

# JUSTICE-MAKING AS A SPIRITUAL PATH

## Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations Advocacy and Witness Programs



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### **Connect Spirit with Social Justice**

- Have activities at social justice programs that include elements that feed the soul of the group – prayer, song, poetry, and art.
- Use altars for people to place objects that represent hopes, concerns, and spiritual and cultural identities.
- Express gratitude and love for the gifts of existence -- life, people, the earth, the universe.
- Acknowledge despair, hopelessness, and grief.
- Celebrate your achievements.

### **Develop Visions and Values**

- Have a vision of what could be. Don't just identify problems.
- Connect political beliefs with spiritual values.
- Practice developing messages and framing issues with UU theology.

### **Build Community**

- Do the work collectively. Use methods that develop consensus for what to work on and how.
- Listen. Use "one on one" methods of discovery such as those used in community organizing and in Appreciative Inquiry.
- Build community in the course of work for justice through intentional activities and exercises that allow people to share their stories.
- Involve the whole congregation and community through intergenerational activities.
- Work with others in the UUA on regional, district, and national levels.
- Work in interfaith coalitions. Consider joining a congregation-based community organization.

### **Act with Accountability**

- Conduct advocacy efforts in partnership with marginalized communities and others who can speak authentically for what's being advocated.
- Be open to various perspectives especially those of historically marginalized groups.
- Participate in socially responsible investing, recycling programs, use affirmative action hiring guidelines, purchase collectively grown coffee and other fair trade products.

### **Engage in Action and Reflection**

- Take the next step. Action is an antidote to despair and hopelessness.
- Link service activities to advocacy efforts, i.e. sponsor a soup kitchen and advocate for legislation to end hunger and poverty.
- Get educated and talk to others. Starting the conversation is a form of action.
- Have meetings that are one part action and one part reflection. (Don't let meetings be all reporting and planning.)
- Share stories of hope. Share stories of failing and trying again.

Incorporate spiritual justice-making into all components of congregational life!

## **Books Available from the UUA Bookstore at <http://www.uua.org/bookstore>**

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**Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World** by Laurent A. Parks Daloz et al. Beacon Press 1997 \$16.00USD

This landmark study reveals how we become committed to the common good and sustain our commitments in a changing world. There is a free online study guide.

***Soul of A Citizen: Living With Conviction In A Cynical Time***

by Paul Rogat Loeb. St. Martin's Press, 1999, \$15.95

How do we challenge our culture's pervasive cynicism? Paul Loeb presents an alternative vision of hope and courage. Based on thirty years studying the psychology of social involvement, Loeb describes how ordinary citizens can make their voices heard and their actions count in a time when we're often told neither matter. *Soul of A Citizen* explores what leads some people to get involved in larger community issues while others feel overwhelmed or uncertain; what it takes to maintain commitment for the long haul; and how community involvement and citizen activism can give back a sense of connection and purpose rare in purely personal life. A resource and study guide are included. For more information visit <http://www.soulofacityzen.org>.

***Soul Work: Anti-racist Theologies in Dialogue***

Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley and Nancy Palmer Jones, Editors, Skinner House \$20.00USD

Papers and discussion transcripts from the UUA Consultation on Theology and Racism held in Boston in January 2001. Addresses such questions as: What theological or philosophical beliefs bind us together in our shared struggle against racism? What are the costs of racism, both for the oppressors and the oppressed? Includes study questions as well as concluding chapters on anti-racist action and resources.

### **Other Resources:**

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***Appreciative Inquiry*** is about the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives "life" to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. For more information on Appreciative Inquiry resources visit <http://appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu/>.

***Social Justice Empowerment Program and Handbook*** The basic purpose of a social justice empowerment workshop is for members of a congregation to assess the quality of their social justice program. It is an opportunity for members of a congregation to consider what they are doing as an institution to create a more just and caring world. During the workshop participants reflect upon what they can do as a religious community to put their faith into practice. Information about the workshop and a copy of the handbook available at <http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/ep/>.

***Spirit in Action***, founded by Linda Stout, author of ***Bridging the Class Divide*** (Beacon Press 1997). The mission of Spirit in Action is to support the development of a movement of people who are unified by a vision of a world which values and embodies love, equality, justice, nonviolence, spirit, and respect for the earth. Spirit In Action's movement building work focuses on goals in four areas:

- creating collective visions of a positive future;
- including a connection to spirit in social justice work;
- healing divisions and creating cooperation across lines of difference;
- taking action for individual, cultural, and systemic change. Visit [www.spiritinaction.net](http://www.spiritinaction.net)