Multicultural Religious Education
Renaissance Module

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**The Reader for this module is What If All the Kids are White? by Louise
Derman-Sparks, published by Teachers College Press, 2006.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the use, with permission, of the following material:

"Quest" by Rev. Kathy Fuson Hurt from *Quest: A meditation manual* (Boston: UUA, 1986).


Lyrics from “Where Do We Come From?” (music by Brian Tate, text by Paul Gauguin and Brian Tate), Hymn 1003 in *Singing the Journey*, the supplement to *Singing the Living Tradition*.


Considerations for Cultural Borrowing – Questions to Ask (and Answer),” by Judith A. Frediani (chair) and the 2003 UUA Cultural (Mis) Appropriations Ad Hoc Committee.


"My mother is white and my father is black..." (Session 4 reading) by Laura K. Warrell, a Boston-based novelist and blogger.

"When I Feel Discouraged" by Vivian Sellers, former director of religious education at the UU Congregation of Gwinnett, in Lawrenceville, Georgia.
INTRODUCTION

James A. Banks, a primary theorist in multicultural education, has written:

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 develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to participate in a democratic and free society. In a word, multicultural education is education for social justice.

Multicultural religious education is a way of seeing and thinking as well as doing. It requires us to truly open our minds and hearts to the perspectives and experiences of others. It requires the humility to see those diverse perspectives to be as valid as our own. It calls us to welcome and include the unfamiliar, those who may be outside our comfort zone. It asks us to acknowledge the realities of oppression and privilege. It means we are open to change and growth, and ultimately care more about justice than comfort.

While there are many dimensions of “multiculturalism,” this program focuses on racial/ethnic identity. Everyone has racial/ethnic identity, and this program is for everyone.

As religious leaders, you can nurture a congregational culture that:
- Welcomes, includes and appreciates cultural diversity
- Helps prepare children and youth for the multicultural realities of society and the world
- Supports people of all ages in developing positive cultural identities
- Exercises moral agency to challenge structures of social and political oppression and make a difference in the lives of others.

Co-leaders of this module can identify as white, a person of color, Latino/Latina/Hispanic, or any other ethnic identity – multiculturalism is a shared responsibility and opportunity. It is important that leaders are skilled group facilitators with grounding in anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism.

Stories are at the core of everyone’s identities. This module offers opportunities to share those often-transformative stories. Therefore, the group covenant and process of community building are particularly important. As with all Renaissance modules, skills and resources are also key, and participants should leave both inspired and prepared to initiate change.

Start your reading of this module with Handout 4, Why Multicultural Education? If you share the goals and values there, you are the right person to begin this work.

Judith A. Frediani, UUA Curriculum Director
Overall Goals for the Multicultural Religious Education Module

Multicultural education is...about all people; it is also for all people, regardless of their ethnicity, language, religion, gender, race, or class.

---Sonia Nieto

The goal of the Multicultural Religious Education Module is to help prepare participants for meaningful participation in a diverse world. It helps or shape ways of thinking, conceptualizing, and recognizing other perspectives. Discussion and experiential activities help participants to expand their understanding of diversity and deepen their commitment to transforming our Association into an antiracist, anti-oppressive religious community.

We cannot ignore the possibilities of this increasingly multicultural world or the possibilities of multicultural, pluralistic religious community. Unitarian Universalism is a faith for anyone – from whatever racial, ethnic, cultural background – who wants what we have to offer: a community in which to explore religious questions, develop responses to those questions that can change with experiences, and act on those responses with the intention of being the best we each, and all, can be.

Our seventh principle talks about the interdependent web. Because we are interdependent, we are accountable to the whole. We cannot afford to ignore some persons or cultures or traditions for the simple reason that they are not immediately a part of our tiny corner of the world. We cannot afford to feel too ignorant or too afraid or because those of us who are European American wish to avoid confronting uncomfortable feelings of guilt for the injustices of our forebears or the outrage of those who bore the injustices.

The module addresses the following:

- The goals of multicultural religious education
- The four approaches to implementing the multicultural educational process
- Awareness of issues involved in cultural appropriation
- Promoting social structural equality and cultural pluralism
- Seeing oppressions as linked, not independent or idiosyncratic
- Exploration of issues of privilege and power
- Factors in creating a climate that invites, honors, and celebrates diversity

The module provides opportunities for sharing stories, community, ideas, concerns, and questions.

Reader: Louise Derman-Sparks, What If All the Kids are White? . If possible, participants should read the entire book before coming to the module.
SESSION 1: GETTING STARTED (3 hours)

**The Reader for this module is What If All the Kids are White? by Louise Derman-Sparks, published by Teachers College Press, 2006.

Goals
- Help everyone get to know each other
- Introduce the content and flow of the module
- Encourage open, honest communication in the group
- Invite participants to articulate hopes and fears for the module
- Explore issues of cultural identity.

Session Plan

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

Session Preparation

☐ Read the session. Plan how co-leaders will share leadership responsibilities for each activity, including gathering the materials you will need.

☐ Gather art and writing materials for the Exploring Our Identities activity. See if you can have access to arts and crafts supplies and work space in the facility where you are holding the module.

OPENING (10 minutes)

Materials
☐ Name tags
☐ Chalice with candle and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
☐ Centering table and (optional) decorative cloth

Preparation
- Optional: Familiarize yourself with an adaptation of "Come, Come, Whoever You Are" (Hymn 188 in Singing the Living Tradition) which includes the phrase “Even though you’ve broken your vows a thousand
times, Come, come again.” To see a group singing and dancing the song on YouTube, search “Come, Come Whoever You Are Rumi’s Urs.”

- Optional: Write the words to “Come, Come, Whoever You Are” on newsprint and post.
- Optional: Copy the reading, “Quest,” for volunteers to read aloud.

**Description**

Gather the group around the centering table. Light the chalice and read aloud a translation of the Rumi poem, “Come, Come, Whoever You Are” or lead the group in singing:

```plaintext
Come, come, whoever you are,
Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving.
Ours is no caravan of despair.
Come, yet again, come.

Come, come, whoever you are,
Though you’ve broken your vows a thousand times
Come, yet again, come, come.
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Then, read aloud (or, have one or more volunteers read aloud):

**Quest**

by Rev. Kathy Fuson Hurt; used with permission.

It starts out quite simply, as complex things can do.
We rise one morning, at the usual time.
We dress, eat breakfast, and set out for the office, in the usual way.
We do our usual job, and then return home as usual.
And so it goes, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
World without end
But not this time.
Today something is different. In the middle of our work, we wonder, “Why?”
And everything changes.
The Universe shifts when we ask “Why?”
Things do not look the same after the question, “Why?”
Although we may go on with our usual routine,
it will not feel usual anymore, because that “Why?” has intruded.

Wondering why, reflecting on the meaning of what we do, indicates that our lives are about to move in a new direction. When the old familiar patterns have been outgrown, when the time comes for crossing a threshold and entering a new existence, the question “Why?” appears. Having once asked “Why?” it is difficult to keep on with our accustomed ways because that “Why?” hints at the possibility of something more than usual. Like a siren, the “Why?” calls us to an adventure.
Say:

Here is the first “why:” Why do you think we opened with “Come, Come Whoever You Are?”

Affirm that the lyrics are welcoming and remind us that we will make mistakes, but we must still continue to do the work.

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (15 minutes)**

**Materials**
- □ Handout 1, Multicultural Religious Education Renaissance Module Outline

**Preparation**
- • Copy the handout for all participants.

**Description**
Welcome participants to the module. Introduce yourselves. Invite participants to introduce themselves by name, congregation, size of congregation (including numbers of children and youth), and role in their congregation.

Distribute Handout 1, Multicultural Religious Education Renaissance Module Outline.

Cover any housekeeping details.

**OPEN COMMUNICATION/COVENANT (20 minutes)**

**Materials**
- □ Handout 2, Covenant Guidelines
- □ Newsprint, markers, and tape

**Preparation**
- • Copy the handout for all participants.

**Description**
Explain that open and safe communication will have special importance in this module, as participants will take some risks in speaking about their experiences and in using new lenses to view experiences others may share.

Distribute Handout 2, Covenant Guidelines. Tell the group these guidelines, adapted from the adult Tapestry of Faith program, Building the World We Dream About, were developed specifically for groups doing antiracist, anti-oppression, and multicultural work together. Propose them as a starting point for a covenant to make the module a safe and effective experience.
Invite the group to take a minute or two to read the handout. Post blank newsprint. Record on newsprint participants’ ideas for modifying or expanding the guidelines and encourage participants to note one another’s ideas on their own handouts.

Once the group reaches consensus on a covenant, you may wish to rewrite the agreed-upon guidelines on fresh newsprint. Leave room for changes the group may make later in this module.

GETTING ACQUAINTED (30 minutes)

Materials
- Handout 3, People Attributes
- Writing paper and pencils
- Timepiece (minutes)
- A chime or bell

Preparation
- Copy the handout for all participants.

Description
Tell the group the ice breaker they are about to do also invites them to practice thinking with a multicultural lens.

Distribute Handout 3, People Attributes. Explain that the handout offers a number of ways people can be the same as or different from each other.

Have participants form four groups. To make groups of equal size, ask participants to count off.

Ask each small group to generate a list of ways they are similar to one another. Recommend they use the handout to help them. Tell them they will have five minutes.

Sound a chime when five minutes are up. Now ask the small groups to discover the diversity in their group—to list ways they differ from one another. Once again, suggest they use the handout and tell them they will have five minutes.

After five minutes, sound the chime again. Now invite the small groups to explore the relevance of similarities and differences to a realistic scenario. Tell them their small group has been appointed to work together to create a Coming of Age project for their district. Ask them to:
• Review their lists of similarities and differences and identify three attributes that are relevant to the task.
• Discuss how the team will need to work together in order to allow all members to participate fully. What accommodations need to be made?

Allow groups to work for up to 10 minutes. Then, bring the large group back together. Invite groups to briefly share observations that came up.

Now ask participants to re-examine the covenant they developed earlier in this session. Does the exercise they have just completed suggest any additional covenant items that might help create a multicultural culture for this module?

WHY MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION? (15 minutes)

Materials
☐ Handout 4, Why Multicultural Education?

Preparation
• Copy the handout for all participants.

Description
Distribute the handout. Invite participants to take a few minutes to read the handout silently to themselves. Or, you might ask for volunteers to read aloud.

Invite comments and questions.

BREAK (10 minutes)

READING – THE CHILDREN OF JOWONIO (5 minutes)

Materials
☐ Handout 5, What the Children of Jowonio Know

Preparation
• Copy the handout for all participants and leaders.

Description
Invite participants to read responsively with you a piece that was written to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Jowonio School, in Syracuse, New York. Jowonio (jo-WOH-nee-OH) is an Onondaga word that means “to set free.” Jowonio was the first school in the country to systematically include children diagnosed as autistic in regular classrooms with “typical” children.

Distribute the handout. Have the group start the reading, with this litany (italicized on the handout):
The children of Jowonio know—not because they have been told—but because they have lived it.

HOPES, FEARS, AND EXPECTATIONS (25 minutes)

Materials
- 4x6 index cards, two colors
- Pencils
- A basket
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Description
Give each participant two index cards of different colors. Ask them to list two or three hopes they have for this module on one card, and two or three fears or concerns on the other. Have them place their finished cards in the basket. Mix up the cards and pass the basket around, inviting participants to each take one card of each color. Then, ask each person to read aloud the cards they chose.

Invite reactions to the hopes and fears the group has heard. What is needed to help address fears or alleviate concerns? What might the leaders do? What might the participants do?

Direct attention to the covenant the group has developed, and post fresh newsprint. Ask: What do we need to add to the covenant? Amend the covenant as needed.

EXPLORING OUR IDENTITIES (45 minutes)

Materials
- A variety of art supplies such as colored construction paper, color markers (including multicultural flesh tone markers), tape, glue sticks, magazines, paint, collage materials, and scissors (including left-handed scissors)

Preparation
- Set out art supplies on work tables.

Description
Tell the group they will now do a hands-on, expressive activity to explore their identities. Encourage participants to take a few minutes to consider multiple aspects of who they are. Mention that aspects of identity include race, ethnicity, culture, language, nationality, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, family relations, roles, and religious beliefs. Then, suggest participants might go deeper into their identities to consider their dreams, personality traits, temperament, spirituality, and passions. Ask: Who are you
really? Invite participants to reflect on how their identities may have changed over time, and how this might be represented.

Indicate the art and writing materials you have gathered. Tell participants they may take the next half an hour to create a representation of their personal identity. Explain they will display their work and process the activity at the next session. If you wish, tell them they may return to their project between the close of this session and the start of the next to work on it some more.

Say, in your own words:

Although this exercise involves creativity, no artistic skills are required. You may use whatever media you feel best conveys who you are. You may draw, paint, collage, write, sculpt, dance, sing—whatever you feel best represents you. Whether you think of yourself as an artist, or not, you are encouraged to let go of the need to make this “look good.” Your goal is to create an honest expression, not to make art.

Allow participants 30 minutes to work (or more time, if you have it). Then, invite participants to gather the materials they will need to present their projects at the beginning of the next session.

CLOSING (5 minutes)

Materials

- Chalice and centering table
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape; or copies of *Singing the Journey*, the supplement to *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation

- Optional: To sing “Where Do We Come From?” together, provide copies of *Singing the Journey* or write the lyrics on newsprint, and post.

Description

Gather the group around the chalice. As a closing reading, share the lyrics to “Where Do We Come From?” (music by Brian Tate, text by Paul Gauguin and Brian Tate), Hymn 1003 in *Singing the Journey*, the supplement to *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?
Where do we come from?
Mystery, mystery, life is a riddle and a mystery.
SESSION 2: CORE ISSUES (3 hours)

Goals
- Discover the multicultural identities present in the group
- Explore the relationship between identity and society
- Illuminate some of the challenges of diversity
- Examine the power of silence and of language in diversity issues
- Demonstrate that oppressions in society are linked, not independent or idiosyncratic.

Session Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Am I?</td>
<td>55 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Wheel</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Privilege and Oppression</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sources of Power</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Systems of Linked Oppression</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Silences</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Session Preparation

- ☐ Read the session. Plan how co-leaders will share leadership responsibilities for each activity, including gathering the materials you will need.
- ☐ This session does not include a common break. You may choose a place to break, and extend the session appropriately. Or, plan to alert the group that there will not be a common break and invite them to excuse themselves as needed.
- ☐ Post the covenant the group created in the previous session.

OPENING (5 minutes)

Materials
- ☐ Name tags
- ☐ Chalice with candle and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- ☐ Centering table and (optional) decorative cloth

Description
Invite the group to wear name tags.

Gather the group around the centering table. Light the chalice and share this reading from “The Web” (1997), used with permission:
More White People Talking
by Katie Kissinger

Part of the reason
this thing works so well
is because
so many of us white people
are silent when we should be talking.
Talking is hard
when you’ve never heard anyone else doing it.
Either you don’t know the words
or the words you know
don’t seem right,
or they seem right,
but they just won’t come out.

NOT TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING GIVES IT POWER

We feel embarrassed
because we were taught
it’s not polite
to talk about differences
which is code for
“it’s not okay to be different.”
We want to do the right thing
but we don’t want to be “correct.”
We feel this overwhelming guilt
and our good intentions
can’t get past the lump in our throats.

Of course talking about it
is not enough
And it can’t be lip service
it has to be REAL.
But if we start talking
then at least we can all
find each other
and begin the rest of the work…

When is the time,
Where is the place,
How is it done,
Who will save face?

NOT TALKING ABOUT IT GIVES IT POWER.
WHO AM I? (55 minutes)

Materials
- Timepiece (minutes)
- A chime or bell

Preparation
- Calculate how much time each participant may take to share their identity representation so the sharing will fit in the time allotted. Save 10 minutes for discussion after all have shared.

Description
Share this quotation, from Na’im Akbar, an African American psychologist and lecturer:

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All people have a major task, from cradle to grave, of defining who they are.
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Invite participants to share the representations of their identities that they have created. Tell them how many minutes each may take to share. Keep track of time and signal each participant when their time is up.

Afterward, ask: What common themes did we hear? What are some of the factors that have shaped our identities? Then, ask volunteers to tell how the process of creating a representation was for them.

Say, in your own words:

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Knowing our own identities and stories is a prerequisite to any embrace of pluralism. Without self-awareness, we may fear those who know themselves better then we know ourselves and make of them objects of envy or anger. Without knowledge of our own ancestral traditions, we are dependent on images provided by the dominant culture.
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Historically, people of color have been disconnected from their own ancestral traditions. This is because the dominant culture defines itself as normative, misrepresents or does not represent the cultures of people of color, and pressures all cultures to conform as best they can to the norm. In a truly multicultural society, all cultural identities are honored.
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Ask: How are the cultures of all members and families honored in your congregation? Encourage participants to share examples.

Ask the group if anyone would like to add to the covenant, based on this greater understanding of the identities present.
IDENTITY WHEEL (10 minutes)

Materials
- Handout 6, Identity Wheel
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation
- Copy the handout for all participants.
- On a sheet of newsprint, draw a large Identity Wheel. Label the sections as they are labeled on the handout. Post the newsprint.

Description
Distribute Handout 6. Invite participants to describe themselves on the Identity Wheel by specifying their own attributes (for example, in the section labeled “Marital Status,” one might write “single”).

Give them a few minutes. Then, ask:
- Which description says more about you, your Identity Wheel or the creation you shared earlier?
- While your Identity Wheel may not express the whole of who you are, the attributes you’ve written do matter. How do these attributes influence your social reality?
- What other attributes might belong on an identity wheel? [Suggest physical appearance and size, language spoken at home.]

Point out that items in the inner circle are identities which are usually hard to change, yet these identities can spark quick, firm impressions in others which can profoundly affect your life.

PRIVILEGE AND OPPRESSION (15 minutes)

Materials
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation
- Prepare four sheets of newsprint to post. Give each a heading:
  Male
  Heterosexual
  White
  Apparently able

Description
Tell the group they will explore the concept of privilege. Invite participants to define it. Then, share this definition, from The Free Dictionary by Farlex (online):
Privilege: (1) a special advantage, immunity, permission, right, or benefit granted to or enjoyed by an individual, class, or caste; (2) such an advantage, immunity, or right held as a prerogative of status or rank, and exercised to the exclusion or detriment of others.

Ask the group to consider how privilege relates to our identities. Share: According to Peggy Mcintosh, author of "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to rather than because of anything they have done or failed to do. For example, when a man is taken more seriously than a woman saying the same thing, when a heterosexual can talk freely about her husband without concern her marriage will meet judgment or scorn, and when a white person can be pretty sure to see in the movies many positive images of people who look like them, these people hold privileges based on the groups they belong to. These are unearned privileges. When people hold privileges just by being who they are, they can easily be unaware of these privileges.

If useful, offer the analogy of a fish in the water: We are living in the system (our "water" being the larger culture). Thus, we may find it difficult to become conscious of the system of privileges and prejudices we move within.

Post the newsprint sheets you have prepared with these headings:
 Male
 Heterosexual
 White
 Apparently able

Brainstorm and list privileges of each identity attribute. Use asterisks to note similarities across attributes.

Once you have established privileges for each identity, say:
 A result of someone’s unearned privilege is the oppression of others who are not afforded the privilege.

Lead the group to review the brainstormed lists and identify oppressions that result from privileges the group has named. For example, if males are taken more seriously, women must work harder to be taken seriously or must constantly prove themselves.

**SOURCES OF POWER (40 minutes)**

**Materials**

- Handout 7, Sources of Power

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Handout 6, Identity Wheel
Newsprint, markers, and tape
Timepiece (minutes)
A chime or bell

Preparation
• Copy Handout 7 for all participants.
• Make sure participants have their Identity Wheel handouts.

Description
Distribute Handout 7, Sources of Power. Invite participants to read it to themselves. Then, ask what connections they see between the Sources of Power and the unearned privileges. In what ways do these powers reinforce the privileges? How do the privileges reinforce the power? How do both reinforce the oppression?

Offer this example:
In a courtroom, procedural power belongs solely to the judge. When the judge is a white, upper/middle-class male, he may be unaware of how his prejudices, assumptions, and stereotypes influence his use of power. If you are a defendant who is a person of color, your lack of procedural power in the courtroom may reinforce a sense of powerlessness within the legal system.

Ask participants to focus, with a partner, on another of the Sources of Power and come up with an example of how that kind of power reinforces privilege. Then re-gather the group and ask each pair to share the example they generated.

Share these observations about unearned privilege:
1. People who hold privilege are usually reluctant to give it up.
Our society reinforces a scarcity model rather than an abundance model: We commonly believe that when someone gets something, someone else has to give something up. Thus, those with privilege can believe their quality of life or their very survival depends on it. They may feel urgency to pass on their privileges to their children. As black Americans attain more wealth assets, for example, some white Americans may worry there will be less wealth for them to accumulate. Therefore, many are invested in not acknowledging their unearned privilege. They may believe they must keep it for themselves and future generations.
2. People often try to conform, to gain privilege. Many give in to societal pressures to assimilate into the privileged group.

Have participants form new pairs. Referring to the Identity Wheels, invite them to consider which of their identities provide them with privilege. Pause for a moment to allow reflection. Then say:
Imagine how your life might be different if you woke up one morning and one of your privileged identities was changed. Consider how your daily life might be affected.

Ask them to take a few minutes for reflection and then share with their partner.

Stop the pairs after five minutes. Ask:
- What identity of yours keeps you from privilege, and leads to oppression?
- What are the positive effects of the identity you are thinking of?

Invite participants to share their reflections on both questions with their partner.

After five minutes, or once you see most pairs are finished, re-gather the large group. Ask for any comments about the Identity Wheel in light of these reflections.

SYSTEMS OF LINKED OPPRESSION (15 minutes)

Materials
- Handout 8, Systems of Linked Oppression
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation
- Copy the handout for all participants.

Description
Post a sheet of blank newsprint. Invite the group to brainstorm ways different oppressions in society are linked together. Briefly note contributions.

Once the group has generated some ideas, distribute Handout 8, Systems of Linked Oppression. Invite participants to read to themselves. Or, have volunteers read aloud:

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 under-representation, 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.

Conclude by saying:
Oppressions lead all of us—people on either side of an oppression—to form relationships based on scarcity rather than abundance. Oppressions thrive on a belief that a competition must exist for limited resources and power. Oppressions interfere with our will and ability to develop a beloved community in which we generously make room for all.

Invite participant questions and comments.

SILENCES (20 minutes)

Materials
- Handout 9, Questions for a Congregation
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation
- Copy Handout 9 for all participants.
- Optional: Write the handout text (three bulleted questions) on newsprint, and set aside.

Description
Say:
Silence is one way we allow oppressions to continue. When we could speak up to acknowledge someone’s story, to name everyone we hope to include, or to protest an injustice, but we remain silent, our silence communicates very effectively. Our silence can powerfully convey: Some people don’t matter; some people are invisible; some people have nothing to offer to enrich my faith or community. People who identify with minority or marginalized groups hear that silence and may conclude: We are not welcome; we are not valued; we do not belong here.
To acknowledge black and white, African Americans and European Americans, is to acknowledge biculturalism. That still leaves silences, as our society is not bicultural but multicultural. Racism and prejudice affect different peoples of color differently, in and outside of our congregations. To remain silent about the existence of any identity in our community is to effectively rescind the invitation to belong.

The impact of these silences is also felt by people marginalized because of a disability, their age, their gender identity, or another identity.

Ask participants to turn to a partner and share about a time when, because of their identity, their voice was not heard in a group and they were hurt or offended by the silence. Or, they may share about a time when they participated in keeping someone else’s voice silent—someone who brought a minority or marginalized identity to the group. Ask them to reflect what might have been said in place of the silence. Ask how a similar silence could be filled in a future situation.

After about five minutes, stop the pairs. Ask them to discuss with the same partner a time when to keep silent might be appropriate, even respectful: When might silence be more honestly inclusive than to speak for another?

After five minutes, re-gather the large group. Ask for any “Ahas.” Then, say:

To engage our congregations in multicultural religious education for transformation, we must listen for the silences. When you go home, find a way to bring these questions to your congregation.

If you have prepared the questions on newsprint, post the newsprint. Then, distribute Handout 9. Read each question aloud or invite volunteers to read them:

- 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?

LANGUAGE (15 minutes)

Materials

☐ Newsprint, markers, and tape

Description

Say:
As we become more aware of silences and how they can reinforce oppression, we also need to be aware of our language. Historically, the group with the most social power has had the ability to name themselves and others, to articulate values which then become the norm for everyone. Our dominant culture has fostered a preponderance of male pronouns, the use of light and dark for good and evil, and value-laden language for marginalized groups including gay, lesbian, transgender, and people with disabilities. Much in our language is neither affirming nor appropriate for our multicultural society.

Language is powerful. It reflects, reinforces, and shapes our perceptions.

Post two sheets of newsprint. On one, ask participants to list words, expressions, and sayings that contain the word “white” (white knight, white as snow, whitewash, etc.). Then brainstorm common uses of the word “black” (blacklist, black sheep, black magic, etc.). Compare and contrast the lists:

- Which items in the white list have positive connotations? Negative ones?
- Which items in the black list have positive connotations? Negative ones?
- How do the positive and negative values associated with “white” and “black” as colors correlate to our broader cultural values and standards associated with “white” and “black” races of people?
- How do these values reflect onto people who identify as “black” or “white”?
- How might these value associations affect people of color who do not identify as either black or white?


Again, post two sheets of newsprint. On one, write: Handicapped. On the other, write: Person with a Disability. Ask: What is the difference? Which term is more respectful? Why? Again, note contributions. Then, invite the group to suggest and analyze more pairs of descriptive terms where one term reinforces marginalization and oppression and the other offers more respect.

To conclude, say:

Multicultural education teaches us to seek language about our differences that does not uphold oppression. If you do not know how to refer to someone from a racial, ethnic, religious, or other group, ask them directly and politely.
CLOSING (5 minutes)

Materials

☐ Chalice, centering table, and (optional) decorative cloth

Preparation

- Optional: Copy the reading, “Mattering,” for a volunteer to read aloud.

Description

Tell participants that in the next session they will discuss the reader for this module, *What If All the Kids Are White?* Encourage them to review Chapters 4 and 9 to discuss together. Invite them to bring questions or comments about the material.

Read aloud, or have a volunteer read, these closing words, written anonymously by a gay high school student and adapted in the adult Tapestry of Faith program Building the World We Dream About:

**Mattering**

My father asked if I am gay
I asked Does it matter?
I said, Yes.
He said get out of my life.
I guess it mattered.

My friend asked why I talk about race so much?
I asked, Does it matter?
I told him, Yes.
He said, You need to get that chip off your shoulder.
I guess it mattered.

My neighbor asked why I put that ramp up to my front door.
I said, Does it matter?
He said, Not really
I told him it made my life easier.
He said, Is there a way to make it less obvious?
I guess it mattered.

A member of my church asked why I like gospel music.
I asked, Does it matter?
She said, No, not really.
I told her it connects me to my southern, Christian childhood.
She said, I think you’re in denial about your oppression.
I guess it mattered.

My God asked me, Do you love yourself?
I said, Does it matter?
She said, YES!
I said, How can I love myself? I am gay, Latino, disabled, and Christian in a hostile climate.
She said that is the way I made you.
Nothing will ever matter again.
SESSION 3: CRITICAL REFLECTION (4 hours and 15 minutes)

Goals

- Introduce five approaches to multicultural education
- Identify some ways our society and our congregations fail to fully include people of color and people with other historically marginalized identities
- Raise awareness of issues involved in cultural appropriation
- Elicit strategies for engaging, not misappropriating, diverse faiths’ and cultures’ texts and practices.

Materials

- A copy of the reader for this module, *What If All the Kids Are White?*
- A DVD or videotape of *White Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men*, a media player, and a projector/screen or monitor

Session Preparation

- Read the session. Plan how co-leaders will share leadership responsibilities for each activity, including gathering materials.
- Set up and test media equipment. Preview and time the material you plan to show.
- Post the covenant the group created in the previous session.

Session Plan

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<td>Opening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identity and “Isms”</td>
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<td>Approaches to Multicultural Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>What Will We Be and For Whom?</td>
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<td>Cultural Appropriation</td>
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<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
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</tbody>
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OPENING (5 minutes)

Materials

- Name tags
- Chalice with candle and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Centering table and (optional) decorative cloth
Optional: A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook

**Preparation**
- Optional: Choose an alternate reading from the module resource box or from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

**Description**
Gather the group around the centering table. Share these words, from an unknown author:

> Our first task in approaching another people, another culture is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we find ourselves treading on another’s dream. More serious still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival.

**IDENTITY AND “ISMS” (30 minutes)**

**Materials**
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

**Preparation**
- List the identity attributes below on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: Post the discussion prompts, in brief form: messages, stereotypes, “isms,” costs.

**Description**
Form several small groups (or, if the group is small, stay together) to consider all of these identity attributes:

- Race
- Socioeconomic Status
- Disabilities
- Gender/Gender Identity
- Sexual/Affectional Orientation
- Size and Appearance

Ask groups to discuss:
- What messages have you learned about different identities in this category, both explicit and implicit?
- What stereotypes are associated with these identities?
- What are the “isms”—e.g., racism, classism, homophobia—that promote and reinforce these stereotypes?
- How have you experienced the cost of these “isms” in your life?
Encourage participants to use their own stories to address the questions. After 20 minutes, if you have formed small groups re-gather all participants and invite volunteers to share briefly some reflections or “Ahas” from their discussion.

Now ask:
- What are the implications for our children today?
- What are the implications for our congregations?

**APPROACHES TO MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION (15 minutes)**

**Materials**
- Handout 11, Approaches to Multicultural Education

**Preparation**
- Copy the handout for all participants.

**Description**
Say, in your own words:
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.

Distribute Handout 11, Approaches to Multicultural Education. Ask participants to take a few moments to read the top section of the handout, or have volunteers read each item aloud:
- **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 these 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.

WHAT WILL WE BE AND FOR WHOM? (20 minutes)

Materials

☐ Handout 10, What Will We Be and For Whom?

Preparation

• Copy the handout for all participants.

Description

Distribute Handout 10. Explain that Kat Liu’s essay is published in the book A People So Bold and that this activity has been adapted from the adult Tapestry of Faith program Building the World We Dream About.

Invite participants to read the handout and consider the questions at the end of the reading. Allow about 10 minutes for reading and reflection. Then, lead a discussion with these questions from the handout:

• What aspects of Unitarian Universalism attracted Liu? Why? [socially pleasant community, faith value of individual authenticity balanced with community accountability, a “justice-seeking religion”]

• What aspects of Unitarian Universalism were uncomfortable for her? Why? [at first, idea of “fluffy” religion; later, lack of color diversity in congregation; disappointment with UU prophetic voice with regard to multiculturalism]

• From Liu’s perspective, what are the most important characteristics of a faith community? What are the most important characteristics for you?

Save a few minutes to pose these, additional questions:

• Does this essay point the way to a strategy for diversifying Unitarian Universalism? How?

• How is building an antiracist, anti-oppressive, multicultural congregation a religious imperative? How is it an institutional imperative?
UU CASE STUDIES (40 minutes)

Materials
- Handout 12, UU Case Studies
- Timepiece (minutes)
- A chime or bell

Preparation
- Copy the handout for all participants.
- Assess the time. Calculate how much time you can give groups to prepare (at least ten minutes, if possible) and how much time each group may use to present their case study (five minutes is ideal).

Description
Share this quotation from the Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed:
Our history in regard to racial justice is brave enough to make you proud, tragic enough to make you cry, and inept enough to make you laugh once the anger passes.

Then, say:
Both individuals and institutions perpetrate oppression. Just as individuals have identities, groups and institutions do, too. One important piece of our UU identity as it relates to our work in this module is the aspect of UUism’s identity as it relates to race. Social justice, and specifically racial justice, forms an important part of UU heritage and identity. Yet, our institutional identity also includes centuries of race oppression. By adopting multicultural religious practices, we can help move our congregations away from—and, in time, transform—the oppression-rooted aspects of Unitarian Universalism’s institutional identity.

Distribute Handout 12. Form five small groups and assign each group a case study. Explain that each case study is a real event in recent Unitarian Universalist history. Invite the groups to read their case study, explore how it could be used as a teachable moment, and prepare to present their case study to the larger group. Ask them to begin their presentation with a short role play, and then describe how the case study could be used as a teachable moment.

Tell the groups how long they will have to prepare and how long their presentations may be. Keep track of time.

Re-gather and have each group present. When groups have finished, invite comments.

BREAK (10 minutes)
CULTURAL APPROPRIATION (60 minutes)

Materials

- Handout 13, Considerations for Cultural Borrowing – Questions to Ask (and Answer)
- DVD or videotape, White Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation

- Copy Handout 13 for all participants.
- Set up and test equipment, and preview the segment you will show.

Description

Say, in your own words:

Culture includes any and all aspects of a community that provide its life force—for example, music, art, food, spirituality, philosophy, and history. Our secular culture in the U.S. reflects and mixes many different cultural traditions. More particularly, as Unitarian Universalists, we share a religious tradition which draws from many sources, specifically including “wisdom from the world’s religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life.” Cultural sharing is not only a fact of life, it is also desirable as we seek to become truly multicultural.

The goal of this section is to raise awareness of the issues involved in cultural borrowing. We must learn to know the difference between appropriately, respectfully exploring or sharing in a cultural tradition and recklessly borrowing from it. This is especially important as it relates to bringing spiritual rituals, symbols, and artifacts that are sacred to a cultural or faith community into our Unitarian Universalist worship and education programs.

To “appropriate” culture means to take possession of aspects of someone else’s culture in a way that:

- Disrespects a tradition’s spiritual, historical, and social context
- Ignores the way our own culture may have affected and may continue to affect the lives of people of that culture
- Reinforces marginalization and oppression.

The Reverend Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley defines cultural appropriation as consciously or unconsciously seeking to emulate concepts, beliefs, or rituals that are foreign to a particular framework, individual, or collective. It is incorporating language, cultural expressions, forms, lifestyles, rituals or practices about which there is little basis for direct knowledge, experience,
or authenticity into one’s being. It is also the superficial appreciation of a culture without regard to its deeper meaning.

This is a broad and controversial subject for Unitarian Universalists. Concerns are raised about whether it is possible for Unitarian Universalists to authentically incorporate rituals, symbols, and artifacts from many of the world’s cultures and traditions. Increasingly we hear concerns that there is racism inherent in cross-cultural “borrowing” of various spiritual rituals and traditions. We need to think about these questions when we wonder whether a certain act is cultural appropriation or appropriate cultural sharing.

Distribute Handout 13. Give the group a few moments to read it. Then, solicit additional questions that would-be “cultural borrowers” can ask themselves. You might suggest:

- What is my responsibility toward the people from this culture? How am I participating in their continued oppression and how might I address this?
- How do people who identify with the culture feel about this piece of its tradition being borrowed?
- If artifacts and/or rituals are available to me as a commodity, then how were they acquired? Where does the money go?
- Is this borrowing spiritually healthy for Unitarian Universalists? When we, as a religious tradition borrow rituals from other cultures, we lose the significant meaning they take on from the community in which they are based. When the integrated belief involved in performing a ritual gives it its meaning, are we simply impersonators?

Share this reading from Joanna Kadi, an Arab American woman, about her experience with the derbeke (der-BECK-eh, a traditional Arabic hand drum); permission pending:

I sense an imperialistic attitude in which privileged people want to own segments of other people’s cultures… unencumbered by hard political/historical/cultural realities, never asking themselves the questions that would uncover these realities…What has imperialism and racism done to the people who created this music? Do I have a right to play this instrument? What kinds of beliefs do I hold about Arabs? Ignoring these questions and ignoring Arab musical traditions translates into cultural appropriation… [T]he derbeke and its playing style are important pieces of Arab culture, with thousands of years of history attached. To disregard that and play however one chooses whitewashes the drum, and by implication Arab culture.

I’ve come to the conclusion that I’m not opposed to non-Arabs playing derbekes if it’s done with respect, knowledge, and seriousness, and if these attitudes manifest themselves in concrete action. I want drummers
to learn the derbeke’s culture and history, and the proper way to play. And to take this knowledge a step further by actively countering the imperialism, racism, and genocide Arabs experience today. It’s not enough to celebrate cultural difference by learning language, music, or history, when people’s whole worlds are at risk.

Ask the group for comments.

Then, introduce the video *White Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men*:

This piece comments about cultural appropriation, from the point of view of some Native Americans. It does not necessarily represent the views of all Native Americans, much less of all cultures, yet it raises important issues.

Show the first 10 minutes of the video. Then, post newsprint and invite the group to name issues they thought the piece raised. Suggest they apply the questions on Handout 13, and any other questions the group discussed, to the examples of appropriation presented in the film. List responses briefly on newsprint.

Invite participants to explore what the people in the video who appropriate Native American religious practices are trying to get: What feeling, experience, or knowledge are they looking for? What needs do these practices fulfill?

Ask participants to turn to a partner and talk about ways these needs could be filled other than appropriating Native American religious practices. Ask:

- In our RE programs and congregations, what practices can we strengthen or initiate that might provide experiences that are culturally appropriate for Unitarian Universalist worship and religious education?

Allow five to ten minutes. Then, re-gather the large group and ask pairs to share their ideas.

Reaffirm to participants that while our Principles and Purposes affirm that “the tradition we share draws from many sources,” we need to grapple with the fact that certain ways of borrowing can be an exercise of unearned privilege that perpetuates oppression.

**WHAT ABOUT THE HOLIDAYS? (40 minutes)**

**Materials**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

**Description**

Say:

Our religious communities celebrate a number of holidays, some religious and some secular. These often become the focal point for religious
education program activities as well as celebrations in worship. Unfortunately, celebrating special times from a cultural tradition does not help children learn about the realities of daily life for people whose holidays we attempt to honor. When we use holidays as the primary focus of activities about cultural diversity, we take a “tourist” approach to cultures. Children experience only discrete cultural elements; they visit a culture by participating in a few activities and then go home. This leads to stereotyping and trivializing a culture: All people do is dance, wear special clothes, and eat.

We certainly don’t want to do away with holiday celebrations, but multicultural education demands approaches that go deeper than we often have in the past. If we are to help children understand that some holiday customs incorporate stereotypes about other cultures, we must approach these holidays in ways that help children identify and think critically about such stereotypes.

Another trap that we fall into, especially regarding widely celebrated or national holidays, is purveying the false assumption that for all Americans, holidays such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter have a positive and/or profound significance. Multicultural education compels us to avoid presenting any holiday as if celebrating it is the only norm.

Mention that one complex national holiday is Thanksgiving. Share this quotation from the late novelist, Native American Michael Dorris:

Native Americans have more than one thing not to be thankful for on Thanksgiving. Pilgrim Day, and its antecedent feast, Halloween, represent the annual twin peaks of Indian stereotyping. From early October through the end of November, “cute little Indians” abound on greeting cards, advertising posters, in costumes, and school projects…Virtually none of the standard fare surrounding either Halloween or Thanksgiving contains an ounce of authenticity, historical accuracy or cross-cultural perception.

Tell the group that, in the next session, they can look more deeply into ways we might celebrate the holidays. Post newsprint and ask if any holiday celebrations of their congregations might be revised to avoid misappropriation and to broaden and make more authentic the nature of the congregation’s encounter with a particular culture or religion. Explain that we will not try to solve those issues right now, only to identify a few holidays for later discussion.

List the holiday celebrations participants suggest.

Explain that in the next session, the group will focus on practical ways to strengthen or begin multicultural religious education in their home congregations. Tell the group they will work in small groups to plan a specific, multicultural approach to an actual situation or opportunity. Ask them to reflect on other
events or issues in their programs and congregations, beyond the holidays they have named, to which they would like assistance applying a multicultural lens. Invite them to bring these to the next session.

**MODULE READER: WHAT IF ALL THE KIDS ARE WHITE? (30 minutes)**

**Materials**
- A copy of the module reader, *What If All the Kids Are White?*

**Preparation**
- Review the book, especially Chapters 4 (“Fostering Children’s Identities”) and 9 (“Cultivating Caring and Activism with Staff and Families”), so you will be able to facilitate discussion.

**Description**

Say, in your own words:

While UU congregations are predominantly white, our RE programs can be more diverse than the adult population. However, even in those cases, most of the children in a UU congregation are white. This book’s authors are two women with knowledge and experience in the areas of teaching, psychology, and antiracism/anti-oppression/multicultural work. The book is a practical guide on how to approach antiracism/anti-oppression/multicultural work when the group you lead is predominantly of the dominant culture, that is, white.

Two chapters are especially relevant: Chapter 4, “Fostering Children’s Identities,” and Chapter 9, “Cultivating Caring and Activism with Staff and Families.”

Invite the group to respond to Chapter 4. Ask for reflections on the ways suggested to engage children and youth in talking about identity. You might ask:

- What were some ideas in this chapter that you found useful?
- How would these ideas be implemented in your religious education program?

Remind the group that the authors illustrate mistakes teachers have made when they assume identity information about the children. For example, one assignment was that the children take a picture of the front door of their home. This angered one family that did not have a home. It also illuminated socioeconomic differences. This was a learning experience for the teacher; the assignment was changed. Ask the group:

- What are some ways you can work toward inclusive activities that take into account different kinds of diversity that may exist in the group?

Now invite discussion about Chapter 9. Say, in your own words:
It can be a challenge to be the “only” person from your congregation who has taken steps to become informed about antiracism, anti-oppression, and multicultural work. This chapter gives tools to engage your colleagues and members of the congregation in this work.

Ask the group to look at the reflection questions offered in Chapter 9. You may wish to read some aloud. Guide the group to consider the questions through a UU lens. You might ask:

- What advice did you find useful and practical? Why?
- What are some ways you can implement your learning from this chapter in your congregation?

Solicit additional responses to the book and questions about the material.

**CLOSING (5 minutes)**

**Materials**

- Chalice and centering table

**Preparation**


**Description**

Gather the group around the chalice. Share the closing reading you have chosen.
SESSION 4: TAKING THE WORK HOME (2 1/2 hours)

Goals
- Demonstrate how children and youth internalize messages about racial identity
- Highlight identity development challenges that face children who are biracial, multiracial, and/or raised in multiracial families
- Apply a multicultural religious education lens to existing situations or realistic opportunities in the home congregation
- Explore how and why various approaches to multicultural education can be useful to improve situations or create opportunities.

Session Preparation
- Plan how co-leaders will share leadership responsibilities in this session.
- Arrange working spaces for small groups so members can hear one another and make notes easily.
- Plan to alert the group that there will not be a common break and invite them to excuse themselves as needed.
- Post the group covenant.

Session Plan
Opening 5 minutes
Multiracial/Multiethnic Families 35 minutes
Practical Application, Part I 1 hour and 45 minutes
Closing 5 minutes

OPENING (5 minutes)

Materials
- Name tags
- Chalice with candle and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
- Centering table and (optional) decorative cloth

Description
Invite the group to wear name tags.

Gather the group around the centering table. Light the chalice and share this reading, “Sins of Omission,” attributed to Natasha Josefowitz; permission pending:

It is not only what I say
for I am seldom prejudiced
in any obvious way

It is what I don’t say
it is the forgetting
the not noticing
the disregarding
the overlooking

It is not only the support not given
it is not knowing
when it is needed

I do not sin by commission anymore
I sin by omission.

MULTIRACIAL/MULTIETHNIC FAMILIES (35 minutes)

Materials

☐ Newsprint, markers, and tape
☐ Handout 11, Approaches to Multicultural Education

Preparation

• Have on hand some copies of Handout 11, from the previous session.
• Optional: Copy the reading by Laura K. Warrell for volunteers to read aloud.

Description

Say:

Prejudice and bias increase the threat for many individuals and families whose appearance sets them outside a norm. The already complex nature of racism can present a particular set of challenges for individuals who identify as biracial or multiracial and families that are multiracial. When children are biracial or multiracial, or belong to multiracial families, they can face a particularly complex path in identity development.

Read aloud, or ask volunteers to read, this piece from Laura K. Warrell, a Boston-based novelist and blogger (used with permission):

My mother is white and my father is black. Thus, to others, I am “mixed,” “mulatto,” a “half-breed.” I prefer biracial. Throughout my life, people have asked questions about my race because they assumed that being labeled “different” was unbearable. At times, it was. Now I embrace my ethnic composition because it has challenged me to rise above prejudice.

There seems to be a choice inherent in being biracial: Are you black or white? Biracial people often feel pushed by society to choose which race they are. No matter which group one aligns with, the opposite pole
resurfaces. If an individual has light skin and a white parent, it may affect relationships with blacks. If a person has dark skin, whites may never allow the individual to become “one of us.”

The choice was more difficult for me because there were few opportunities to feel part of a larger community. There was no box marked “biracial” to check on questionnaires, no bookstore shelves marked “Biracial Studies.” As a dark-skinned girl with a white single mother living in a small, predominantly white town, disassociating myself from blackness seemed to be the only way to fit in. While never altering my personality to appease white friends, I was silent on issues of race and devastated by remarks that “outed” my skin color.

After moving to a more racially mixed community, I witnessed both sides of racism. But my aspirations and tastes were never black or white to me. They were a genuine result of my upbringing and inner voice…

We fight racism because it’s an unfair way to define and control individuals. Race should not confine people to boxes, creating lives that are focused solely on breaking through barriers and battling stereotypes. Race should be celebrated and cherished, one beautiful fragment of the whole individual. A marvelous cord that joins people.

The biracial person offers evidence of what is possible: an amalgamation of the races, the chance to expose prejudice on both sides and dismantle it. After years of being pulled by both sides and knowing neither completely fit me, I chose not to choose. More accurately, I chose to be biracial. It is more empowering to position myself outside of categories established only to divide people. My vision of racial politics is different because the possibility of overcoming racial boundaries is real. My life is richer because I’m not confined by the narrow lines that restrict and divide.

Invite the group to take a few moments for reflection. Then invite participants to share briefly about their experiences serving biracial/multiracial individuals or multiracial families in their congregations.

Provide this background:
Claiming a biracial or multiracial identity has only recently become a viable option in the United States. Until the 2000 census, individuals were forced to choose one racial category only, denying the experience of many people. Current trends indicate that the biracial/multiracial demographic in the U.S. will continue to grow, and thus, so must our commitment to become a faith community that welcomes and celebrates this diversity. Many of our congregations and particularly our RE programs have a growing presence of biracial/multiracial individuals and multiracial/multiethnic families, some
through transnational adoptions. UU religious professionals have both the opportunity and the responsibility to leverage multicultural perspectives and implement multicultural approaches. We need to become more aware of diversity and more prepared to authentically welcome individuals and families that bring a wide variety of racial and ethnic identities, including “mixed.”

As religious educators, we are well positioned to create programs that explicitly teach anti-bias and welcome each individual in the fullness of their identities. This is extremely important work for the healthy identity development of biracial and multiracial/multiethnic children and youth, children and youth of color who are minorities in their communities, and transracially adopted children and youth, all of whom face a likelihood of some of these outcomes:

- They may feel between worlds, not completely at home in either (or any) of their cultural heritages. These feelings can be acute and constant for children of color who are, or feel, alone in a white world, disconnected from communities of color.
- They may be challenged by questions, sometimes intrusive, about where or with whom they belong. Biracial and multiracial children are often asked, “What are you?” This also can mean, or be heard as, “Which side are you on? Where do you stand?” Children of color whose parents are white are often asked “Is that your real mom/dad?” “Are you adopted?” “Why is your mom white when you are black?” Whether or not children are adopted, such questions cast doubt on their right to belong in their families.
- Biracial and multiracial children often appear exotic to others. Frequent remarks about one’s physical features can feel flattering to a child or youth, but at the same time such remarks objectify a child or youth, and over time teach the individual that they are “other,” not normal.
- When a parent and child have different racial identities, the parent faces an inherent challenge in nurturing the child’s healthy self-concept through all the stages of identity development. Parents of biracial/multiracial children may not know how to prepare a child for the “What are you?” questions the child will have to navigate. White parents of children of color may lack the ability to give their children tools to protect themselves from racism the children will likely encounter in their lives; some parents may be unaware their children will need such tools.

Solicit ways participants do or could nurture and support biracial and multiracial children and/or multiracial/multiethnic families in their home congregations. Suggest participants refer to Handout 11, Approaches to Multicultural Education, to spark ideas. Post newsprint and briefly record contributions.

Add these ideas if the group does not generate them:
• Facilitate the formation of support groups and networking for families that share racial identity concerns. Work to create groups that are diverse, to help families build a multicultural community of friends.
• Help white parents of children of color to understand that their child’s racial identity is an integral part of the child’s developing identity and is relevant to child-rearing.
• Support parents to address their children’s racial identity development by providing programming, perhaps in a community or interfaith setting, such as panel discussions about family issues such as how to prepare children of color for instances of racism they may encounter.
• Provide antiracism/anti-oppression education opportunities across age groups; these might include book discussion groups or movie nights, as well as UUA programs and trainings (see Tapestry of Faith programs online).
• Start a congregational book group around fiction that highlights diversity in family composition, economics, and ethnicity.
• Choose books, toys, and other resources for your program that show a “norm” of people of different races, ethnicities, physical abilities, and family compositions.

Invite the group to keep these ideas in mind as they work on practical applications for multicultural religious education, in the next exercise.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION, PART 1 (1 hour, 45 minutes)

Materials

- Handout 11, Approaches to Multicultural Education
- Writing paper and pens/pencils
- Optional: Computer(s) with Internet access, and printer

Preparation

- Have on hand some copies of Handout 11, from the previous session.

Description

Tell participants they will use the remaining time in this module to apply a multicultural education lens to existing situations and potential opportunities in their programs and congregations. They will choose a project topic from the list you will present, to work on in a small group. They will have about an hour and a half to develop their project. Then, the next time the group meets, small groups will present to the larger group.

Suggest these project ideas:

- Design a training to help RE teachers create an inclusive culture in their religious education group.
• Design a program to reach parents and other adults in their congregation with the tools to create an inclusive culture in the congregation.
• During the course of this module participants may have described issues or situations in their congregations that are not multicultural but have an inclusion focus. Re-create a scenario to make it multicultural, then devise a way to improve it.
• Design a program to help adults, youth, or children become better allies to marginalized communities.
• Revise one of your congregation’s traditional holiday celebrations with a multicultural lens.
• (If Internet access is available.) Use Tapestry of Faith curricula and resources to create a multicultural education program for a multigenerational group.

Help participants form groups of three or four based on their project preferences. Then, give these instructions:
• Review the situation or opportunity. Identify aspects of the situation or opportunity where a multicultural lens and multicultural approaches can make the biggest difference. Look for places where your project can specifically address issues we have talked about, such as unearned privilege, silences, cultural misappropriation, language, and stereotypes.
• Make suggestions on how to change the situation or develop the opportunity.
Invite them to apply the approaches to multicultural education from Handout 11 as they can to foster cultural change.

Suggest they make notes on writing paper or newsprint to help them present their project in the final session.

Say, in these words or your own:
We want our religious education programs to demonstrate that there are many ways of seeing and living in the world; we do not want them to demonstrate that a white, Western view is normal and others are exotic, supplemental, and not normal. Try to design a program or create a change that promotes differences as normal, familiar, and acceptable, and nurtures in all participants an anti-bias awareness and an activist identity.

Allow small groups to work on their projects for the rest of the session, until it is time to gather for the Closing.

CLOSING (5 minutes)

Materials
□ Chalice and centering table

**Preparation**

**Description**
Gather the group around the chalice. Share the closing reading you have chosen.
SESSION 5: THE TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY (2 1/2 hours)

Goals
• Provide practice applying lessons learned to existing situations and potential opportunities in the home congregation
• Nurture envisioning of the components of an inclusive, anti-oppressive UU religious community
• Guide action plan development.

Session Plan
Opening 10 minutes
Practical Application: Project Reports 1 hour and 30 minutes
Taking the Work Back Home 30 minutes
Evaluations 15 minutes
Closing 5 minutes

Session Preparation
☐ Read the session. Plan how co-leaders will share leadership responsibilities, including gathering the materials you will need today and holding participants’ self-addressed envelopes to mail out in one month.
☐ Post the group covenant.

OPENING (10 minutes)

Materials
☐ Name tags
☐ Chalice with candle and lighter or LED/battery-operated candle
☐ Centering table and (optional) decorative cloth

Description
Invite the group to wear name tags.
Gather the group around the centering table. Light the chalice and share this reading by Vivian Sellers, former Director of Religious Education at the UU Congregation of Gwinnett, in Lawrenceville, Georgia; used with permission.

When I Feel Discouraged
When I feel discouraged about how far we have yet to go on our journey together, I will remember that, in only one generation, in only one family (mine) some things have changed.
I learned the “N-word” in rhymes and heard it used in daily conversations. My children have never heard their parents use the word to describe people, only in explanation of why we should not say the word.

I attended all white schools until the ninth grade, when one—yes one—African American integrated into my high school. My children have attended multi-racial schools since pre-school, and have been in the racial minority since early elementary school.

I never attended school with children who were persons with disabilities. My children now have classes with these children who are no longer “shut away.”

I was told to go into a “woman’s profession” — either teaching or nursing. My children, of both sexes, are told all options are open.

I grew up assuming that because I was a woman, I would have children. My daughter says that she wants none and is encouraged to keep that belief!

I never was told about gay and lesbian people until I was going away to college and was warned about women who “went after” other women. My children know homosexuality, like heterosexuality, exists and who our friends are that are gay/lesbian.

I never dated a man who I knew to be “of color.” My son’s first girlfriend has ancestry that includes an African American grandfather.

I was told as a child that I was fat and to lose weight. My daughter is told that health, not size, is what really matters.

I knew few Jewish people and heard many negative things about them. My children attend a Passover Seder Service each year and respect has grown.

I grew up thinking Indians were savages who would kill, scalp, burn, and rape for no reason. My children know that Native Americans were here first, that white people took their land and destroyed their civilizations.

I grew up eating pretty much only “southern” food. My children eat Mexican, Italian, Thai, Chinese, Cuban and Southern (which we know is largely of African American descent) food.

I was raised in a church where, when teachers of color entered the sanctuary for “teacher appreciation Sunday” many white people left. My children attend a church where diversity in color is actively sought and
welcome.

All-in-all, many steps have been taken, many more are yet to come. It’s daunting, and it’s tiring, but each small step lessens the distance to go.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION: PROJECT REPORTS (1 hour and 30 minutes)

Materials
- Small groups’ notes from previous session
- Timepiece (minutes)

Preparation
- Calculate how much time each group can have to present their project.
  Save time for the responses and suggestions after each small group presentation.

Description
Have groups report on their work in the last session. Invite responses after each presentation. Keep track of time so all groups can present.

TAKING THE WORK BACK HOME (30 minutes)

Materials
- Writing paper, pens/pencils, and letter envelopes

Description
Ask participants to form triads. Invite each person to share for two minutes about how this module will affect their program over the next year or two. Encourage participants to be specific about their plans.

After 15 minutes, distribute writing paper, pens/pencils, and letter envelopes. Have each participant self-address an envelope and use the paper to write a message to themselves about their hopes and plans for how their experience in this module will influence their program within the next two years. Suggest they think of the message as a promise.

Collect the envelopes and say you will mail them to participants in a month.
EVALUATIONS (15 minutes)

Materials
- UU Renaissance Module evaluation form

Preparation
- Copy the evaluation form for all participants.

Description
Give each participant an evaluation form. Ask them to complete it and return it to you before they leave.

CLOSING (5 minutes)

Materials
- Chalice and centering table

Preparation
- Choose a closing reading from the book Encounters (included in Multicultural Religious Education Renaissance Module Resource Box). Suggestions include “Passing,” page 15; “Patience,” page 30; “In Between,” page 93; and “Reflections,” page 153.
- Optional: You may wish to conclude the module with a short closing ceremony. You might have participants share a word or short phrase about how they are feeling as they end the module, or create some other type of closing activity. One suggestion is to sing “We Are the Ones We’ve Been Waiting For.”

Description
Gather the group around the chalice. Share the closing reading and activities you have chosen.