

TJMC UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

GROWING ANTI-RACIST UU's: A CURRICULUM FOR CHILDREN

In 2016, following the many events surrounding the brutal treatment and death of Black Americans including the murder of several African Americans within the sacred setting of a church, our religious education program felt compelled to provide our congregation's children with appropriate lessons and experiences in racial justice. Furthermore, in 2017, our community of Charlottesville, Virginia witnessed its own difficult struggles in advocating for justice for black lives. Our search for a complete written curriculum, one which would combine racial justice with principles of Unitarian Universalism to use with our children from preschool age through upper elementary levels, was unsuccessful. Therefore, a team of educators (none of whom are African American) from the UU congregation in Charlottesville, developed a total of 30 lessons for each of three age groups, preschool, Kindergarten-Grade 2, and Grades 3-5. These lessons have been used by our congregation from 2016 until the present. We strongly believed that our lessons needed to be vetted by a Black UU religious educator. With grant funds from the Universalist Sunday School Association, Greg Carrow Boyd provided editorial revisions to the curriculum.

As this curriculum was created by several educators, the authorship and writing styles are unique for each section of lessons. In addition, the lessons have been created with our congregation's specific groupings in mind. Folder A contains the introduction, curriculum map, glossary, inclusion strategies, The Rainbow Chalice, and bios of the curriculum developers.

The lessons for children of preschool age (referred to as Folder B) were embedded within the Spirit Play framework, a Montessori style program adapted to UU philosophy and principles. Children of preschool age are not yet clear about racial identity. According to Louise Derman-Sparks (footnote below *) they have a strong sense of empathy and fairness, and are beginning to think about hurtful behaviors.

In consideration of the developmental stages proposed by Louise Derman Sparks, lessons were created for primary children (ages 6-9 or grades K-2) and elementary children (ages 8-11 or grades 3-5). For each level (referred to as Folders C

and D), there are 12-13 lessons which might be presented over a two year period. However, a religious education program may choose to use the lessons in a single year. The table of contents will assist you in organizing these lessons.

Children, ages 6-9, have strong membership group identity. They can easily switch between home, community and school cultures. Children begin to think critically about empathy and social justice. Children are able to offer their ideas and perspectives, without having directly experienced a relevant event. In addition, they are interested in and capable of understanding the history of their families and community. By about age 9, their racial attitudes develop strongly. Through their awareness of different perspectives and interest in learning about culture and people, they are able to develop an understanding about racial justice and engage in anti-racist activities.

* Derman-Sparks, Louise, "Stages in Children's Development of Racial/Cultural Identity & Attitudes" from Sophia Lyn Fahs Lecture, UUA General Assembly, 2012.

These lessons draw on the work of Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards, especially their Four Core Goals of Anti-Bias Education:

FOUR CORE GOALS OF ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION

From Louise Derman-Sparks & Julie Olsen Edwards, 2010. *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children & Ourselves*.

1. Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.
2. Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.
3. Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts. Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discrimination.
4. Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discrimination.

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Please note that we are happy to share this material with you and suggest that you donate to this website. The material is **not to be sold or distributed** in any way. Our time and our efforts have been long, but rewarding and **certainly imperfect**. We are very clear that as White women, our process of learning about racial justice is unending and we may have made mistakes. If we were to rewrite these lessons a couple of years from now, we are sure they would be modified! As authors of these lessons, we simply want to share our learnings with you. We sincerely hope you value the use of this curriculum, and we surely welcome your response and comments.

Please send feedback to:

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