

Co-Moderator Report to the General Assembly, June 2019

Our theme for this General Assembly, “the Power of We,” speaks to the moment we find ourselves in. The Unitarian Universalist movement has been grappling with what it means when everyone within the circle of Unitarian Universalism—those in the center and those at the margins—has a valued voice and a place at the table.

We’ve also been exploring what it means to pay attention more deeply to the perspectives of those who have been pushed to the margins or outside the circle of “we” for the majority of our movement’s history. We’ve been learning how doing so grows our collective power as a movement—grows the power of we.

Honoring Historical Context

It has been deeply meaningful, as two people who represent a number of the different groups that have been pushed to the margins of Unitarian Universalism, to serve as interim co-moderators of this denomination.

June 2019 is the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, a night when those who were most oppressed—trans women, drag queens, people of color, young folks living on the streets—fought back against police brutality. Their action was a spark that ignited a new movement for queer liberation.

June 2019 is also the 50th anniversary of the walk-out of the 1969 General Assembly by representatives of the Black Affairs Council and their supporters, in the midst of what Jean Ott called “the white controversy over Black empowerment.” Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed helps us remember that the walk-out was a moment when, to those present, it felt like Unitarian Universalism might divide permanently.

These events charged a denomination that was overwhelmingly white and straight and cisgender to not just be engaged in the fight for queer and trans and Black liberation but also recognize queer and trans and Black people as Unitarian Universalists and as leaders. We honor the leadership of Black and Brown trans women like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera at Stonewall. We honor the leadership of Black Unitarian Universalists throughout the entire history of this religion, people including Mtangulizi Sanyika (formerly known as Hayward Henry Jr.) and Whitney M. Young, Jr.

As queer and genderqueer leaders, we honor the prophetic elders and ancestors within the overlapping Black, queer, and UU movements who made our very lives possible and granted us the chance to bring our gifts forward and serve as UUA co-moderators, the highest volunteer leadership position in Unitarian Universalism. We both came of age in a UU movement that was informed by this history and the charge to honor the leadership of people of color, queer folks, and trans folks. We lead differently than our predecessors because of being steeped in this charge as children and youth. We mourn the fact that our movement has not always lived up to the charge to recognize queer and trans and POC Unitarian Universalists as full members

and respected leaders. We mourn those who have left our movement and honor those who have stayed.

Moving the Margins to the Center

Benefits of diverse leadership and notable accomplishments

This year the UUA Board has strived to move the margins to the center and fully value the leadership and contributions of those who have been marginalized within our movement, such as people of color, queer and trans people, disabled people, low-income people, and young people. Doing this enriches our work.

For example, new understandings and practices of accountability are emerging as we explore how to ensure that our institutions and covenanted communities are accountable to the needs of all of us. We are particularly proud of the following work that we were deeply engaged in this year:

- **Refining the Board's conflict of interest practices:**
This year the Board made much progress on clarifying its understanding of what constitutes a conflict of interest, how conflicts of interest should be addressed, and how we can improve our policies and practices around it, particularly in light of the impact of past conflict of interest policies and practices on leaders with marginalized identities. This work is ongoing.
- **Making adjustments to the moderator position and the election process:**
As co-moderators we engaged in a process of documenting the resources (including time, money, loss of income, energy, and more) expended by those who serve as moderator, and supported the Board in refining the job description and expectations of the position. The Board is also bringing before the 2019 General Assembly bylaw changes that will streamline and clarify the election process for moderator, president, and other elected positions.
- **Adjusting the Appointments and Nominating committees' pipeline process:**
We were glad to be involved in the good work this year of streamlining and improving the process by which leaders express interest in and are on-boarded onto the Appointments Committee and Nominating Committee. The Board, UUA administration, and leadership of both committees worked together to revise and combine the application process for the committees, created procedures for keeping applicants updated, adjusted the vetting process, and ensured that the committees' leadership are working together.
- **Supporting the creation of a shared ethics board:**
A remarkable achievement this year was the creation of a shared ethics board via the collaboration of leaders from the UUA administration, the Liberal Religious Educators Association, the UU Ministers Association, the Association of UU Music Ministries, the

Association of UU Administrators, and the religious professionals credentialing committees. A summit held in Denver in May 2019, which we attended part of, resulted in a proposal being brought to the Board for a process to address ethics violations across all forms of leadership.

- **Revamping the National Advisory Committee:**
We were excited to work with the former Regional Leaders Group to craft an across-the-board memorandum of understanding for all UUA regions/districts, and to come up with a revised make-up and plan for populating the National Advisory Committee. The members of the National Advisory Committee will be half selected from the Administration and half selected from the UUA Board so that both entities are accountable and the committee offers guidance to the whole denomination.
- **Participating in the Commission on Institutional Change’s collaboratory gathering:**
We both attended a gathering with several dozen key UU leaders who came together to imagine what could be in many different aspects of our faith, from UU seminaries to elected leadership to religious education. Some of the bylaw changes that the 2019 General Assembly will be considering came out of this gathering, where we took time to analyze patterns of white supremacy culture in the denomination and figure out how our organizations can work together to change the culture of Unitarian Universalism.
- **Working toward modernizing the UUA bylaws:**
Last year we made an ambitious plan to create a bylaws review commission that would work with congregations, covenanted communities, and stakeholder organizations to develop and draft modernized bylaws in time for General Assembly 2019. We are still working toward creating this bylaws review commission, but in the meanwhile the Board is bringing several important bylaws changes to the 2019 General Assembly that were developed in collaboration with stakeholders most impacted by the changes.

Disproportionate impacts of leadership on leaders with target identities

The work of the Board this year has deeply benefited from the diverse perspectives of the leaders involved. But we also want to name the disproportionate costs of leadership for those with marginalized or target identities.

For us, serving as co-moderators has meant lost wages, lost vacation and rest because of spending all available time off on moderator duties, extra exhaustion from managing expectations and demands of us based on our identities, and isolation from communities of support due to perceptions of conflict of interest or the boundaries of the moderator role. We are also not always respected as authorities in the ways previous moderators have been, and this means that fulfilling our duties takes extra work and takes an extra toll.

Sometimes, the costs are too great. We mourn the fact that Trustee Christina Rivera felt the need to resign from the Board due to the costs of being a leader with a target identity—costs that included death threats and extended beyond herself to her children. Every time a leader

leaves, for any reason, it leaves a void. We mourn the death of Trustee Dick Jackie and the resignation of Trustee Tim Atkins this past year, and we will deeply miss Latifa Woodhouse and Vice Moderator Denise Rimes, who are leaving the Board after this GA. But no one should have to leave because of the violence and impact of bigotry.

The Role of Evaluation in the Work of Structural Change

Dismantling systems of oppression within our movement means doing things differently. It takes more than just different leaders; it also takes different leadership structures and different ways of doing things. It takes trying things, and failing, and figuring out what to do differently. It takes slowing down, and evaluating what we are trying, and valuing the process.

Having two moderators is something that has never been tried before, so it's important to pause and assess what has worked and what hasn't. As an example of something positive, having two moderators isn't about having two people at the helm instead of one, it's about modeling shared leadership and fully believing that all members of the Board can lead in some way. It's been a joy to be part of a Board that is led by us all.

As an example of a challenge, the Board had hoped that having two moderators would mean being able to share the work, but that hasn't always happened. In part this is because the systems of our denomination and the people in them are used to having one person who knows and shares all. They aren't prepared for only one of us to attend a call, a meeting, or a gathering. So what should be an advantage is not, because our structures haven't been set up for shared leadership.

Our deep hope is that as the Board decides who to appoint as moderator(s) in order to fill the role between now and the delayed 2020 moderator election, and how many people to elect in 2020, there's room for assessment and evaluation of what has worked and what hasn't, and how to improve our leadership and governance models in line with our highest values. There are no short-cuts in the work of culture shift and transformational change.

Co-Moderators' Year in Review

August 2018

- Co-Moderator Elandria attended the Association for UU Music Ministries (formerly the UU Musicians Network) annual conference, Portland, OR
- Both co-moderators met virtually with Commission on Institutional Change representatives to plan October collaborative gathering

September 2018

- Both co-moderators attended the General Assembly Mission of the Association of the Partnership (GAMAP), GA Grid, and the GA Planning Committee meetings, Boston, MA

- Both co-moderators attended memorial service of late Trustee Dick Jacke, Bellevue, WA

October 2018

- Both co-moderators attended in-person Board meeting, Boston, MA
- Both co-moderators attended the Commission on Institutional Change collaborative gathering, Walnut Creek, CA

November 2018

- Co-Moderator Barb attended the LREDA Fall Conference, Houston, TX

December 2018

- Co-Moderator Barb met virtually with UUMA Guidelines Accountability Committee representative

January 2019

- Both co-moderators attended in-person Board meeting, Boston, MA
- Co-Moderator Barb attended Starr King School for the Ministry Symposium, Oakland, CA
- Co-Moderator Barb attended TRUUsT retreat, Oracle, AZ

February 2019

- Co-Moderator Elandria attended Election Task Force meeting, Las Vegas, NV
- Co-Moderator Barb virtually attended Appointments Committee meeting
- Co-Moderator Barb presented at Stonewall anniversary event, Juneau, AK
- Both co-moderators virtually attended Nominating Committee/Appointments Committee process conversation

March 2019

- Co-Moderator Elandria attended Investment and Socially Responsible Investing Committee joint meeting, Boston, MA

April 2019

- Both co-moderators attended in-person Board meeting, Boston, MA
- Both co-moderators attended General Assembly Planning Committee meeting, Spokane, WA
- Co-moderator Elandria attended the meeting of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, Boston, MA
- Both co-moderators attended the installation of Manish Mishra-Marzetti, Ann Arbor, MI

May 2019

- Co-Moderator Barb virtually attended Nominating Committee/Appointments Committee process conversation

- Both co-moderators virtually attended UUMA Ethics Summit board meeting, Denver, CO

June 2019

- Co-Moderator Barb preached at and attended building expansion blessing, First UU Church of Austin, TX
- Both co-moderators attended General Assembly, Spokane, WA
- Both co-moderators attended in-person Board meeting, Spokane, WA

Every month / ongoing

One or both co-moderators are liaisons to the following elected and Board-appointed committees, task forces, and professional organizations (in addition to UUA staff departments), and have been in monthly/quarterly/regular communications with them:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointments Committee • Association of UU Administrators (AUUA) • Association of UU Music Ministries (AUUMM) • Audit Committee • Board of Review • Co-Moderator/Vice-Moderator/ UUA President/UUA Vice-President huddle • Commission on Appraisal (CoA) • Commission on Institutional Change • Commission on Social Witness (CSW) • Election Campaign Practices Committee (ECPC) • GA Planning Committee (GAPC) • GA Youth Caucus and GA Young Adult Caucus • Investment Committee • Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee (JTWTC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) • Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) • Moderator Nominating Committee • National Advisory Committee • Nominating Committee • Open UUA Committee • Presidential Search Committee • Re-Imagining Covenant Task Force • Religious Education Credentialing Committee • Retirement Plan Committee • Socially Responsible Investing Committee (SRI) • UU Association of Membership Professionals (UUAMP) • UU Ministers Association (UUMA) • UUA Board of Trustees • UUA Employee Benefits Trust Board |
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Faithfully submitted,
 Elandria Williams and Barb Greve
 Co-Moderators, Unitarian Universalist Association