

# What is the Journey Toward Wholeness?

## Our Unitarian Universalist Principles call us to affirm

- The inherent worth and dignity of each person
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all

Yet we live in a world in which oppressive structures prevent us from living out these Principles.

Journey Toward Wholeness is the name for the Unitarian Universalist Association's initiative to develop anti-oppressive, multicultural, anti-racist ways of being in the world so that we can truly live by our Principles.

There are several paths on the journey – the path to dismantle racism, the path to eradicate heterosexism, the path to abolish ableism, and the path to combat economic injustice. The material in this document focuses on the path to anti-racism.

The Journey Toward Wholeness reflects a common overarching process grounding our transformation and includes the many programs, resources, strategies, committees, resolutions, and accountability structures that make up Unitarian Universalism's anti-oppression efforts.

The Journey Toward Wholeness is shaped by the anti-oppression work that is done by Unitarian Universalists in our congregations, districts, denominational structures, and organizations. The Journey is also embodied in how we work for justice in the world.

## The Spiritual Dimension of the Journey Toward Wholeness

The work of anti-racism and anti-oppression is essentially spiritual work. The term Journey Toward Wholeness expresses the spiritual nature of the work.

To say that we want to move toward a greater sense of wholeness is to recognize there is a brokenness caused by racism that needs to be healed and transformed. There is a brokenness that exists in our nation because of the extermination of Native Americans, the enslavement of African peoples, the exclusion of Asians, and the internment of Japanese Americans.

The brokenness in our nation's history is mirrored in the brokenness of our faith community. For example, we remember Thomas Jefferson for whom we have named one of our districts – the author of one of the greatest documents of human freedom and champion of religious liberty – and yet he was an owner of African people who were enslaved and an avid proponent of taking the land of Native Americans.

And there is brokenness in our hearts as individuals. The demonic power of racism shapes the identities of peoples of all races in our society. Racist institutions acculturate those of us who are white to think that we are somehow superior to people of color. And it forces people of color to internalize the oppression of the dominant society.

To walk the path of the Journey Toward Wholeness is to heal the brokenness in our nation, in our faith community, and in our individual hearts.

## **The Development of the Journey Toward Wholeness Initiative**

In the 1960s, political leaders in our country passed civil rights laws to end legal segregation in America. The passage of these laws resulted in open accommodations, new voting rights, affirmative action programs, and an increase of political power for people of color in our country.

However, the primary institutions and systems of our nation- business, health care, education, criminal justice, transportation, media, the arts, and religion – were barely affected by these new laws. Racism is still deeply imbedded in these organizations. Many people of color are marginalized in their relationships with these institutions. As a result, the hopes of people of color for equality, opportunity, and advancement have yet to be fully realized. Therefore, our task in the new millennium is to dismantle the racism that exists in these institutions and systems, including the Unitarian Universalist Association, its districts, and congregations.

During the early 1990s members of congregations across the continent discussed how racism operates in our congregations and our communities. Many programs at our General Assemblies from 1992 until 1997 addressed these issues. Some of the important observations made at that time were:

- Many Unitarian Universalists provided important leadership in integrating our religious community.
- In our congregations white culture is considered to be the norm and people of color are expected to assimilate into this white culture.
- The focus of much of our justice work is on the victims of racism and not the oppressors that benefit from racism.
- We need to put greater focus on the power and privilege that white people have in our racist society.

In June of 1997, by an almost unanimous vote, the 3,000 General Assembly delegates in Phoenix AZ voted to carry forward the vision put forth in a report from the UUA Racial and Cultural Diversity Task Force entitled “Journey Towards Wholeness-The Next Step: From Racial and Cultural Diversity to Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racist Multiculturalism.” The report was the culmination of five years of work and research that analyzed how institutional racism functions in the UU movement and outlined specific ways of dismantling it through an intentional anti-racism transformation process.

**The 1997 resolution says:**

### **TOWARD AN ANTI-RACIST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION**

**WHEREAS** the 1996 General Assembly resolved that all congregations, districts, organizations, and professional and lay leaders participate in a reflection-action process throughout the 1996-97 church year using the Congregational Reflection and Action Process Guide and the Anti-Racism Assessment; and

**WHEREAS** our Unitarian Universalist principles call us to affirm and promote "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations" and "the goal of world community"; and

**WHEREAS** our history as Unitarian Universalists includes evidence of both great commitment and individual achievement in the struggle for racial justice as well as the failure of our Unitarian Universalist institutions to respond fully to the call for justice; and

**WHEREAS** racism and its effects, including economic injustice, are embedded in all social institutions as well as in ourselves and will not be eradicated without deliberate engagement in analysis and action; and

**WHEREAS** because of the impact of racism on all people, and the interconnection among oppressions, we realize we need to make an institutional commitment to end racism; and

**WHEREAS** the social, economic, and ecological health of our planet is imperiled by the deepening divisions in our world caused by inequitable and unjust distribution of power and resources; and

**WHEREAS** we are called yet again by our commitment to faith in action to pursue this anti-racist, multi-cultural initiative in the spirit of justice, compassion, and community;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the 1997 General Assembly urges Unitarian Universalists to examine carefully their own conscious and unconscious racism as participants in a racist society, and the effect that racism has on all our lives, regardless of color.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the General Assembly urges the Unitarian Universalist Association, its congregations, and community organizations to develop an ongoing process for the comprehensive institutionalization of anti-racism and multiculturalism, understanding that whether or not a group becomes multi-racial, there is always the opportunity to become anti-racist. Early steps toward anti-racism might include using curricula such as Journey Toward Wholeness for all age groups, forming racial justice committees, and conducting anti-racism workshops.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the General Assembly urges all Unitarian Universalist leaders, including ministers, religious educators, leaders of associate and affiliate organizations, governing boards, Unitarian Universalist Association staff, theological schools, and future General Assemblies to engage in ongoing anti-racism training, to examine basic assumptions, structures, and functions, and, in response to what is learned, to develop action plans.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Unitarian Universalists are encouraged to enter into relationships of sustained engagement with all people of color with a goal of opening up authentic dialogue that may include, but is not limited to, race and racism. Such dialogue should also include how to appropriately honor and affirm the cultural traditions of all people of color.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the General Assembly requests that the UUA Board of Trustees establish a committee to monitor and assess our transformation as an anti-racist, multi-cultural institution, and that the Board of Trustees shall report annually to the General Assembly specifically on the programs and resources dedicated to assisting our congregations in carrying out the objectives of this resolution.

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that in order to transform the racist institutions of our world, the General Assembly urges the Unitarian Universalist Association and all its parts to establish relationships with other international and interfaith organizations that are working to dismantle racism.

This resolution emphasizes the importance of moving toward anti-racist multiculturalism where we deal with the issues of white power and privilege at the various levels of our religious institution. It also calls on us as Unitarian Universalists to make a commitment to doing this work in our congregations.

## **Analysis of Racism**

The Journey Toward Wholeness Path to Anti-racism was born out of the premise that racism and its effects are embedded in all social institutions as well as in us and will not be changed without deliberate engagement in analysis and action.

There are at least three ways of doing an analysis of racism.

1. Anti-bias or prejudice reduction
2. Diversity or multiculturalism
3. Anti-racism based on a power analysis of systemic oppression

If we diagnose racism as personal prejudice then we will create models of change to reduce prejudice. If we think that racism continues because whites don't understand or appreciate people of color, then we will want to have programs to foster diversity and promote multiculturalism. And if we perceive that racism is caused by the systemic misuse of power then we will want to do a power analysis.

In our experience, many Unitarian Universalists have been working to reduce their own personal prejudice and develop multicultural competency. They have been focusing their racial justice work at the first two levels. Reducing prejudice and developing multicultural competency are important efforts but they do not address issues of the systemic misuse of power and the need to change the imbalances of power in our institutions. Those of us involved in the Journey Toward Wholeness Initiative believe we are being called to do a more effective job of dealing with systemic racism and the significance of white power and privilege in our congregations.

To deal more effectively with systemic racism it is important to have an accurate diagnosis of racism and to use terms that have clearly understood meanings. We call this the process of developing a common analysis. Some of the issues discussed in this process are:

- Using the definition: Racism is prejudice plus the systemic misuse of power.
- Seeing how racism operates at the personal, institutional, and cultural levels.
- Using a wall of history to learn about the historical context of race and racism in our nation, in our denomination, in the local church, and in the local community.
- Doing a power analysis of the dynamics of racism so that we realize that racism not only has devastating consequences for people of color but it also provides undue privilege and power for white people in our society.
- Understanding the power of racism to shape our personal, social, and spiritual identities.

Getting consensus on a common language concerning racism is a challenging task. People need time to struggle with core concepts in order for that to happen. This process can be especially challenging for those of us who are white. As Marjorie Bowen's Whitley writes:

“Once one acknowledges white privilege, it is both easier and more difficult to be intentional and committed to taking a proactive stance against racism. It is easier because white people are more informed and aware of what racism is, how it works, and its insidious nature. It is more difficult

for the same reason because whites now have to face their own demons, and their own struggles about what it means to be a racist.”

The path begins internally. We take a fresh look at ourselves and learn to identify our personal and institutional relationships to oppressive systems. We then learn the skills we need to dismantle racism in our institutions and restructure ourselves into anti-racist institutions. At the same time that we work to get our own house in order we move into authentic multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and interfaith coalitions for effective spiritually-driven action for justice.

### **Racism in the Unitarian Universalist Association**

Over the past several years, members of the UUA Board and staff have taken the time to analyze how racism exists in our denominational structures.

We looked at the history of discrimination against people of color who wanted to be ministers in our congregations. The Rev. Mark Morris on Reed has documented this pattern of discrimination in his book *Black Pioneers in a White Denomination*. As a result of this new awareness a committee was established by the UUA administration to focus on the recruitment and support of people of color into our ministry.

We reviewed our religious education programs and found that while our church schools are becoming more multicultural, we did not have the leadership and resources to support these changes. As a result the UUA Staff Group for Life span Faith Development and the Liberal Religious Educators Association are putting new thought into how we can be more effective anti-racism educators with our children, youth, and adults.

We examined the publications that are produced by the UUA. While demographers are predicting that by the year 2050 half of the citizens of the US will be Spanish speaking we were only printing two pamphlets in Spanish. Since then John Buehrens' and Forester Church's book *Our Chosen Faith* has been translated into Spanish. But this is only a first step in addressing this important issue.

These are examples of how racism exists in our denominational structures and the steps we have taken to dismantle it.

The analysis of the UUA as an institution continues. And strategies for dismantling racism in our beloved community are continually evolving. Members of the UUA staff, the UUA Board of Trustees, and leaders of UU organizations continue to make anti-racism initiatives central to their work. For example, the UUA Board has an anti-racism action plan it is implementing, maintains good contact with the leaders of the Journey Toward Wholeness Committee, and has started meeting with the leaders of Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries.

This same kind of reflection is going on in our congregations where members consider how racism operates in the various parts of their religious community: worship, religious education, social justice, membership programs, adult education, and so on.

### **The Relational Nature of this Work**

The work of anti-racism and multiculturalism is deeply relational. People already engaged in the process have learned much but there is so much more to learn, synthesize, and share. UUA staff

and trained volunteers are working in partnership with UU organizations that are making a commitment to this initiative across the denomination.

An important dimension of this work is our interfaith anti-racism work with Crossroads Ministry, the Minnesota Council Anti-Racism Initiative, and Ecumenical Partners for Racial Justice.

The Journey Toward Wholeness Initiative is monitored and evaluated by the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee. The members of the committee are appointed by the UUA Board of Trustees. The committee has the authority to ensure that the General Assembly Resolution "Toward an Anti-racist Unitarian Universalist Association" is implemented. The committee has representatives of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds from various sectors of the UUA. It has an annual budget to carry out its work, with staffing and access to UUA resources.

### **Accomplishments of the Program**

Since 1992, there have been many milestones and accomplishments on the Journey Toward Wholeness.

- Over 1000 UU Leaders have participated in the two and a half day power analysis of racism training.
- Since 1994, 135 congregations have had a “Creating a Jubilee World” workshop.
- In 2000-2001, 125 congregations held a Journey Toward Wholeness Sunday.
- 275 congregations have had a Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop.
- Religious professionals in eight chapters have participated in the Step Ahead Program.
- There has been important anti-racism programming at all the General Assemblies for the past nine years.
- There are now 340 Welcoming Congregations.

Currently there is important work going on in UUA organizations, districts, and congregations.

**ORGANIZATIONS:** The following UU organizations have important anti-racism initiatives including the UUA Board of Trustees, the UUA staff, the UU Minister’s Association (UUMA), Liberal Religious Educator’s Association (LREDA), Interweave, the General Assembly Planning Committee, Continental Unitarian Universalist Young Adult Network (CUUYAN), and Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU).

**DISTRICTS:** Anti-racism transformation teams have been formed in the Mass Bay, Thomas Jefferson, and Joseph Priestly Districts. Other districts have not formed transformation teams, but major organizing efforts are taking place in the Metro New York, Pacific Southwest, Clara Barton, and Ballou Channing Districts.

**CONGREGATIONS:** Anti-racism transformation teams have been formed in The Unitarian Society of New Haven in Ham den CT, The Unitarian Universalist Society of Springfield MA, The First Unitarian Congregational Society of Brooklyn NY, The Unitarian Universalist Church of Washington Crossing in Titus NJ, The Unitarian Universalist Church in Long Beach CA, and First Parish in Browser MA.

## **Leadership Groups**

Several groups are responsible for providing leadership to the Journey Toward Wholeness Program.

The UUA Board of Trustees takes a major leadership role in supporting the Journey Toward Wholeness Program.

The Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee was appointed by the UUA Board to monitor and assess the implementation of the 1997 General Assembly Resolution passed in Phoenix.

The Jubilee World Trainers provide resources and leadership to the anti-racism initiative. Every year this group of 20 people sponsors “Creating a Jubilee World” workshops in dozens of congregations across the continent.

Jubilee Two Trainers provide Jubilee Two workshops and analysis and team building training's for transformation teams.

Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM) is a UU affiliate organization for UUs who are people of color.

Latino Unitarian Universalist Networking Association (LUUNA) is a UU affiliate organization that supports and advocates for Latinos within the UUA.

Unitarian Universalist Network on Indigenous Affairs (UUNIA) is a UU affiliate organization working within the UUA and is dedicated to advocating for Native American people and their issues.

African American Unitarian Universalist Ministers (AAUM) is a UU affiliate organization, which provides support and advocacy for African American religious professionals within the UUA.

The UUA Staff Structure for Congregational Services provides staff and resources for the Journey Toward Wholeness program.

## **Moving Forward on the Journey**

The Unitarian Universalist Association is now offering anti-racism resources through the Office for Congregational Justice Making in the Staff Group for Congregational Services. These resources are available to congregations, clusters, districts, organizations, and religious professionals intent on becoming anti-racist multicultural organizations. The Office for Congregational Justice Making provides consultation, curricula, training, and resources to assist groups in developing a step-by-step plan for becoming an anti-racist multicultural religious community.

To become an anti-racist multicultural institution requires commitment, analysis, strategy, and willingness to risk, grow, and change. The benefits of embarking on this journey are to experience a spiritual change of heart and to enter into what some anti-racist theologians and organizers describe as a “politics of conversion” to create the beloved community.

There are four outcomes that we hope will be achieved as people do this work in their UU congregations, districts, and organizations.

