--either because of choice or because of missing accounts. But oral history touches actual events; its importance lies in reactions to the recounting.

### **Pre-Consolidation**

Both the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America had long histories in the struggles for justice. It must be acknowledged that both movements and the individuals within them have had checkered histories. For the purpose of this timeline, we will not dwell upon those times except to note that our oral history recalls that the first elements to consolidate/merge were our justice branches and our youth movements.

**The 1960s** – Despite some financial and organizational distractions, this era is characterized by struggles for peace and racial equality.

- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) – In 1969 it was believed that the UUSC had close ties to the Central Intelligence Agency and that through these ties, we were assisting the war in Vietnam. The response of our youth through the Interdenominational Radical Caucus (IRC) was to storm the offices of UUSC and stage an occupation of the facility. This incident has become part of the legend of Liberal Religious Youth (LRY), recounted with pride by former LRYers. It has been regarded as a story about how a few students could bring justice about by their actions and civil disobedience.
- Black Empowerment – At the 1968 GA in Cleveland, the youth participants witnessed and learned from the political struggles that brought about the funding of the Black Affairs Council (BAC). When the issue of funding exploded during the 1969 GA in Boston, the youth were in the midst of the action. They joined

with members of BAC in physically seizing the microphones at one point and blocking access to them at another point. When the Black Caucus walked out of the assembly, most of the youth delegation walked out as well. The youth were strong and visible in their support of funding for BAC. For the moment it appeared that walkouts and non-negotiable demands were initially successful. Wayne Arnason comments in *We Would Be One*, "The 1969 GA felt like one great public victory for the leaders of the Youth Caucus, but it would be a prelude to a series of disappointments and defeats."

**The 1970s** – After the tumultuous sixties, our wounded movement lurched along, spending its justice energies in varied areas and slowly declining. LRY found itself in financial distress and controversies over leadership and conduct.

- 1970 – Finding itself financially challenged, the UUA Board of Trustees reduced the amount of funds to BAC. In April, BAC would disaffiliate itself from the UUA and the UUA would remove BAC from the official list of affiliate organizations. BAC was not included in the tentative balanced budget for 1970-1971.
- 1970 – Despite its own economic crises, LRY pledged one half of its endowment fund to the BAC Bond program.
- 1970 – BAC supporters boycotted the GA in Seattle. LRY pushed forth an aggressive justice agenda, spearheading the effort to pass resolutions about legalizing marijuana and civil rights for homosexual people. Both resolutions were approved. According to a report of the Special Committee on Youth Programs (SCOYP) to the UUA Board of Trustees, "The resolution on civil rights for homosexuals was a landmark – the first public statement by the Unitarian Universalist Association on gay rights."
- 1972 – At its March meeting, the UUA Board of Trustees voted to grant associate status in the UUA to BAC.
- 1974 – The Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns was established. This office would grow over time and accomplish many of its goals by using inclusive and non-confrontational models.
- 1974 – LRY membership mirrored the decline in membership in UU congregations. Critics claimed that the radical ideology adopted by the LRY leadership in the late sixties and early seventies was responsible for parents and teens not feeling safe at LRY gatherings. Youth groups in local congregations began to drop their association with LRY.
- 1977 – The *Women and Religion* resolution was submitted by 548 members of 57 active societies and passed unanimously at GA. The resolution established the Women and Religion Committee, which was charged with overseeing the implementation of the resolution. Committee members were chosen from constituencies of the UUA at large as well as from the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA), Ministerial Sisterhood Unitarian Universalist (MSUU), Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA), and Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation (UUWF). By presenting and supporting resolutions as a large block, this constituency would exert great power over the following years.

- 1978 – Internal power struggles, financial management questions, and disputes that created two organizations claiming to be BAC eventually precipitated the decline of BAC. Although it continued its associate status through 1978-1979, BAC made its final distribution of funds by early spring of 1982.
- 1978 – The SCOYP report was highly critical of the lack of adult involvement in or support for LRY. It also outlined some of the concerns adults expressed about LRY. Rumors abounded about the end of LRY. The SCOYP report said,

The relationship of the youth group to its church or fellowship must be one that will affirm the experience of youth in determining their own direction and learning the responsibility implicit in that freedom. Youth need support from adults as they strive to build self-esteem. The church or fellowship must welcome youth, help them to feel they are appreciated, accept them as an integral part of the UU community. Youth programs in our churches and fellowships deserve and are entitled to the same kind of personal, financial, and staff support that other activities receive. Youth must be able to trust that adults do care about them and will support them in their growth. In turn, youth should honor this relationship with the church fellowship through respect, commitment, and a sense of responsibility.

**The 1980s** – After almost ten years, we were able to return to some unresolved issues from the late sixties and early seventies, youth and racial equality. Steps were taken carefully and gingerly, with much preparation.

- Common Ground I & II – At a point when LRY was imploding, delegates gathered in 1981 and again in 1982 to redesign and reframe our ministry to youth. The end result was the creation of the Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU), with closer ties to the UUA and plans to involve youth and adults in a partnership for the benefit of all.
- 1981 – The UUA Board of Trustees adopted the Institutional Racial Audit Report.
- 1982 – GA approved the Commission on Appraisal report entitled *Empowerment: One Denomination's Quest for Racial Justice, 1967-1982*.
- 1983 – The Board of Trustees appointed a Task Force on Racism, which was to report to GA in 1984.
- 1984 – The Board of Trustees appointed the Racism Monitoring and Assessment Team.
- 1985 – Despite opposition, GA established the Black Concerns Working Group and charged it with implementing the recommendations of the Task Force on Racism. It should be noted that the initial oppositions were resolved through negotiations, understandings, and promises through what we now call "off-line" conversations.
- Mid 1980s – The Committee on Urban Concerns and Ministry addressed issues of oppression and racism in urban areas and large congregations. Through their efforts the African American UU Ministers (AAUUM) was founded.
- 1987 – YRUU began a five-year review of itself. The final report issued in 1989 was highly critical about the lack of adult involvement in YRUU:

Support and training for adults who work with youth is seriously lacking, and adults are reluctant to work with youth when there is little training or support for them. . . . We see a pattern of neglect of youth ministry among our ministers, especially parish ministers. This is communicated to lay leaders, and contrasts sharply with ministerial attitudes in denominations whose youth programs are more successful. Youth ministry is not taught in most of our theological schools, is rarely discussed in UU Ministers Association (UUMA) chapter meetings, and is not practiced personally by many ministers. With a few outstanding exceptions, parish ministers are absent from district youth-adult councils (YACS) and the Youth Council. Nor do the UUA field staff often provide leadership to district youth programs. In this respect, little seems to have changed since 1977, when the Special Committee on Youth Programs reported "little evidence of ministerial involvement in youth programming and almost no evidence of ministerial involvement in youth programming beyond the local level."

- 1988 – Because of Arizona's refusal to recognize a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, the GA was moved from Phoenix to Palm Springs.
- 1989 – The first incarnation of the Welcoming Congregation program was unveiled at UUMA Professional Days.

**The 1990s** – After the slow, carefully laid steps of the 1980s, the 1990s saw a headlong plunge to adopt programs of anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism. Some of the flaws with such a rapid approach began to surface.

- 1990 – The Board of Trustees directed the UUA administration to develop a feasibility plan for racial and cultural diversity.
- 1991 – A basic list of changes needed to achieve diversity within a ten-year period was presented to the Board of Trustees.
- 1992 – The Board of Trustees decided not to introduce a business resolution at the 1992 GA, but instead issued the report *Long-Term Initiative for Racial and Cultural Diversity*. Responding to the report, a group of UUA affiliate organizations presented a resolution, *Racial and Cultural Diversity in Unitarian Universalism*, which was unanimously adopted by GA according to reports. The Board of Trustees appointed the Racial and Cultural Diversity Task Force.
- 1993 – At the Charlotte GA, the incident of the “Jefferson Ball” (a dance scheduled for the GA for which attendees were encouraged to come dressed in period costume—which would have left persons of African descent or Blacks dressed as slaves) generates a collaborative, peaceful and effective protest by many of the delegates.
- 1994 – The Fort Worth GA was a celebration of diversity and focused on the new frontiers we were facing.
- 1995 – Through the efforts of the UU Urban Coalition and the UUA Department of Religious Education, the Latina/o UU Networking Association (LUUNA) was organized.

- 1996 – The Racial and Cultural Diversity Task Force made an initial presentation at GA with a call for congregations to return in 1997 to act on specific recommendations. LUUNA complained to the Task Force that it was a dichotomous program taking into account only blacks and whites.
- 1996 – Representatives from AAUUM and LUUNA met to create the organization that would eventually become DRUUMM.
- 1996 – In response to the firebombing of African American Churches in the South the UUSC established the JustWorks workcamps. In its six-year initial time span, over 2,500 volunteers worked on social justice projects; 85% of the participants were youth and young adults. Many youth and young adult participants in the workcamp program go on to become leaders in our movement.
- 1997 – The Racial and Cultural Diversity Task Force recommended that the Board of Trustees establish a committee to monitor and assess our transformation to an anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural institution. The Board of Trustees appointed the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee (JTWTC).
- 1997 – DRUUMM held organizing meetings with two co-presidents (one from AAUUM and one from LUUNA). Membership was restricted to UU religious professionals.
- 1997 – YRUU issued its Fifteen-Year Report on Youth Programming. While the report noted improvement since the previous report, it stressed that there were great differences in the degree and variety of youth programming. It also noted that while youth empowerment was the ultimate goal, it required adult responsibility. This became a key issue because the report stated that empowerment without adult involvement is abandonment that leads to entitlement without accountability.

At its core, the Unitarian Universalist youth programming philosophy advocates the empowerment of youth through leadership opportunities. While the recommendations we have made in this report cover a wide variety of issues, all of them have been conceived with the goal of youth empowerment in mind. This goal necessitates a delicate balance between youth and adult power that seeks to give the youth as much responsibility as possible for creating and carrying out their own programs while also expecting adults to ensure a safe environment for the youth and protect them from the large-scale failures.

Accompanying an intention which seeks to give youth responsibility for the direction of their program, there must also be an understanding that the responsibility for ensuring that there is a program lies with the adults. In particular, it is the responsibility of the adults in our movement to see that there is a sufficient number of trained, competent adult youth group advisors available to work directly and consistently with our youth, and that these advisors have the support they need from their UU communities.

- 1998 – The UUA, in conjunction with the JTWTC, began anti-racism programs favoring a model and analysis from Crossroads Ministries and the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond.
- 1999 – YRUU passed a resolution that anti-racism work would be its number one priority.
- 1999 – The LUUNA publication *Bringing Gifts* was published, presenting alternative methods for doing anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural work in a supportive and covenanted community.
- 1999 – DRUUMM changed its membership rules to include people who are not religious professionals.
- 1999 – The JTWTC held a stakeholders meeting in Kansas City. The Latina/o participants walked out in protest against the lack of cultural diversity or cultural sensitivity in the program. DRUUMM confronted the UUMA about the lack of diversity in its Executive Committee. At the subsequent UUMA Professional Days, an *ad hoc* member with the portfolio of anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism was appointed.
- 1999 -- At the GA in Salt Lake City, over 360 youth participated in the Youth Caucus. This was the first year of a new Youth Caucus structure, a structure that greatly enhanced the GA experience for many youth by placing emphasis on the youth community and its needs. The new staff structure was instrumental in executing the "intentional community" concept and defining what positions and niches youth held in that community. Emulating past practices, the Youth Caucus carefully studied GA resolutions and selected the best presenters to voice the youth positions. As a result, the youth were a marked presence at the plenary sessions, including participation in the debates. Furthermore, the youth were socially integrated with the adults--striking up conversations, responding more than perfunctorily to greetings, blending their groups in with adult groups in the audiences at various events. Most notable was the intergenerational activity at the evening dances. There were obstacles to be faced and elements that were not anticipated. Problems were dealt with swiftly and with care. The entire staff worked above and beyond the call of duty and worked together in concert to make that GA one of the best in recent history. It was anticipated that the new Youth Caucus structure would pave the way for Youth Caucus to continue to grow and serve and be a delightful beacon of youth empowerment.

**The 2000s** – To date this has been a period of change, reframing, and confrontation. It seems that the shortfalls of previous programming efforts are finally being manifested.

- 2000 – The Youth Advisor Task Force Report was issued. Essentially the report was directed at youth advisors and religious professionals, calling on them to help the youth become more integrated into congregational life:

Bridging the gaps between the youth and adults in a congregation requires not only that youth advisors work with the youth to create enthusiasm for involvement, but also that the congregation reach out to the youth. There is an untapped potential for youth to minister to adults, and for adults to minister to youth. Youth often feel that the congregation is for their

parents, and call the Sunday service the "adult service." Ideally, worship is for all in a congregation, and we fear that without a connection to the greater church youth programming becomes a place for the children of UUs, not for young UUs. While youth need a place in the church that is their own, they also need to feel that they are part of a greater community.

- 2000 – Differences of opinion about self-identity and accountability caused a struggle in DRUUMM. After a little over a year, none of the founding Latina/o members remained in DRUUMM.
- 2000 – A group of Unitarian Universalist youth caused an unscheduled yet significant event at GA. Reacting to the sight of a homeless man in a Nashville park, the group collected \$300 from among their ranks, used the money to buy food, and delivered the food to a local homeless shelter. After announcing their actions in a Plenary session at GA, the young people raised an additional \$2,700 to aid the homeless.
- 2000 – The YRUU Steering Committee adopted Formal Consensus instead of Robert's Rules for its governance.
- 2001 – On the recommendation of the YRUU Steering Committee, the Youth Council adopted Formal Consensus for its governance.
- 2001 – LUUNA agreed to undertake a reorganization. A Steering Committee was appointed for two years and later extended for an additional year.
- 2001 – Bill Sinkford was elected President of the UUA, the first person of color elected to the presidency of our movement.
- 2002 – At GA in Quebec City, YRUU and the JTWTC asked for permission and were granted time during the Plenary to address an issue with the Commission on Appraisal skit (a skit during which a white male, following the script, “jokingly” pushed a Black woman out of the way). Additionally there were concerns about lack of youth supervision during GA.
- 2002 – Youth Council called for a long-range task force to determine the needs of YRUU.
- 2003 – There were reports of unregistered and unsupervised youth attending the Youth Caucus at GA. Furthermore, the youth meeting rooms in the hotels were significantly damaged.
- 2003 – Youth Council adopted a different model. Instead of business meetings, the majority of the time would be devoted to anti-racism training. The *Challenging White Supremacy* workshop was chosen for the program.
- 2003 – YRUU released its Long-Range Planning Meeting Report. Of the six major issues to be considered, the overwhelming concerns centered on anti-oppressive transformation with an anti-racism focus and development of curricula and resources.
- 2003 – Bill Sinkford addressed the Youth Council and stressed the need to re-imagine the program. After debate, the Council passed a resolution to consider calling for a Common Ground III. The resolution was to be sent to the local chapters and voted for final approval at the 2004 Youth Caucus.
- 2003 – The Youth Council resolution *It's Time We Do More About Racism in YRUU* passed.

- 2004 – The YRUU Steering Committee became embroiled in struggle when it used consensus to decide elections. In attempting to solve the problem, valuable time for planning Youth Council was lost. The approach was often confrontational.
- 2004 – YRUU Steering Committee meetings with the Board of Trustees were contentious.
- 2004 – Youth Council programming was a repeat of the previous year. The *Challenging White Supremacy* workshop was expanded to include work from other UU groups. Time devoted to business was vastly reduced, necessitating late meetings, shortened agendas, and curtailed "down time."
- 2004 – Tension and differences of opinions in the Steering Committee manifested themselves at Youth Council. A combination of lack of sleep, lack of communication, and confrontational methods eventually caused a meltdown. Delegates used the Formal Consensus Block maneuver to defeat the Common Ground III Resolution. During the process, significant numbers abstained.
- 2004 – Incidents at Con-Con resulted in some participants being sent home. Eventually, Con-Con for 2005 was cancelled.
- 2005 – The UUA convened a Consultation for and About Youth Ministry to Our Youth.
- 2005 – GA was held in Fort Worth, Texas.

### **Timeline for GA 2005, Fort Worth, Texas**

**March 2005** – A Leadership Development Conference was jointly announced by its sponsors, DRUUMM Youth and Young Adults (YaYA), the UUA Youth Office, and the UUA Young Adult & Campus Ministry Office. This conference for people of color alternates the focus yearly between programs for youth and programs for young adults. The 2005 conference for youth was to take place in Dallas, at the First Unitarian Church of Dallas, from June 17 to June 22.

**April 2005** – At the meeting of the GA Planning Committee, extensive time was devoted to concerns from youth and the Youth Caucus:

There is one concern whose consequence will greatly impact later events; the staff of the Youth Caucus did not make reservations in time to be in one hotel. Thus the youth will be split up among various hotels. That fact, coupled with the curfew times, means that youth will need to find adult chaperons when traveling from a late night event back to their hotel rooms.

**June 17-22, 2005** – Due to miscommunications and misunderstandings, the Leadership Development Conference got off to a rocky start. The Dallas church, lacking an alternative contract for the conference, based arrangements on the standard church rental agreement and were minimally involved in the conference beyond providing space. At the same time, the church's youth advisor was departing. Meanwhile, understanding the church to be sponsoring the conference, LDC leaders expected that they and the participants would be treated as special guests. Limited resources and short staffing, both at the church and at the LDC, compounded overload.



Accommodations were not what the LDC expected and tensions grew. It is reported that interaction with several parishioners was strained and at times insulting. At a dinner meeting on Monday, June 20, the DRE and staff tried to rectify some of the misunderstandings. It is reported that the group at the dinner parted on amicable terms.

The fact that the church was located in University Park in Dallas, originally a white-flight suburb now engulfed by the expanding city, added to the tension at the LDC. The area was *de facto* segregated by class and there was overt racism in the University Park Police Department. There were reports from the youth participants of harassment by local law enforcement officers and residents. Apparently the LDC leaders were not aware of the history of the area.

Although the incidents in Dallas were stressful and insulting to the youth participants, these incidents were not reported to the leadership of the three sponsoring organizations. After the LDC ended, the participants and conference leadership traveled to Fort Worth for the GA.

**June 22-24, 2005** – LDC participants and other youth began arriving in Fort Worth. Due to the Youth Caucus's failure to reserve rooms and to the shortage of rooms in the immediate convention area, the youth were scattered over several hotels. At meetings for youth of color, the stories of the LDC and Dallas were shared. There were several incidents in which youth of color were mistaken for hotel employees by GA participants and asked to perform menial tasks. There were reportedly incidents in which hotel employees tended to the needs of white youth but ignored youth of color.

**June 24, 2005** – Workshop 2067, *Transracial Adoptions, Interracial Families: Changing Faces, Changing Hearts*, was co-sponsored by the Planning Committee and DRUUMM. The workshop was to examine the issues faced by transracially adopted UUs, especially youth and young adults. In addition to transracially adopted youth, young adult, and ministerial presenters, there were two outside speakers. One of the featured speakers from Pact, an adoption alliance, canceled at the last moment due to a family crisis. A white UUA staffer who has adopted a child of color replaced her. The presentation of the other featured speaker, a transracial adoption activist, was reportedly confrontational and upsetting to some adoptive parents, while the youth were gaining insight into their pain and a vocabulary to express it. Tension grew as the adoptive parents and adoptees expressed their anger and frustrations. Rumors circulated that some of the adoptive parents would protest the follow-up workshop, 5017, *Transracial Adoption: Perspectives of Youth and Young Adults* (sponsored by Continental UU Young Adult Network and the Family Matters Task Force). The potential for further dialogue was important to many attending.

**June 25-26, 2005** – Racial incidents continued to be reported at identity meetings for youth of color. Some involved harassment by the police and local residents. The youth of color felt threatened at times. These incidents and the growing tension were shared with some of the young adult leadership from DRUUMM YaYA, but they were not passed on to other authorities in DRUUMM, the GA Planning Committee (GAPC), or the Board of Trustees. Other incidents involving other groups were

reported to the GAPC and other authorities and their concerns were addressed during GA.

**June 26, 2005** – The purported protest at the second *Transracial Adoption* workshop did not materialize. The parents and sponsors managed to discuss their concerns in an amicable manner.

The youth of color and their young adult leadership gathered in a Caucus meeting. They shared with each other their stories of how they had been mistreated at the LDC and GA. They decided that the delegates at GA needed to know about their pain and brokenness and that the best course of action was to stop the GA and request that their stories be heard. Representatives of the group left to arrange for a chance to speak to the delegates. However, the Closing Ceremony had begun and the last Plenary session had ended, so there was no official way for the youth of color to address the delegates, increasing their tension and frustration.

Three young men of color left the Caucus meeting and headed to the convention center. There they began to perform a non-violent protest by requesting programs from the ushers and then either throwing the programs to the ground or tearing them first and then throwing them down. They repeated these actions several times in the convention hall so that the delegates would notice. One usher was concerned about their actions and asked another usher to determine the cause. Since the youth were not visibly wearing nametags, she also asked the other usher to determine whether they were UU youth or locals who had entered the hall. Some words were exchanged between the male usher and the youth as they continued their protest. These interactions began to attract the attention of others. A Youth Office staffer tried to intervene but only increased the tension as more people became aware of the protest and reactions. A minister intervened and challenged the three young men. Harsh words were exchanged and the young men began to exit the hall. The minister followed them into the lobby.

The youth of color, having finished their Caucus meeting, arrived in the lobby of the convention center still determined to somehow address the delegates. It is reported that some youth and young adult leaders were upset that they could not address the delegates and expressed their frustrations in the lobby. Other youth of color tried to find white allies and others in positions of power to assist the youth in finding a way to address the delegates. Some of the people of color leadership either happened upon the agitated gathering in the lobby or entered the lobby from the convention hall. As they tried to determine what had happened, the three young men and the minister entered the lobby from the hall. It is reported that they exchanged harsh words loudly and that the minister appeared to be following the three young men, who appeared to be trying to distance themselves from her.

In the lobby, some of the youth came to the defense of the three young men, telling the minister that they were UU youth and a part of the community. The situation continued to escalate with more and more people drawn into the crowd, including youth, young adults, adults, delegates, ministers, UUA staffers, and a member of the

Board of Trustees. As some of the youth tried to disengage, one young woman made a comment that seemed to infuriate the minister. Words usually reserved for an urban street argument were exchanged at increasing volume. It is reported that both the minister and the youth had to be restrained. At that point the UUA Moderator, Gini Courter, left the Closing Ceremony and attempted to restore order in the lobby. It is reported that Gini ordered the minister to distance herself from the situation several times. The minister eventually left the lobby.

Given the agitated state of some of the youth, their requests to tell the delegates of how their world was now broken, and the growing tension in the lobby, Gini negotiated for meetings back in the Radisson Hotel. The youth and supporters left the lobby for the hotel meetings. As the youth and leaders attempted to use the elevators, another incident took place. This particular incident, reported elsewhere, is indicative of the tensions and misunderstandings of that evening. At the hotel, the groups broke out into separate Persons of Color and White Allies meetings. Meanwhile, the evening Intergenerational Dance, sponsored by the Youth Caucus, had started in the hotel ballroom, when some youth white allies announced that the dance was cancelled. The GAPC was unaware of and had not authorized the cancellation.

At the meetings in the Radisson, adult leadership, of color or white, learned for the first time of the particular incidents from the LDC to the Closing Ceremony. Emotions were running high and one of the youth made a video recording of people's feelings. This video was to be shared with the Board of Trustees. Plans were made to address these issues to the Board of Trustees and the GA Planning Committee.

**June 28, 2005** – At their meeting with the new Trustees, the entire UUA Board of Trustees learned about the incidents for the first time. The Board of Trustees acted swiftly to take responsibility and resolved to investigate the allegations, publicly apologize to those who had been hurt by the incidents, and determine what could be done to vastly reduce these types of incidents in the future. The Trustees who are ministers called upon the UUMA and the Ministerial Fellowship Committee to become involved.

The GA Planning Committee was also informed of the incidents and appointed liaisons to various groups to learn from these incidents and determine what needs to be done for future General Assemblies.

**June 30, 2005** – UUA President Rev. Bill Sinkford and Moderator Gini Courter issued a letter on the reported incidents in Ft. Worth. They called for the formation of a Special Review Commission to determine the trajectory of the events at GA and to report the learnings from these incidents to the Board of Trustees.

**August 2005** – The Youth Council gathered information from the participants at the LDC and GA. These reports were compiled into one document, without attributions, and eventually shared with the SRC.

**September 2005** – The SRC met for the first time in Boston. They determined to conduct extensive interviews and issue a preliminary report to the October 2005 Board of

Trustees meeting. A final report was scheduled to be released to the January 2006 Board of Trustees meeting.

The GAPC met and discussed the incidents in Ft. Worth. Janice Marie Johnson, president of DRUUMM, met with the GAPC and the following issues were raised:

1. How do we welcome one another? That's just good manners. It works when it is authentic, not forced.
2. "How did you find our faith?" is a difficult question for most UUs of color to hear.
3. We need to acknowledge that it is an emotional challenge for many people of color to come to GA.
4. We need an ongoing and continual "audit" of how things are going, using an AR/AO lens, throughout workshops.
5. We need to check in with persons of color when a question arises about how something might be taken or received.
6. When an incident happens, where do we go? We should first find out what happened before planning how to respond.
7. We need to ensure that the community of color knows 1) to call and 2) whom to call. The former is important; the latter is critical.
8. There is tremendous sensitivity about naming the problem - e.g. the Board's letter posted on uua.org.
9. We need to include more programming opportunities for anti-racism, anti-oppression (AR/AO) learnings, such as JUUST Change consultancies, Identity-Based Ministries workshops, all orientations (including District In-Gatherings), DRUUMM, LUUNA, and Opening/Closing Ceremonies.
10. We need AR/AO trainings for all hospitality services, including local volunteers.
11. Linda Friedman volunteers to be liaison to DRUUMM and Janice Marie Johnson, as President of DRUUMM, agrees to be the liaison to the GAPC.
12. We will revisit the Guidelines for Presenters that were developed after the Rochester GA.
13. We need to create real space inside of GA for a gathering of stakeholders doing AR/AO work (organizational, district, and congregational).

**October 2005** – The SRC issued its preliminary report to the Board of Trustees. This report was well received and the Board of Trustees endorsed the continuing work of the SRC. In order to further its understanding of the issues related to anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism, the Board of Trustees sent liaisons to the November meetings of DRUUMM and the White Allies Conference at Murray Grove and the UUMA's Hispanic Ministerial Caucus Conference, *Drinking From Our Own Wells*, at Meadville Lombard. The video from the meetings at the Radisson was not available.

**October-December 2005** – The SRC continued to conduct interviews and share information and insights. All the material was gathered and reflections and meta questions were submitted. Members of the SRC viewed the videotape made in the circle following the incident at the Closing Ceremony.

**January 7-8, 2006** – The SRC, meeting in Boston, gathered all the interviews and related material in order to write the final report. They determined that more time was needed to make a thorough report. In conversation with the Moderator, the SRC decided to submit an interim report to the Board of Trustees in January, giving the Board of Trustees and other groups time to submit questions. The final deadline for submitting questions would be thirty days from the time the interim report was posted to the UUA website. The final report was to be submitted by March 20, 2006, so that it would be posted prior to the April meeting of the Board of Trustees.

### **“THE ELEVATOR STORY”: A METAPHOR**

Upon reviewing more than eighty accounts of the events that took place in Fort Worth, the members of the Commission came to a common understanding: Each of us brings into every situation a personal body of experience that affects the nature of our interactions. This is exemplified by what we refer to as “the elevator story.”

In this true story, a woman of African descent recalls riding in a crowded elevator with several emotionally exhausted youth and young adults of color on the final night of GA. Two of the youth had just been involved in a near-altercation with a white female minister outside of the Closing Ceremony. The elevator stopped, and as the doors opened, the woman heard a white woman yelling at the youth of color in the elevator, “If you people really want to be anti-racist, you will get off the elevator now and allow this poor man to get on.” The woman of African descent peered outside the doors and observed that the man in question was an older, black hotel employee with a food cart. When she looked at him, she read shame and embarrassment on his face. Meanwhile, the white woman had boarded the elevator. The woman of African descent remembers a flood of emotion. “In his eyes,” she says, “I saw me.” And she wondered, “What was I doing with rude, insensitive white people so far removed from *his world, my roots?*” This episode reminded her of many of the negative, race-based encounters she’d experienced within the UU community over the past fifteen years. She questioned why she was a part of this faith community, but “I stayed on that elevator. I stood my ground. . . . I belonged on that elevator, too.” Soon after she learned that the white woman was a UU minister, which increased her discomfort.

The white UU minister recounts the same event. She had heard only that the dance had been canceled due to incidents of racism and the youth community feeling “broken.” Leaving the ballroom, she came upon an older, black hotel employee waiting at the elevator doors with a food service cart. An elevator arrived and a dozen YRUU youth hurried past him to fill it. This happened twice as she watched. The man told her that he’d been waiting for some time as this scenario repeated itself. The third time the elevator arrived and youth rushed to enter, she interrupted to ask if they would step out and let the man in. She recalls that the youth “were screaming at me that their world was broken.” She told them that if they were concerned about racism, they would care about *this* man. She reminded them that everyone at GA was privileged and urged them to look after the hotel staff. After boarding the elevator, she and the youth continued to dialogue until an

adult woman of color said to her, “You need to stop now and go with your white community and talk about this.” This incident left her shaken. She was accustomed to speaking out for the underdog, she said. Although she too had attended the closing ceremony, “I had no clue what had happened with the youth or what I had gotten into.” She described this incident as “one of the more unpleasant experiences in my entire life.”

The story of the elevator demonstrates the vastly different lenses through which two women viewed the same event. While race played a factor, so had encounters immediately preceding this one and all the experiences associated with being an adult, a parent, a woman, a person of color, a white person, a person of authority, and so on. The Commission views the elevator story as a metaphor for many of the stories we were privy to during this investigation. It is our conclusion that a vital part of the effort to become a more whole and loving community involves listening to and sharing our honest perspectives--not to determine who is “right” and who is “wrong” but to identify where we have attempted to communicate with one another and simply failed. The good news is that we *are* reaching out and striving to connect. Let us be kind to each other and try again--and again, and again. Ours is a continuing story.

The waitress took the parents’ order, and then turned to their small son

“*What will you have?*” she asked

“*I want a hot dog!...*” the boy began.

“*No hot dog!*” the mother interrupted.

“*Give him what we ordered!*”

But the waitress ignored her.

“*Do you want anything on your hot dog?*” she asked.

“*Ketchup!*” the little boy beamed.

“*Coming up!*” she said, as she walked to the kitchen.

There was silence at the table.

Then the youngster said to his mother:

“*Mom, she thinks I’m real!*”

Rev. David O. Rankin, from his 1978 UUA meditation manual, *Portraits from the Cross*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUR FUTURE AS A COMMUNITY OF FAITH**

So what have we learned?

- that racism is a pernicious problem both in our larger society and in our faith communities
- that there is no simple solution to racism and that the nature of racism is adaptive
- that there is no hierarchy to oppression and that oppressions are linked

- that as an institution, we have made mistakes and at times continue to make the same mistakes
- that we are in need of a comprehensive history that truly takes into account the multiple points of views of individuals, groups, and organizations within our faith movement
- that we need clearly defined accountability relationships that operate in both directions
- that we need to evaluate our current anti-racism, anti-oppression, multicultural programs and determine if they are meeting our needs
- that we are an imperfect association of imperfect congregations of imperfect people, but this does not excuse us from admitting our mistakes and working to rectify those mistakes

The meta-solution to all of these issues, clearly, is to live our UU Principles fully in relationship with each other. Toward that end, we would re-envision GA as a prime venue to practice our Principles and call forth and commit GA delegates and participants of all ages to undertake this charge conscientiously. We offer these recommendations with that vision foremost in mind.

The Special Review Commission recommends that:

- all GA participants be asked to wear and display nametags at GA events, regardless of identity and (assumed) status
- GA materials include information that will sensitize attendees to the cultural settings of the site and of GA itself and a request that attendees live our Principles in all interactions with everyone they encounter
- participants be urged to come prepared to practice hospitality, greeting one another as members of a religious community and behaving as gracious guests
- delegates be explicitly invited to learn from and minister to the uniquely diverse Unitarian Universalist environment that is GA
- program planners continue to recognize and celebrate the panoramic diversity that is Unitarian Universalism at its principled best (while becoming aware and wary of tokenism) and offer opportunities for individuals to explore their own personal identities and claim the fullness of their blessings and challenges
- a written protocol be adopted to aid participants of all ages, specifically including youth, in seeking help when serious problems arise, including a contact list of chaplains, pertinent UUA staff, the GA Planning Committee, identity-based affiliates, and allies

- program planners be encouraged to consult with chaplains and other qualified leaders about potentially stressful events that may need the services of chaplains and/or counselors
- there be greater availability of well-trained, identifiable, visible, and proactive chaplains for youth
- programs be developed that chronicle and demonstrate models for successful youth activism in the movement and celebrate the history of youth presence and influence on GA
- planners of youth programming consider the existing time and energy commitments of youth leaders when asking them to take on more responsibilities, and youth feel authorized to set limits on their spiritual and emotional energies and practice good self-care
- parents and sponsors connect with their young people daily and provide them safe space for debriefing, deep listening, and rest
- youth be included in all levels of GA planning
- basic conflict resolution and communication skills training become a regular, ongoing part of UUA, district, and congregational programming
- all Unitarian Universalists be encouraged to wear nametags when we gather at conferences and congregational events

You will note that our last recommendation expands upon our first, which is by far the simplest and easiest of them all. We're aware it may also be the most resisted. If so, we want to ask *why*? Why this reluctance to be known, to be identifiable as an individual person? What underlies refusing this simple way of saying "I am"? "Here and now, I am."

Is it a misplaced sense of entitlement? Shouldn't we be accepted and welcomed simply as human beings? Our Universalist forebears would say yes. But we are far from there yet, either as Unitarian Universalists or as a human race.

In the meanwhile, along the journey, your nametag expresses your own elemental affirmation of *yourself* as a person of inherent dignity and worth. This simple act can serve us all as a first step — toward meeting and greeting one another, engaging each other in dialogue, growing to know the rich diversity of whole human beings, and expanding our horizons to include truths beyond what we each know now.



*By **SIZE** I mean the stature of one's soul, the range and depth of one's love, one's capacity for relationships.*

*I mean the volume of life you can take into your being and still maintain your integrity and individuality, the intensity and variety of outlook you can entertain in the unity of your being without feeling defensive or insecure.*

*I mean the strength of your spirit to encourage others to become freer in the development of their diversity and uniqueness.*

*I mean the power to sustain more complex and enriching tensions.*

*I mean the magnanimity of concern to provide conditions that enable others to increase in stature.*

*To me, this is the fundamental category, this is the essential principle.*

Bernard Loomer, a process theologian, was an ordained American Baptist minister and a member of the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley when he died in 1985.

## **CONCLUSION**

The work of this Special Review Commission has been a task of love and caring. Knowing the importance of the issues we faced, we have attempted to be as thorough, dispassionate, and accurate as possible. But human limitations and time restraints render omissions and unanswered questions inevitable

Not everyone will be satisfied with this report. Some will want more details, more passion, and an acknowledgment that their beliefs are the correct beliefs. Some will want certain individuals or organizations either praised or condemned. We have intentionally avoided these actions and instead focused on the deeper issues, mindful of our responsibilities to preserve and live by our covenants and to uphold and maintain the ideals of our Unitarian Universalist faith.

It is the size of our hearts, of our souls, that will determine the future of Unitarian Universalism.