

Discussion Guide

for the Keynote Presentation by Mark Morrison-Reed at the March, 2015 Marching in the Arc of Justice Conference

Materials

- Computer with Internet access, a large monitor or a digital projector and screen, and speakers
- Name tags and markers
- A chalice and lighter or a battery-powered, LED chalice
- Journals and writing instruments
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Quiet, recorded music

Preparation

- Test your equipment and Internet connection.
- Queue the [YouTube video](#), “Marching in the Arc of Justice Conference – Friday Keynote: the Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed.” Rev. Morrison-Reed begins his talk at 02:00 (two minutes into the video).
- Familiarize yourself with “Building Bridges,” Hymn 1023 in *Singing the Journey*, the supplement to *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, so you can lead it as a closing song or a reading. Hear the tune online: <http://smallscreen.uua.org/videos/stj-1023-building-bridges>
- Write the indented portion of discussion questions you plan to use on sheets of newsprint, and set aside.
- Optional: Open a word processing program on your computer so you can type and project the discussion questions and participant contributions rather than use newsprint. Another option is to use a dry erase board and markers.

I. Opening (10-15 minutes)

Welcome participants and invite everyone to make and wear a name tag.

Gather the group. Say that this workshop explores themes from a keynote presentation given by the Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed during the Marching in the Arc of Justice conference, sponsored in March of 2015 by the Living Legacy Project to commemorate the Selma Bridge Crossing 50 years earlier.

If this group is together for the first time or any participants are new, invite everyone to introduce themselves. Ask each person to say their name and, in one or two sentences, why they decided to attend this workshop.

Ask a volunteer to light the chalice while you read these chalice lighting words, excerpted from a poem by Kathy Galloway in *Maker's Blessing* (Wild Goose Publications /The Iona Community, 2000).

God beyond borders
we bless you for strange places
and different dreams

for the demands and diversity
of a wider world

for the distance
that lets us look back and re-evaluate

for new ground
where the broken stems can take root,
grow and blossom.

We bless you
for the friendship of strangers
the richness of other cultures
and the painful gift of freedom.

II. Introduce the Video (5 minutes)

Say that the Reverend Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed, retired from Unitarian Universalist parish ministry, is an affiliated faculty member at Meadville Lombard Theological School and the coordinator of the Sankofa Archive there. He is the author or editor of several books from Skinner House Books, including *Black Pioneers in a White Denomination*, *Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism*, and *The Selma Awakening: How the Civil Rights Movement Tested and Changed Unitarian Universalism*.

Suggest that participants take notes as phrases or ideas resonate with them during the video.

III. Show the Video (50 minutes)

Stop the video at the end of Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed's presentation.

IV. Journaling (5 minutes)

Show the discussion questions. Say that participants will have time to discuss the questions, but first you would like to allow five minutes for journaling and/or reflection. If you wish, play quiet music during the five minutes.

V. Discussion (30 minutes)

Lead a discussion using any of the questions below. If you have a large group, break into smaller groups of four or five participants for 20 minutes of discussion. Return to the larger group to share some individual reflections during the last ten minutes.

1.

Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed states that the “rush to Selma” fifty years ago was not because of the righteousness of the cause, although the cause was righteous. He says it was relationships that compelled people to go. “Selma” happened because of relationships people had with Dr. King and other African American activists and clergy. Rev. Morrison-Reed asks: “With whom are you in relationship? Who is going to call you and ask you if you are going to come?” He continues: “Who are you building bridges with? Or, what’s getting in the way of your making that relationship?”

Rev. Morrison-Reed calls us to step up. He says, “It takes some courage. We don’t like being out of our comfort zone. Being careful and being cautious and hiding our vulnerabilities is not a recipe for change and transformation!”

Can you describe a situation when you felt “outside of your comfort zone?” How did you feel? What made you feel that way? How did you handle it? Would you/did you put yourself back into that situation? Why or why not?

2.

According to Rev. Morrison-Reed, when you commit and engage, you need to “let the awkwardness, and the anxiety, and the relationship reach in to change you.”

When have you been changed by relationship? What part did awkwardness and anxiety play in developing the relationship? Did the other person or persons share the awkwardness and anxiety? If so, what do you do to make them feel at ease?

3.

What does Rev. Morrison-Reed mean when he says “...relationships give courage”? He adds, “Placing the cause first can lead you astray. Ideological commitment[s] will certainly lead you astray because it places right belief before right relationship.”

Do you agree that ideological commitments will lead you astray?

What’s the difference between acting for others and acting with them? Do you think it is okay to act “for yourself,” as Rev. Morrison-Reed suggests?

VI. Next Steps (15-20 minutes)

Say that you would like to group to now consider next steps. Ask:

What relationships do you and your congregation have with people who are leading the movement for racial justice today?

What relationships do you have with other UUs who are doing the work?

What gets in the way of reaching out and building bridges?

Does your congregation tend to think about who in your community you need to be in relationship with? or is justice-making all about issues? If the latter, think about who in your community or area is affected by those issues you are most concerned with. Who is organizing in the community? Reach out to them. Explore what kind of solidarity you can build.

Invite participants to journal for a few additional minutes on any commitments they want to document.

VII. Closing (5 minutes)

Sing or read "Building Bridges" together:

Building Bridges between our divisions,
I reach out to you,
Will you reach out to me?
With all of our voices and all of our visions,
Friends, we could make such sweet harmony.