

Beyond the Partisan Divide

Facilitator Guide: Videos and Discussion

This guide provides discussion questions for the six videos offered in the [Beyond the Partisan Divide Toolkit](#) on the UUA website. The total time of the videos is approximately 80 minutes. To keep the entire session to two hours, plan to limit total discussion time to 40 minutes.

[Beyond Partisan Division, video #1](#)

Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael at 2015 Metro NY "Defying Gravity" conference (12:00)

Discussion Questions

- Does talking about politics make you uneasy? Why?
- Do you struggle to talk to people who belong to a different political party than your own?
- If your congregation became a place where people across the political spectrum were welcome, would you no longer feel welcome?
- Rev. Anya says: We bring you this talk because we are sick and tired of the demonizing partisan ideology that has crept into our national landscape and at times our congregational fold and stolen us body and soul one from another. We bring you this talk because the authority that lays claim to the whole of our identity, the authority that crams the whole of our beauty into the confines of a single label, is an unholy authority that we as Unitarian Universalists are called to overthrow. Have you ever felt this way? Describe the circumstances that led to this feeling.

[Beyond Partisan Division, video #2](#)

Monologue #1 at 2015 Metro NY "Defying Gravity" conference (3:00)

Discussion Questions

- Does your family include a diversity of political views? How does this affect you?
- Do you agree with the assertion that "if you were going to come out to your UU Congregation as gay, Christian or Republican, it seems like Republican would be the hardest"?
- Were you surprised to learn that a Republican stood out in the rain passing out flyers for gay rights?
- Are you more complex than the labels that others might use to describe you, allow?

[Beyond Partisan Division, video #3](#)

Monologue #2 at 2015 Metro NY "Defying Gravity" conference (2:04)

Discussion Questions

- How does the way you grew up affect your political ideology?
- Is there anything you avoid discussing at your congregation? Why?
- Do you struggle to live into any of the UU Principles? How?

[Beyond Partisan Divide, video #4](#)

Rev. Scott Sammler-Michael at 2015 Metro NY "Defying Gravity" conference (12:28)

Discussion Questions

- What contradictions do you hold in your person?
- Have you ever been denied the right of self-definition? Tell the story.
- Can you explain the difference between theological liberality and political liberality? What might help you make the distinction?
- Rev. Scott tells "Shannon's" story. How does this story affect you?
- How can being with people 'whom you might never have chosen' be a gift?

[Beyond Partisan Divide, video #5](#)

TED Talk by Jonathan Haidt, The Moral Roots of Liberals and Conservatives (18:39)

Discussion Questions

- What grabbed your attention in this TED Talk?
- Haidt says our most remarkable wonder of the world is not the Grand Canyon (erosion writ large) but our ability to cooperate and live together in hostile environments (the Alaska tundra or the Arizona desert) and in big cities. He notes that this takes full use of each person's moral toolkit and requires sub-groups, organizational tools, and moral incentives to rise to our best and say "no" to our worst voices (in which Haidt thinks religion plays a key role). How can our religion continue to encourage us to cooperate and to live together in "hostile environments"?
- Haidt says we should be very aware that a group where the majority are liberals likely has massive biases against conservative viewpoints. Moreover, Haidt suggests that conservatives actually have a more complicated moral system, consisting of five values, whereas a liberal moral system is guided by just two. He asks that we step outside our systems and understand the other point of view. What might you need to do to make this jump? What would help you to better understand the values that undergird another political perspective?

[Beyond Partisan Divide, video #6](#)

Rev. Anya and Rev. Scott Sammler-Michael

Discussion Questions

- Rev. Anya notes that our congregations are our 'practice ground' where we can practice building the beloved community. How might we practice living in a community that honors different political perspectives?
- In the Story from the Rev. Nancy McDonald-Ladd, Nancy's friend the AME pastor shares: "The Unitarians leading this will make this too easy to dismiss." How do you relate to this reflection?
- Rev. Scott shares: "No one has a monopoly on the truth." How do you relate to this reflection?
- What lofty goals do you hold as a Unitarian Universalist?