

Discussion Guide for Video

Long Strange Trip, Part 6: Unitarian Universalism (01:07:12)

Opening and Chalice Lighting

Light the chalice. Share words by Rev. Clinton Lee Scott, Universalist minister and a signer of the 1933 Humanist Manifesto, from “Morning,” Reading 438 in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

From the east comes the sun, bringing a new and unspoiled day. It has already circled the earth and looked upon distant lands and far-away peoples. It has passed over mountain ranges and the waters of the seven seas. It has shone upon laborers in the fields, into the windows of homes, and shops and factories. It has beheld proud cities with gleaming towers, and also the hovels of the poor. It has been witness to both good and evil, the works of honest men and women and the conspiracy of knaves. It has seen marching armies, bomb-blasted villages and ‘the destruction that wasteth at noonday.’ Now, unsullied from its tireless journey, it comes to us, the messenger of the morning; harbinger of a new day.

Discussion Questions

Choose among these questions and lead a discussion:

- What did you discover about recent Unitarian Universalist history from this film?
- The film argues that deep philosophical and theological differences held the Universalist and Unitarian movements apart, until humanism provided the common ground that allowed for merger. In what ways is humanism still the common ground that holds Unitarian Universalists together?
- How is liberal religious education—grounded in life experience and nurturing a sense of wonder and a questioning mind—reflected in Unitarian Universalism today? In what ways did religious education and Fahs' New Beacon series of curricula lead the way for the new Unitarian Universalist movement?

- There were fears on both sides at the time of the consolidation of the two movements. Were you a Unitarian or a Universalist at that time? Have you talked with anyone who was? Which fears or hopes from that time came to pass? Does our movement still have two distinct strands, Unitarian and Universalist? Or have the two denominations truly become one movement?
- In what ways is the saga of money in the early days of our association a cautionary tale from which we can draw helpful lessons?
- Had you been aware of the UU response to King's Call to Selma? The events surrounding the response to the call for Black Empowerment? Does your congregation's history fit into these events? How? Are we a stronger movement because of these events? How do we tell of these events when we share our story today?
- The film contends that the events of Selma and the response to Black Empowerment transformed us into a social justice movement. Are we a social justice movement?
- What role did the General Assembly play in the events narrated in the film: the Empowerment Era, the struggle for LGBT rights and equal marriage, and the Women in Religion movement? What is your perception of the role General Assembly plays in the direction of our association today? To what extent do the actions of the General Assembly affect our congregations?
- Which stories from our history had you heard before watching the Long, Strange Trip series [or, the parts of the series the group has watched together]? Are there stories left out that you think are important?
- How is our Unitarian Universalist identity shaped by who gets to tell our history and whose story is told?
- Imagine a Part 7 of this video series, documenting the challenges Unitarian Universalism faces in our own day and the ways we are responding. What are your dreams and hopes for our faith's future? What are your fears? What events, people, ideas, and actions do you imagine will be part of the story of our faith when it is told in the early 21st century?

Closing Reading

Share these words by former UUA President Rev. William F. Schulz, from Reading 459 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook:

This is the mission of our faith:

To teach the fragile art of hospitality;

To revere both the critical mind and the generous heart;

To prove that diversity need not mean divisiveness;

And to witness to all that we must hold the whole world in our hands.

Extinguish the chalice.