

# Multicultural Religious Education Renaissance Module

## HANDOUTS



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# Handout 1: Multicultural Religious Education Renaissance

## Module Outline

### Session 1: Getting Started (3 hours)

Opening	10 min.
Welcome and Introductions	25 min.
Open Communication/Covenant	20 min.
Getting Acquainted	30 min.
Why Multicultural Religious Education?	15 min.
Reading – The Children of Jowonio	5 min.
Hopes, Fears, and Expectations	25 min.
Exploring Our Identities	45 min.
Closing	5 min.

### Session 2: Core Issues (3 hours)

Opening	5 min.
Who Am I?	55 min.
Identity Wheel	10 min.
Privilege and Oppression	15 min.
Sources of Power	40 min.
Systems of Linked Oppression	15 min.
Silences	20 min.
Language	15 min.
Closing	5 min.

### Session 3: Critical Reflection (3 hours and 45 minutes)

Opening	5 min.
Approaches to Multicultural Education	15 min.
What Will We Be and For Whom?	20 min.
UU Case Studies	60 min.
Cultural Appropriation	70 min.
What about the Holidays?	50 min.
Closing	5 min.

### Session 4: Taking The Work Home (2 hours and 45 minutes)

Opening	5 min.
Multiracial/Multiethnic Families	35 min.
Practical Application, Part I	120 min.
Closing	5 min.

### Session 5: The Transforming Community (2 hours and 30 minutes)

Opening	10 min.
Practical Application: Project Reports	90 min.
Taking the Work Back Home	45 min.
Closing	5 min.

## Handout 2: Introduction to Renaissance and RE Credentialing

**The Renaissance Program** has a distinguished history of providing standardized training in a specific topic useful to religious educators (as well as parish ministers, seminarians and lay leaders). The Renaissance program is a major component of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Religious Education (RE) Credentialing program. Most of the modules are designed as “face to face” gatherings of 15 hours and may be used in any order:

- Administration as Leadership
- Adult Faith Development and Programming
- Curriculum Planning
- Ministry with Youth
- Multicultural Religious Education
- Philosophy of Religious Education
- Teacher Development
- Unitarian Universalist Identity
- Worship for All Ages

Other modules are designed as distance learning modules of 30-35 hours:

- Unitarian Universalist History
- Unitarian Universalist Theology

For more information, visit the Renaissance program page of the UUA website:

<http://www.uua.org/careers/re/renaissance/index.shtml>

**The Religious Education Credentialing Program** is a three-level program for religious education professionals intended to nurture the call to religious education as a profession, to provide a comprehensive path for professional development, and to articulate and uphold professional standards and guidelines in religious education leadership.

For more information, visit the RE Credentialing page of the UUA website:

## Handout 3: Preparation for Module Evaluation

Locate the [Renaissance Program Participant Online Evaluation Form](#).

Please complete and submit it within one week of completion of this Module. The official Renaissance Certificate will be sent to you within ten days of receipt of evaluation. All feedback is confidential and is seen only by Renaissance staff; feedback to leaders is shared only in the aggregate. Your candid comments are very helpful in developing strong leaders and a strong Renaissance program.

There are three areas on which you will be asked to provide feedback:

### **I. Module Leadership – consider each leader separately**

- Group Facilitation Skills
- Knowledge of Content Area
- Sensitivity to Different Learning Styles
- Teamwork with other Leader
- Organization/Communication
- Other Comments or Suggestions for Leaders

### **II. The Learning Experience**

- What was most valuable for you?
- Please share at least three significant learnings from the module:
- What expectations did you bring to the module? Did the module meet your expectations? Please explain.
- In what ways will you use the learnings from this module?
- How will you share your learnings in the congregation or with peers?
- Other comments or suggestions about the learning experience

### **III. The Resources**

- I read: all/most/some/none of the resources
- I found the resources: very useful/somewhat useful/not useful
- Comments on the resources.

## Handout 4: Covenant Guidelines

These guidelines, adapted from the adult Tapestry of Faith program, Building the World We Dream About, were developed specifically to foster groups doing antiracist, anti-oppression, and multicultural work together.

- Assume that people in the group are doing their best.
- Ask questions to learn and understand, rather than to challenge another's point of view.
- Use "I" statements when sharing experiences, feelings, and opinions.
- Withhold unsolicited personal judgments.
- Speak from personal experience; avoid generalizing your experience to include others you perceive to be similar to you.
- Do not ask or expect persons from culturally marginalized groups to speak as "experts" on their particular culture.
- Set your own boundaries for personal sharing. Ask yourself, "What parts of my life story am I comfortable sharing?"
- Be willing to examine and grapple with how your assumptions shape your "truths."
- Speak personal truths in constructive and respectful ways.
- When you speak, consider how your communication style affects others.
- As a listener, be willing to sit with your discomfort with others' personal truth(s).
- Take interpersonal concerns to that person.
- Recognize that the work we do together is sometimes difficult and involves taking risks; our overall goal is to stay "at the table" together.
- Respect and validate other people's experiences; it is not useful to argue that one form of oppression is more or less valid than another.
- Talking about sessions with non-members of the group is okay, but don't share personal content (other than your own stories) with people outside the group.

## Handout 5: People Attributes



# Handout 6: Why Multicultural Education?

## What Is Multicultural Education?

1. Multicultural education is primarily a way of thinking. It is about establishing a culture in your program that makes space for multiple perspectives. It's a way of asking questions, that we might bring groups that have been on the margins into the center of society and encourage those in the dominant culture to make a commitment to resist and challenge systems of marginalization and oppression.

2. James A. Banks, a primary theorist in multicultural education, says, "The goal of multicultural education is an education for freedom that is essential in today's ethnically polarized and troubled world. It promotes the freedom, abilities, and skills to cross ethnic and cultural boundaries to participate in other cultures and groups. It should help people to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to participate in a democratic and free society. In a word, multicultural education is education for social justice."

3. Multicultural education is for all of us. It is not just for white people. It is not just for people of color. Its core aim is to eradicate racial, cultural, and religious stereotypes. Multicultural education is a way of caring and taking action to make our society more just and humane. It is a method for showing and teaching participants in our religious education programs to do the same.

4. Multicultural education presents and honors the experiences and perspectives of many people. It welcomes everyone's stories. It does not require teachers and leaders who are people of color or belong to other historically marginalized groups.

5. Multicultural education is not just about race and ethnicity. Race and ethnicity are the focus of this module, yet multicultural education embraces all attributes of identity and culture, including gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, socioeconomic status, age or stage in life, family structure, and national origin or native language.

6. Multicultural education is not something we do only at certain times of the year. It is a philosophy of education that should encompass the whole religious education program, and indeed the entire congregation, all the time.

7. Multicultural education is not an attempt to become politically correct. It is an earnest effort to seek ways to live together in a world that values respect, justice, and equity.

## Why Do UUs, Our Congregations, and Our Movement Need Multicultural Education?

**1. Social and political reasons.** Ours is a multicultural society. But do we welcome, honor, and celebrate the gifts multiculturalism brings? Does our leadership reflect our diversity? For centuries, people who belong to culturally dominant groups have defined



the language and “norms” we share and controlled access to opportunity and power. Multicultural education will help us build societies where:

- Individuals from all racial and ethnic groups enjoy equal access to opportunities for achievement based on merit.
- All are free to work toward individual accomplishment, unhampered by others’ biases about age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, or perceived capabilities.
- Pathways are not closed to any individual because of any aspect of their identity or culture—for example, sexual orientation, ethnic background, or skin color.

Multicultural education provides spiritual grounding and practical skills to actively pursue social justice, a core value in our faith. It helps people internalize a justice-oriented lens.

**2. Religious and moral reasons.** Our seventh UU Principle talks about an interdependent web. If we believe we are each accountable to the whole, then the diversity in our communities, nation, and world demands we address the reality and embrace the possibilities of multiculturalism.

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe “revelation is not sealed.” This is a theological mandate to seek out and listen to voices from the margins of the world we think we know. The cross-cultural interaction multicultural education promotes is fertile ground for personal, community, and world spiritual growth.

Finally, our first UU Principle calls us to respect the inherent worth and dignity of every person. To acknowledge and honor each person’s uniqueness is a religious act.

**3. Reasons of psychological and social health.** Multicultural education invites everyone to develop positive cultural, national, and global identification. *Cultural identification* is one’s sense of belonging in faith, ethnic, neighborhood, civic, and school communities. *National identification* is the ability to live competently and positively as a citizen in our society. *Global identification* tells us how we fit in the whole world picture.

Multicultural education helps us build, maintain, and deepen our own cultural self-knowledge while broadening our perspectives beyond our own experiences. It prepares our children to live flexibly and productively in an increasingly multicultural world. Whether or not our children live in communities that are diverse, they will need the ability to make authentic connections across cultural and identity differences.

**4. For the future of our religious movement.** Multicultural education demonstrates and strengthens the spirit of Unitarian Universalist beloved community. Multicultural education builds an awareness of diversity and a culture of inclusion which will help all families feel comfortable in our congregations. In our congregations and across our movement, it promotes an atmosphere in which we come together to celebrate the gifts of individuals from all backgrounds, and act for change that benefits all.

**NOTE:** This module will not answer all your questions about multiculturalism, or about multicultural religious education. Rather, it will develop your multicultural lens—a way of looking which helps you know what questions need to be asked, guides you to seek answers, and leads you to right actions. By the end of this module, you will know some questions to ask yourselves to shape and lead multicultural religious education.

## Handout 7: What the Children of Jowonio Know

By Mara Sapon-Shevin.

*The children of Jowonio know—not because they have been told—but because they have lived it.*

That there is always room for everyone—in the circle and at snack time and on the playground—and even if they have to wiggle a little to get another body in and even if they have to find a new way to do it, they can figure it out—and so it might be reasonable to assume that there’s enough room for everyone in the world.

*The children of Jowonio know—not because they have been told—but because they have lived it.*

That children come in a dazzling assortment of sizes, colors and shapes, big and little and all shades of brown and beige and pink, and some walk and some use wheelchairs but everyone gets around and that same is boring—and so it might be reasonable to assume that everyone in the world could be accepted for who they are.

*The children of Jowonio know—not because they have been told—but because they have lived it.*

That there are people who talk with their mouths and people who talk with their hands and people who talk by pointing and people who tell us all we need to know with their bodies if we only listen well—and so it might be reasonable to assume that all the people of the world could learn to talk to and listen to each other.

*The children of Jowonio know—not because they have been told—but because they have lived it.*

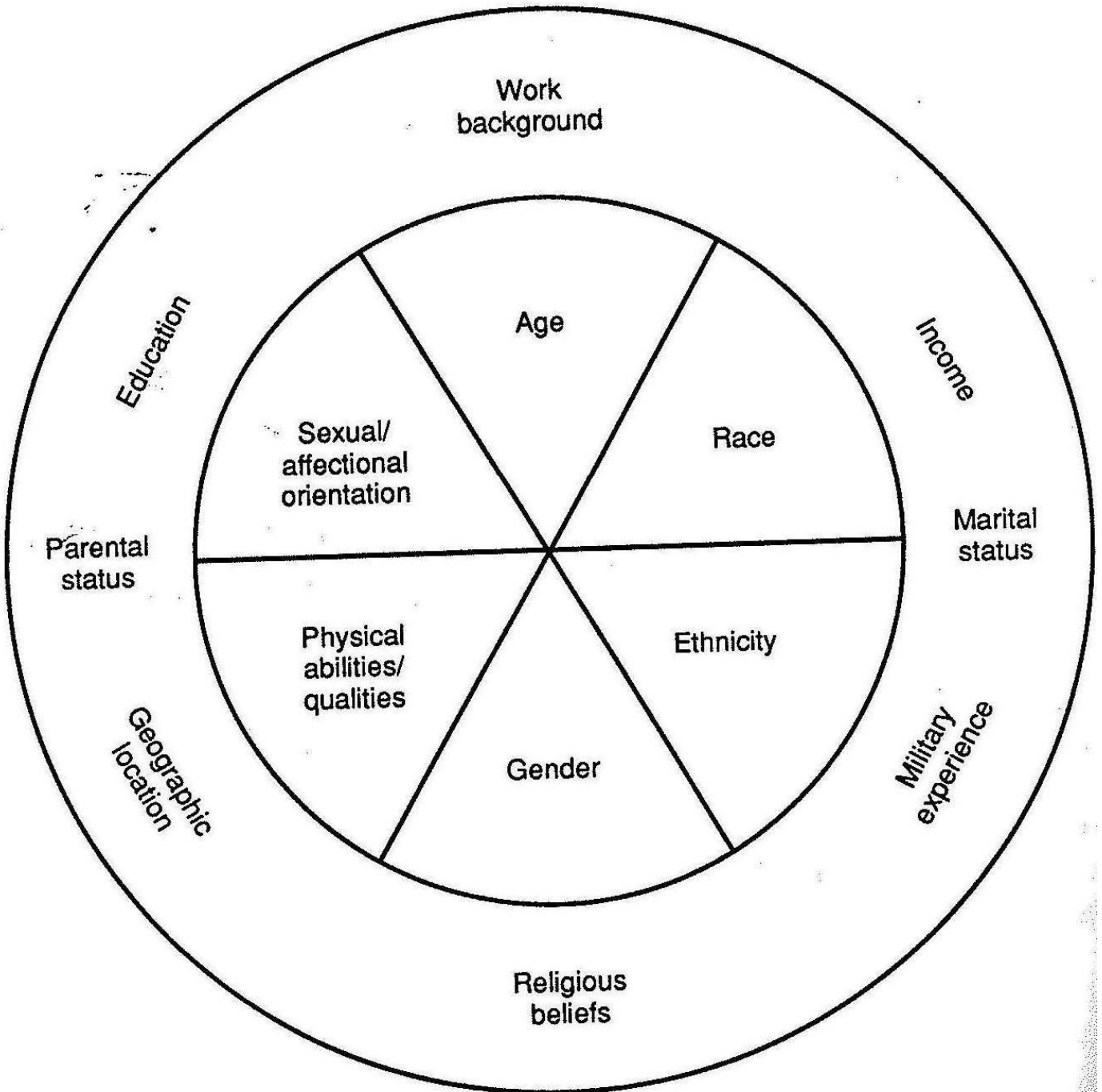
That we don’t send people away because they’re different or even because they’re difficult and that all people need support and that if people are hurting we take the time to notice and that words can build bridges and hugs can heal—and so it might be reasonable to assume that all the people on the planet could reach out to each other and heal the wounds and make a world fit for us all.

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From *Because We Can Change the World: A Practical Guide To Building Cooperative, Inclusive Classroom Communities* by Mara Sapon-Shevin (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2010, 2nd edition); used with permission. This piece was written in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Jowonio School in Syracuse, New York. Jowonio is an Onondaga word that means “to set free.” Jowonio was the first school in the country to systematically include children who were labeled as “autistic” in regular classrooms with “typical” children.

## Handout 8: Identity Wheel

“Diversity Wheel” from *Workforce America!: Managing Employee Diversity as a Vital Resource* by M. Loden and J. Rosener (© The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1991); used with permission.



## Handout 9: Sources of Power

There are many sources of power. For the most part, they fall into these categories:

**FORMAL AUTHORITY.** The power that derives from a formal position within a structure that confers certain decision making prerogatives. Example, the power of a police officer, an elected official, a CEO, a parent, a school principal.

**EXPERT/INFORMATION POWER.** The power that derives from having expertise in a particular area or information about a particular matter.

**ASSOCIATIONAL POWER (or REFERENT POWER).** The power that derives from association with other people who have power.

**RESOURCE POWER.** The power that derives from control over valued resources—money, materials, labor, or other goods or services. The negative version of this power is the ability to *deny* needed resources or to force others to expend them.

**PROCEDURAL POWER.** The power that derives from the control over the procedures by which decision are made, separate from the control over decisions themselves. This is the power of a judge in a jury trial, for instance.

**SANCTION POWER.** The power that derives from the ability (or perceived ability) to inflict harm or to interfere with a person's ability to realize his or her interests.

**HABITUAL POWER.** The power of the status quo that rests on the premise that it is normally easier to maintain a particular arrangement or course of action than to change it.

**MORAL POWER.** The power that comes from an appeal to widely held values; related to this is the power that result from the conviction that you are right.

**PERSONAL POWER.** The power that derives from the variety of personal attributes that magnify other sources of power, including self-assurance, the ability to articulate one's thoughts and understand one's situation, one's determination and endurance, and so on.

**SOCIAL POWER.** The combination of formal power, associational power, resource power, procedural power, sanction power, and habitual power. Social power combined with prejudice of any kind creates oppression.

Based on Bernard Mayer, "The Dynamics of Power in Mediation and Negotiation," *Mediation Quarterly* 16 (1987) as cited by John Wade, Director, Dispute Resolution Centre, Bond University, Queensland, Australia in "Forms of Power in Family Mediation and Negotiation," Bond University epublication (1994).

## Handout 10: Systems of Linked Oppression

Oppressions are linked, whatever their form, in at least these respects:

- They have similar origins in bias, fear, ignorance, and the desire to preserve power.
- They confer unearned advantage on some and impose disadvantages on others.
- They limit and deprive people through roughly the same devices, such as physical violence or the threat of violence, job discrimination, political underrepresentation, and unequal access to education and economic opportunity.
- They divide us against one another, because they rest on the assumptions that (a) our differences are more important than our similarities and commonalities and (b) our interests are better served by competing rather than cooperating with one another.
- They reinforce each other by promulgating the myth that one minority in the human population is the norm, and the other minorities (which together may comprise a majority) are deviant. For example, when “heterosexual male” is the norm, both female and gay male are deviant, and sexism and heterosexism reinforce each other. If the norm for female beauty is young, slim, and Caucasian, then ageism, ableism, and racism reinforce each other.

When we understand the way oppressions are linked, it becomes clear that no one is safe from the effects of an unjust society. “We,” not “they,” participate in the process, and “we,” not “they,” suffer from it.

From *Weaving the Fabric of Diversity: An Anti-Bias Program for Adults* by Jacqui James and Judith A. Frediani (Boston: UUA, 1996).

## Handout 11: Questions for a Congregation

- In what ways are we as a congregation diverse? How is that diversity recognized, affirmed, and celebrated?
- What are the silences in our community? Who is not here, not heard, not included? Who is ignored?
- What would this religious community look like if we were to hear and see and know each of us as full participants?

## Handout 12: Approaches to Multicultural Education

There are five approaches to implementing multicultural curriculum reform:

- **Contributions Approach** – Highlights cultural heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements.
  - **Additive Approach** – Expands time spent on multicultural investigations with literal “add-on” units dealing in depth with content, concepts, themes, and perspectives.
  - **Transformation Approach** – Enables participants to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives. (Essentially teacher “pulls out,” “redesigns,” and “creates anew” the existing curriculum.)
  - **Social Action Approach** – Enhances engagement as participants make decisions on issues and take actions to solve problems.
  - **Cultural Change Approach** – Uses all of the other approaches to create a multicultural culture in the program that recognizes that the community includes multiple cultural perspectives and backgrounds and strives to welcome and nurture these perspectives and to develop participants’ anti-bias awareness.
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Multicultural education supports us to try and see from different people’s perspectives. It gives us ways to ask questions and listen for answers, so we can work together to bring various groups that have been on the margins into the center of society. It supports us to care and take action to make our society more just and humane.

There are four essential steps to implementing multiculturalism in our faith communities:

- Knowing the stories, both personal and institutional—who we are, what our histories are, and why.
- Listening to the silences—being aware of who is left out, ignored, or avoided, in our lives and the lives of our religious communities.
- Engaging in critical reflection on the insights of the stories uncovered and the silences heard: What does this mean for our life together, as we take diversity seriously?
- Moving toward intentional transformation, celebrating the new richness and grieving the losses that change brings.

## Handout 13: What Will We Be and For Whom?

By Kat Liu, from the book [\*A People So Bold: Theology and Ministry for Unitarian Universalists\*](#), John Gibb Millspaugh, ed. (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2009); used with permission.

I first learned about Unitarian Universalism in college from friends planning to get married. They were unenthused about being married by a judge but equally unenthused about having God invoked in their nuptials. They found in Unitarian Universalism the perfect compromise. My friends described Unitarian Universalism as a religion “where you can believe anything you want.” While I was happy that such a faith existed to serve their wedding needs, I did not understand why anyone would want to actually join such a “faith.” This kind of fluffy, feel-good religion held no appeal for me as a young Chinese-American woman, struggling to navigate between the U.S. American ideal of individual liberty and the Asian ideal of communal responsibility.

Nevertheless, years later, when I moved from my native California to New York, I realized that without friends or community, the social engagement I had thought a natural part of my identity was slipping away in my isolation. I decided to investigate the local Unitarian Universalist congregation. Everyone in the little all-white fellowship was pleasant enough, and I became a sporadic, uncommitted, ambivalent attendee. When new acquaintances asked what my religion was, I uncomfortably responded that I attended a UU fellowship, but I never identified as a UU.

A change of careers took me to Washington DC, and one Sunday I dropped by the local UU congregation. At the introductory session following the service, a newcomer remarked that her favorite aspect of Unitarian Universalism was that you could believe whatever you wanted. I started making plans to be elsewhere the following Sunday. But then the minister gently questioned the statement. “Is that really true?” she asked. “Or is it that you are free to believe what your conscience calls you to believe?” My ears perked up. Over the next two weeks I learned from ministers and congregants about a faith that valued liberty for the sake of justice—individual autonomy balanced with communal accountability. I had known about Unitarian Universalism for two decades without much interest, yet in less than two weeks I enthusiastically signed the membership book.

I had found a home. As an Asian American—particularly one who grew up in a white neighborhood—there were few places where I felt comfortable at the time. In all-white settings I remained acutely aware of my differences, even if others seemed to accept me as one of them. In all-Chinese settings I was often disapprovingly reminded of ways in which I was not fully Chinese. I have come to learn that I am not alone in this regard. For me and many people of color, and even for some Euro-Americans, the settings where we feel most at home are multiracial or multicultural. Amidst a diversity of people, both our similarities and our differences are acknowledged and accepted. Few churches ever attain meaningful ethnic and cultural diversity; fewer still remain that way by deliberately embodying that identity.



Having found a spiritual home after so many years, I became an evangelical UU, eagerly sharing with anyone who would listen my discovery of a justice-seeking religion that not only tolerates diversity but celebrates it. I had no reservations about sharing this good news with people in the local area. However, when talking with people who lived elsewhere, especially people of color, I felt a pang of ambivalence if they voiced interest in investigating Unitarian Universalism. I had told them that my religion celebrates diversity—but what would my friends find when they stepped through the doors of their local house of worship? It was likely that they would see a group less diverse than their own neighborhoods, less diverse than the neighborhood of the church itself. In proclaiming my enthusiasm for Unitarian Universalism as I experienced it in my own congregation, I couldn't help but wonder if I was selling a false bill of goods.

I have also wondered whether Unitarian Universalism is a prophetic religion for our times when it comes to racism and multiculturalism. A prophetic church must lead a community in upholding social justice, which means recognizing the concerns of those at the margins of society and helping to bring those concerns into equal consideration with concerns of those in power. A prophetic religion speaks to its time and community and leads people to a better vision of the future.

By these criteria, one can argue that Unitarianism and Universalism have always been prophetic. Other essays in this volume note our illustrious (and sometimes not so illustrious) past on abolitionism, women's suffrage, and the civil rights movement. Unitarian Universalism recognizes and promotes equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, sometimes finding itself one of very few religious voices speaking for transgender people. When I think of our work in this area, I am proud to be a UU.

However, much as we cite the work of our religious ancestors on abolition and civil rights, I am less sure of our current commitment to antiracism and multiculturalism. The United States has become increasingly diverse, yet our faith communities remain predominantly white. If we are the prophetic church we claim to be, how can we remain content with congregations less diverse than our neighborhoods? During the last presidential campaign, while UUs praised Obama for the diversity of his supporters and denigrated McCain because he attracted supporters who are mostly whiter of skin and hair, it did not go unnoticed that our UU congregations look far more like McCain's crowd than Obama's.

In the Jewish and Christian roots of our faith, the role of the prophet is to speak truth to power, often through holding governments accountable to a higher standard. Yet today, given the savvy ways the Obama administration has reached out to a wide array of cultural constituencies, it seems that our government is far ahead of our churches. We are not leading; we are not even keeping up. With regard to racial and cultural diversity, we are lagging behind, in danger of becoming irrelevant.

Unitarian Universalism appears to have a generally tepid appeal among people of color. Perhaps one reason for this is our being stuck in an Enlightenment or modernist mind-set. Unitarianism was born of the same Enlightenment ideals of reason and tolerance encoded in our nation's foundational documents—noble ideals born from the cultured musings of wealthy white men who saw the strengths of these philosophies without

noticing the classist, racist, and sexist views latent within them. The early Unitarian vision of self-cultivation through study and reflection presupposes a person with ample leisure and resources. The watchword liberty asserts individualism more prominently than community, and it assumes opportunities that are not always present. While Unitarians promoted tolerance of diverse views, they also believed that judicious application of reason would eventually reveal one objective truth—a viewpoint prophetic and liberating for that modern era, but often dangerous and repressive in postmodern times.

Postmodernism need not only refer to convoluted interpretations of abstract theories by obscure authors. In this context, it means the view that socially, spiritually, ethically, and ethnically, there is no one objectively true reality, but rather multiple subjectively true realities for different people from different perspectives. Thus, in the postmodernist view, diversity is inherently valued, not just added on to a presumed norm.

Postmodernism also recognizes that the ideals that are liberating for you may be oppressive to me. For example, “You can believe whatever you want” may be liberating to those who are fleeing the rigid dogmas of some religions, but the same statement is irrelevant and off-putting for others. People who live at the margins of society and are subject to the whims of those in power know that beliefs have serious consequences. Advertising campaigns along the lines of “When in prayer, doubt” may be very appealing to a class of people whose circumstances afford them the time to ponder, but the same phrase is irrelevant and nonsensical to those for whom prayer is the only hope remaining.

Most of our outreach advertises values that appeal predominantly to white, middle-class sensibilities, yet we wonder why it is predominantly white, middle-class visitors who come through our doors and why the few people of color who make their way to us often leave.

Some people have argued that Unitarian Universalism is not for everyone, that we cannot be all things to all people. While this is true, the question remains: What, then, will we be, and for whom? If we want to be a religion of the race and class privileged, then we need not change, and we can watch society pass us by. If it is our desire to be prophetic leaders in building a multiethnic, multicultural beloved community, we must step outside our culture-bound viewpoints, recognize that other equally valid viewpoints exist, and intentionally work to see through the eyes of others. Those among us who live on various margins have already had to learn to do this.

May we lead, not lag. May we reclaim the voice of our prophetic faith.

### **Questions for reflection and discussion**

- What aspects of Unitarian Universalism attracted Liu? Why?
- What aspects of Unitarian Universalism were uncomfortable for her? Why?
- From Liu’s perspective, what are the most important characteristics of a faith community? What are the most important characteristics for you?

## Handout 14: Who Are My People?

[“Who Are My People? A Black Unitarian Universalist on Selma and Ferguson”](#) by Kenny Wiley. October 15, 2014

“*Man, I don’t have any people. I’m with everybody, Julius.*”  
—Louie Lastik, *Remember the Titans*

Wintertime in Houston sneaks up on you. As children we sweated in our Halloween costumes and, some years, played the big Thanksgiving Day basketball game in shorts. That first 40-degree day in early December alerted us it was time to ask our parents for money for Christmas shopping.

It was such a 40-degree day in my ninth year, a Sunday, when an adult said words that still stick with me.

“It means so much that your family worships here with us, Kenneth. It shows how far your people have come.”

Baffled doesn’t quite say it.  
I thought the folks at church *were* my people.

I am a proud lifelong Unitarian Universalist. My roommates will tell you that some days I sing *Spirit of Life* to myself as I make breakfast. Coming of Age and YRUU summer camps brought me ever-mingled comfort and stress.

I am also black. The struggle for black freedom has long held a grip on my soul. In adolescence not even complicated high school romance got me *feeling* quite like Toni Morrison and Lorraine Hansberry could.

I love being Unitarian Universalist—I think.  
I love being black—I know.

During college I joined a great UU congregation. They were thrilled to have me, and I them. Older adults had me over for dinner and looked out for me on campus. When my mom died, church staff and members alike wrote cards and weren’t afraid to ask me how I was doing.

There were also only two black men active in the church, and the other gentleman’s first name was my last. Though he was older than my father, it took some folks two years to stop getting us confused. Sometimes it was funny and sometimes it hurt, but it always reminded me that I was not fully at home.

In *Soul Work: Anti-racist Theologies in Dialogue*, UU minister and scholar Rosemary Bray McNatt relays the story of the time she talked for an hour with Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. King.

Mrs. King told Rev. Bray McNatt, “Oh, I went to Unitarian churches for years, even before I met Martin. And Martin and I went to Unitarian churches when we were in Boston.”

Mrs. King continued, “We gave a lot of thought to becoming Unitarian at one time, but Martin and I realized we could never build a mass movement of black people if we were Unitarian.”

The first time I read that, during my failed attempt to do seminary and become a UU minister, tears came down my face like a mighty stream. Night after night I read that passage from Rev. Bray McNatt’s chapter in the book. Night after night I wept.

I cried because I understood. I understood why they would choose to root themselves in a black church, and with a suffering God who could help black people and tell them He would never forsake them or give up on them, even in death.

I teared up also because I’ve often wished I could leave UUism. Sometimes I feel so alone because of race. I need church, though; almost by default, this faith is my religious home. I believe in God, but don’t call God ‘He.’ Unless Jesus somehow finds me, I cannot in good conscience join a Christian church.

Experience has taught me that being black and UU means feeling great most of the time, yet waiting for the next microaggression, the next moment of non-belonging. It is to feel profoundly uncomfortable in the midst of the familiar.

Growing up I needed to figure out how to navigate a mostly white society that accepted me quite warmly, so long as I did little to rock the boat. I had no real black community to help me out, save for a few friends and two extended family members. Talking about race with many white UUs too often means shouldering their insecurities, patiently answering their questions, making the fight for racial justice appear warm and inviting.

It isn’t.

On Facebook I am quite active; on Twitter, I have few followers and mostly listen/read. I follow young adult activists who fight for racial equality, champion black feminism, and struggle for change. Mostly they are people of color, often also members of the LGBTQ community. They are not conciliatory. They regularly call white people out, challenge PoC men’s sexism, and support one another.

They live out theologian Allan Boesak’s words from *The Courage to be Black*: “No one person has the right to take our life into their hands, and to exercise the power to give our life to us or to withhold it from us.”

For them the way is clear and straightforward, albeit difficult. For them white people, even (or perhaps especially) well-meaning white liberals, mostly get in the way, re-

center themselves, and derail conversations. These folks are mostly done with the mainstream society that blindly trusts conventional authority. I mostly agree with their analysis and support them with favorites, retweets, and small financial contributions.

All the community they need is with each other.

Nothing is so straightforward for me. Most people in my life are white. I cannot so easily dismiss them, nor do I want to. White individuals have caused me stress, and others have been there for me. White people have told me awful race jokes I never again want to hear, and white people have marched alongside me at rallies and protests.

Some may read this as internalized racial oppression. It is. I am shaped by my upbringing. Many privileged black folks revel in being accepted by white America, in opting out of blackness (see: Raven Symone and Pharrell). I want no such thing. I am black and proud; being authentically black, for me, means something a bit different.

When Mike Brown was killed by officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri in August, something fundamentally shifted within. I felt called to act, to organize rallies and vigils in Denver.

Planning those rallies terrified me, but not because I feared the inevitable white backlash. I worried that I wasn't "black enough." I thought my being a Unitarian Universalist would put me on the margins of the movement.

I was wrong.

A black, Christian pastor I met at a Denver rally said to me, "As long as you're not ashamed of your blackness, you can be one of them and one of us at the same time."

And so it is.

At rallies for racial justice in Denver, UU ministers and laypeople have shown up. I have looked out and seen "my people." They are black folks and white UUs.

This is, it seems, less true nationally. Our faith has a complicated racial history, and a less than stellar record on race presently. St. Louis-area UUs put out a call for ministers and UUs to come to Ferguson, to be present for **Ferguson October**. Some, like Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley and Rev. Julie Taylor, were there and proved vital. But not enough.

Hundreds of UUs are planning to go to Selma, AL in March 2015 for the fiftieth anniversary of the Selma-to-Montgomery march. Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed writes in *The Selma Awakening* that, after years of absence, UUs came through and journeyed

to Selma. Rev. Morrison-Reed argues that in Selma, “Unitarian Universalists’ *values in practice* snapped into alignment with their *espoused values*.”

Last summer I went to Selma as part of a moving road trip through the South. With a friend I walked from Brown Chapel to the Edmund Pettus Bridge on a muggy June evening. On the way we stopped at the marker honoring Rev. James Reeb, the white, Unitarian minister from Boston who was killed after answering Dr. King’s call for clergy to come to Selma.

Kneeling in front of Rev. Reeb’s marker drove me—to tears, and to an understanding of history’s importance. Finally, after ignoring the race problem for years, we showed up in Selma. But fifty years later, if we UUs show up in Selma in 2015 but not in Ferguson right now, and not for all those black and brown victims of police violence in the sadly inevitable future, we will not have learned from our past.

The harrowing truth is that I could be the next Mike Brown. My household had two parents. I have a college degree and a job. My pants don’t sag. When I’m out protesting or canvassing, though, none of that matters. I cannot opt out of blackness, and I do not want to. In the wrong situation, though, my respectable nature may not save me—from a racist police officer or citizen, nor from the ensuing character assassination. I would go from the decent, reasonably friendly guy some of you know to a mentally deranged (I have depression) Harvard dropout who was “no angel” and deserved what he got.

I know some of my people—black people—would come to my defense. Some UUs and other friends would, too. But would there be a broad movement on my behalf? Or would faith members send my dad and sisters thoughts and prayers before moving on?

These questions keep me up at night.

There are so many things to fight—and fight for—in the world. We mostly do a great job on climate justice and immigration. Our LGBTQ work has saved and changed lives. Black lives, too, are worth fighting for. When the next Ferguson happens—and sadly, it will—we can and must do more. We have to show up, be willing to follow others, and be willing to change ourselves.

Unitarian Universalists, you are my people. And UUs, my ‘other’ people—of which some of you are—need you. We need you to show up. We need you to listen and go beyond platitudes. Not everyone can travel hundreds of miles, but we can all do something—something beyond what we thought we could do. Oct. 22 is National Day Against Police Brutality, and several cities are hosting events.

The next call to action for racial justice has arrived. My people: Will we answer?

My people want to know.

## Handout 15: UU Case Studies

### Case Study A: The Thomas Jefferson Ball

At the General Assembly (GA) in Charlotte, NC, in the Thomas Jefferson District, the GA Planning Committee sponsored a “Thomas Jefferson Ball,” inviting participants to come in “period costume.” A number of people of color, especially African Americans, were offended by this suggestion. On the night of the ball, people of color and a number of European American allies held a demonstration in protest. *How would/could you have made this a “teachable moment?”*

### Case Study B: Our Chosen Faith

In 1998, Skinner House Books published a Spanish translation of *Our Chosen Faith*. However, the name of the Latino translator did not appear on the cover or anywhere in the book. *How would/could you have made this a “teachable moment?”*

### Case Study C: You’re Extinct!

Recently a Native American UU woman was preaching in one of our congregations. She mentioned the name of her California people. After the sermon, she was approached and asked if she was sure she was Native American, because the questioner understood her people to be extinct. *How would/could you have made this a “teachable moment?”*

### Case Study D: You’re Not One of Us

At the 1993 General Assembly (GA), one of our African American ministers was in a hotel elevator returning to her room after attending a UU Women’s Federation meeting. Since she had not yet registered for GA, she was not wearing a GA badge. A (white) woman got on the elevator and said to her, “Well I guess you all must be busy getting ready for us.” As the minister exited at her floor, she announced to the woman, “I am one of us.” *How would/could you have made this a “teachable moment?”*

### Case Study E: A Sermon in Two Voices

A few years ago, a gay minister and a very light-skinned African American woman offered a sermon in two voices, speaking honestly and openly about their experiences in Unitarian Universalism. After the sermon, one person approached the African American woman, saying, “I don’t understand what your problem is. If you didn’t say you were African American, we wouldn’t know that, and if he didn’t tell us he was gay, we wouldn’t know that...and everything would be all right.” *How would/could you have made this a “teachable moment?”*

## Handout 16: Considerations for Cultural Borrowing – Questions to Ask (and Answer)

From Judith A. Frediani and the UUA Cultural (Mis) Appropriation Task Force.

Motivation	Why am I doing this? What is my motivation?
Goal	What is the goal? Why do we want multiculturalism? Why this particular cultural material or event?
Context	What is the context in which I will use the cultural material? What is the cultural context from which it is taken? The history? What are the controversies/sensitivities surrounding this material? What are the power relationships in this context? The privileges?
Preparation	What am I willing to do to prepare for this experience? Have I done my homework on this material? What sources/resources have I used? Have I asked people from the culture for feedback/critical review of my plans? The history? Have I asked people from the culture to create or co-create the material? Did I invite people from the culture to participate? To speak for themselves in this plan?
Relationship	Am I in relationship with people from this culture? Am I willing to be part of that community's struggle? What is my relationship with the source of the material? What can I give in return? What do I offer? With whom do I ally myself with this usage? Am I working alone?
Identity	How does this work nurture self-identity and group identity? How does this strengthen UU identity? How does it help UUs be religious? What does this say about UU faith? How does it relate to UU spirituality or spiritual practice? What can UUs learn from other traditions?
Adaptation	With printed material, who holds the copyright? Have I received permission to use the material? Who has the right to adapt? Why? Who will be insulted/offended by this adaptation? With whom do I ally myself with this adaptation? What is the difference between symbolic and real ritual, and how am I using this ritual? If I am using a translation is it accurate, authentic, and current?
Language	Am I using current, authentic language?