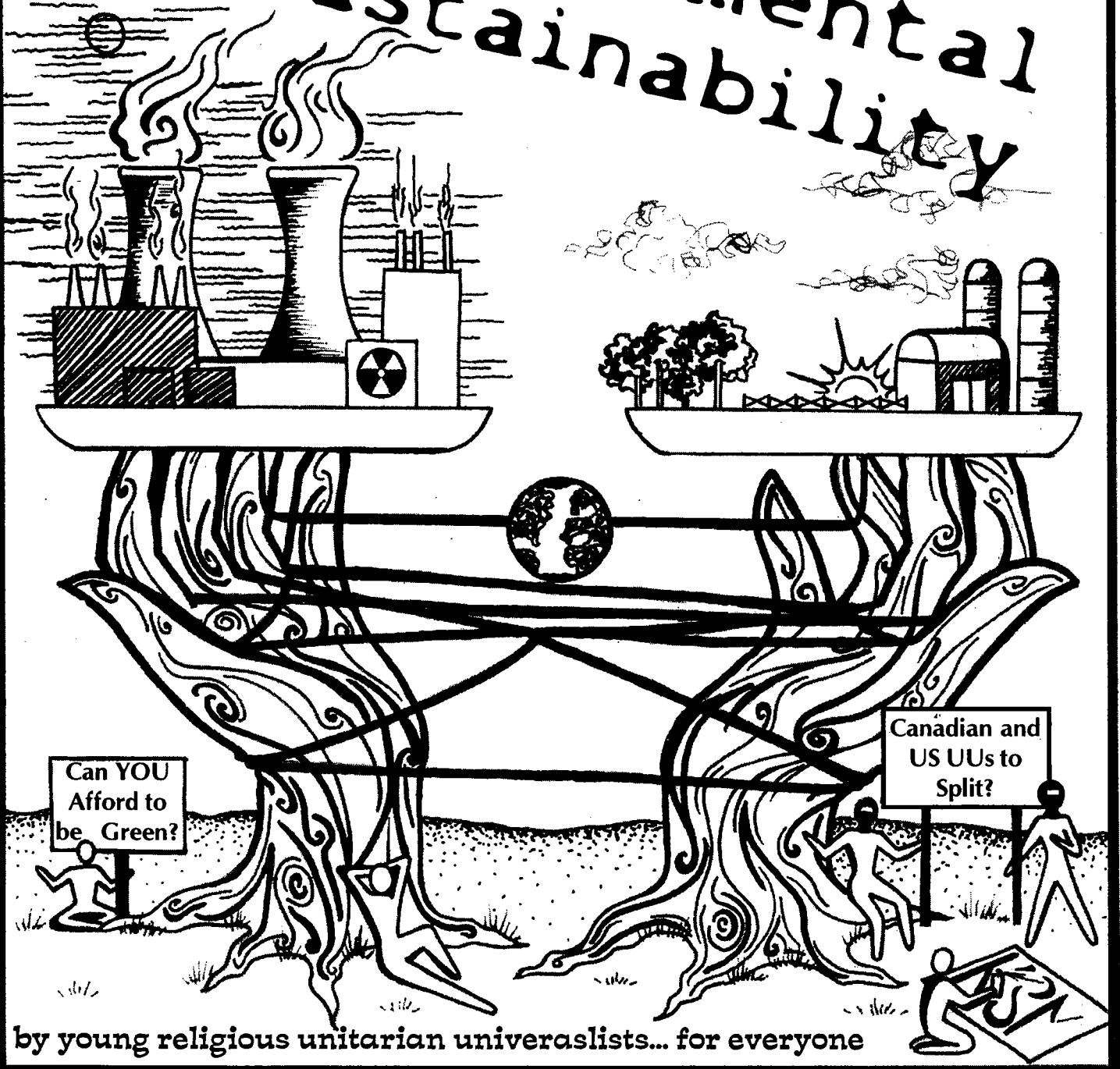


Synapse

A point of
contact where
information and
energy are
exchanged...

Spring 2001
Volume XIX
Issue 1

Environmental Sustainability



by young religious unitarian univeraslists... for everyone

Continental Calendar

SPRING 01 - FALL 01

MAY 3-6

CONTINENTAL SPIRITUALITY
DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE
TRAINING

MAY 1

EARLY DEADLINE FOR YOUTH
HOUSING AT GENERAL
ASSEMBLY (\$190 US)

MAY 10

FINAL DEADLINE FOR YOUTH
HOUSING AT GENERAL
ASSEMBLY (\$210 US)

MAY 18-20

YRUU LONG-RANGE
PLANNING MEETING

JUNE 15

CONCON FORMS DUE

JUNE 21-26

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JULY 20-26

CONCON

JULY 27-30

CONCENTRIC (SEE CUUYAN.ORG FOR
DETAILS)

JULY 28-AUGUST 3

YOUTH COUNCIL

AUGUST 1-5

OPUS (SEE CUUYAN.ORG FOR DETAILS)

FOR A COMPLETE UP TO
DATE CALENDAR, SEE OUR

WEBSITE AT:

<http://uua.org/YRUU>

OR CHECK OUT:

<http://uua.org/calendar>

WHO WAS THAT MASKED MAN?

howdy, i'm graham baas. noticed my name is in lower case? good. i'm just not an upper case kind of guy. you probably want to know a little about me, seeing as how i'm a yps and all. i grew up in iowa, then moved to illinois, then moved to minneapolis, then decided that living in one area for any length of time is kind of bogus, so i then proceeded to move around a whole lot. now i live in jamaica plain, ma. so what do I do in the youth office? well... i'm the resident "computer geek", i handle all of the website stuff and manage the listservs. that's in addition to all of the other yps duties I fulfill. as a not so side note, i hate fax machines. when I hear the words, "i'm going to fax it to you" i break out in a cold sweat. so when ever you're thinking, "oh gosh my 'insert random thing that could be late' is late, i'd better fax it right now to the youth office." take a deep breath, now take another one. call the youth office, explain to us what it is that you're faxing, and we'll figure out some other way of getting it to us. also, this is just my opinion, not that of the youth office as a whole. just remember:

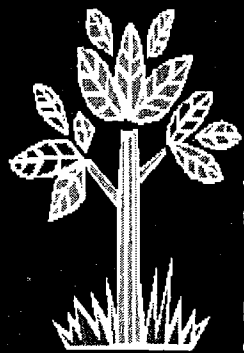
"graham hates fax machines."



Hey there! I'm Elka (formerly Liz) your Intern! Info about me: I'm a drama freak and damn proud of it. One day you'll see me somewhere, whether it be on the stage on movies or tv, I don't care, but you'll be seeing me again. I like

to sing and dance (ballet, tap, jazz, club, etc.) because I love to perform. I also love the play goal on my school soccer team. I guess I enjoy diving at balls flying at my head, jamming fingers, mutilating knees and getting kicked at. It's all about me, Me, ME I, unfortunately to my wallet, am a shopaholic. And admitting it is not the first step to recovery. I'm doomed. My other major passion is being a hard-core YRUUer (note the rawkin' painful chalice tattooed on my lower back). Worship (bringing the R back in YRUU!) and Social Action (Prison Reform, Animal Rights, the War on Drugs) are the most important parts of YRUUness to me. I'm a senior at the Commonwealth School in the Back Bay of Boston and I'm going to Hampshire College next year. So look for me in your quest for entertainment and call me at the youth office if your bored, you might save me from some long hours in front of a computer!





Wink

from the editors

Our culture teaches us to always want more, More, MORE. It's the founding principle of capitalism and is, I believe, the main reason our world is in such bad shape. When a society is based around unchecked growth and expansion, resources become depleted, not replenished, and the environment suffers permanently.

This is where the concept of environmental sustainability comes in. Sustainability means taking out less than we put in. It means there is a balance; that growth somewhere means decline somewhere else; that the world moves in cycles and waves, not in one upward-slanting line.

Our society also grants us with a huge amount of freedom, freedom that is regularly abused in the name of profit. The thing we have forgotten is that with freedom comes responsibility. In order to truly be responsible with our freedom, we need to view the world holistically. We must acknowledge that everything we do has an effect on everything else, and we therefore have a responsibility to do good. We must fully accept responsibility for the damage each of us causes, directly or indirectly, to the environment. As a resolution from General Assembly puts it "Responsible Consumption is a Moral Imperative."

Responsible consumption, and living life sustainably means giving some things up. It means driving less, buying less, using less, taking shorter showers, eating less meat ALL THE TIME. Every time we eat beef we are contributing to massive erosion, water pollution, and poisoning of the land with pesticides, not to mention ingesting 54% more pesticide residues than if you ate a bowl of cereal. In fact, if everyone in the world became vegetarian all at once, the world's oil reserves would last 260 years

instead of 40-80 years.

Environmental change can not be made only by passing laws or by protesting World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings or by riding your bike to school. The work towards an environment that is healthy and will stay healthy must infiltrate everything we do; we must pass legislation, we must protest horrible organizations, we must eat food grown locally and organically, we must print schoolwork on double-sided paper, and we must carpool when we can. Change must be made on all levels simultaneously. The big environmental disasters get news coverage and movie star sponsorship, but it is the little things that cause the most damage; the '89 Exxon Valdez oil spill (the worst spill ever in US waters) was a horrible tragedy, but Americans improperly dispose of 20 times that much oil every year by changing their own car's oil. Dumping small amounts of oil over the entire land is a lot harder to contain and clean up than an oil tanker spill.

Widespread environmental destruction is coming sooner than we might think. Our oil reserves are predicted to run out in 40-80 years. A possible rise in global temperature of 2.5 degrees C (4.5 degrees F) before 2100, causing disaster for the global ecosystem (and therefore human economic and social systems) is predicted.

This Synapse has a number of articles related to environmentalism; some related to specific issues like genetic engineering, some relate to widespread epidemics, like environmental racism. Environmentalism is linked to all movements for social change, and we must act against all forms of oppression while we work towards a more sustainable world. We must educate ourselves and others, make responsible decisions, and work for positive change in the world!

-Abbey Tennis

About Synapse...

Synapse is a publication of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU), the youth organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Subscription is free. Two issues per annum. For more information on subscriptions, see the back cover. All contributions are considered based on quality and whether they fit into our Principles and Purposes.

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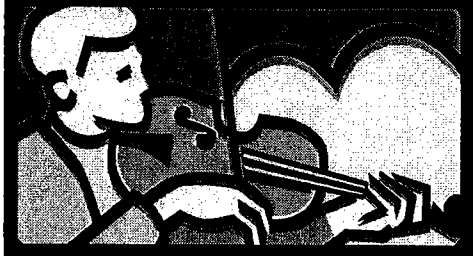
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Letters to the Editor



Response to a Friend, and Hope for All

To better understand this letter, refer to the commentary in the Fall 2000 issue of Synapse entitled "Polite Rage of one Canadian" (Fall 2000 Synapse, page 17).

As for many of you, YRUU has been a life changer for me. My district involvement, beginning in 1997, and my continental involvement, beginning about a year and a half ago, has seen the Amir of yesterday disappear into oblivion and the Amir of tomorrow emerge in full fashion. Most recently, actually for almost a year, my continental participation has been fulfilled as one of the youth observers to the UUA Board of Trustees. My colleague is Jacob Larsen, the writer of the previously mentioned essay.

I consider myself ethnically diverse, possessing many identities, American often being the last of which I boast. My father was Egyptian and my mother is Swiss, and I take a great pride in my multicultural heritage. As a member of YRUU, my struggles to be accepting, tolerant, and compliant are incessantly ongoing—I believe in this faith's principles with all my heart—and I, like Jacob, am pained to see that discrimination exists in some aspects of YRUU. I certainly learned this year that I have to examine myself.

I have actually done some of the things that Jacob expressed contempt toward. I have actually asked him to say the word *about*. Perhaps the worst part of it all was that I didn't even realize what I was doing. I obviously wasn't relating to him because any comment to me about America will be met with indifference. However, Jacob never asked me how Egypt was, or how Switzerland was, or to speak in

an Idaho accent for goodness sake, as ridiculous as that sounds. But that's exactly what I was doing to him.

I deserved a slap in the face, but fortunately Jacob is just too nice for that. The most critical part of all this, especially our personal conversations on the subject, is the fact that he *is* my colleague and friend. Elected by you to serve the Board, we became friends, developed trust, and optimized the future. But there I was—inadvertently offending my new friend while I thought I was living out my UU Principle of acceptance. I don't have anything against Canada. I was disturbed to see that my apathy (and I hate to call it that) led to the pain of my friend's feelings.

We are lucky to have Jacob. We are lucky to have such a large number of Canadians committed to our faith. Unitarian Universalism, above all, should not be bound by the American borders. Perhaps that is what is happening in YRUU and it is time to stop. Let ConCon (held in Ontario this year), Jacob's words, this response, and your belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person be stepping stones toward our progressiveness.

I have a hope for all of YRUU. Never again should one of my friends be driven to the point of sleeplessness because those he loves have been unconsciously causing misery for him. I have opened my eyes. My beloved colleague, you are not Jacob the Canadian. You are Jacob my friend. You are Jacob our friend.

Amir Fouad
Pocatello, Idaho, USA

Raise a Ruckus

I just want to send a shout out to all the YRUU kids out there. It is really inspiring and wonderful to see that YRUU is still the best thing since sliced bread.

I saw a bunch of stuff around whether Synapse should be free to print whatever it wanted to print. I felt very sad. If this sort of thing happens again, write letters to the UUA World in protest. Raise a ruckus. Be a prophetic voice that says "this is wrong!" Take action. You are the future of the UU movement. If people fail to listen to the voice of youth, then our movement will die.

Youth in this denomination have a long history of %#@&*@\$^!# up. It was the leadership of youth that eventually brought Unitarians and Universalists together into one denomination. It was the with the help of the leadership of youth eight years later (1969) that caused significant protest over race at GA. It was partially the leadership of youth who brought in new voices about earth centered spirituality into the UUA in the late 70s. Youth have made so many contributions to this religious movement that they deserve to speak in their own voice even if it pisses people off.

Don't be passive. The adult leadership in this denomination have walked over youth before. Don't let them do it again. Youth have made great contributions to our religious movement simply by repeatedly refusing to be silenced. This religious movement needs the vitality and spiritual force of youth almost more than the youth need the movement.

Remember these two words: Youth autonomy. Remember that YRUU is a vehicle to empower youth, that is, put youth in positions of power over their own lives. Take that power and live it. If anyone tries to take it away from you, don't even think about giving in without a fight. Read up on the history of the youth movement within the UUA. There are many oppressive, authoritarian, and anti-youth institutions in the world—it is your duty as youth to ensure that the UUA is not one of them.

love and phuufs,

Dan Kappus,
former youth
Atlanta, Georgia, USA



Anti-Racist or Anti-Racism?

I feel that we as a society are an anti-racist society. Not only is this against our [UU] principles, it is hypocritical. It bothered me in the latest issue of synapse when I read "Anti-racist." I am not against the people that hold a belief (a racist), but rather the belief itself (racism). Through my interpretation, the true UU version of the term would have been "anti-racism." This is hard very hard though. That when someone wishes or even inflicts harm on others due to a belief. I find it hard to affirm that someone's inherent worth and dignity. For me that is where faith enters UUism. If one chose to not see that someone's inherent worth and



dignity, that one, you, is a hypocrite. I say this because you hate a person for hating another person. Blatant hypocrisy. I have felt this way, strongly, since I "came of age" and was forced to think about it. I hope whomever this finds is forced to think about it as well.

Chris Weber
Centerville, Ohio, USA

What's Shakin' in JPD?

Greetings from the Joseph Priestly District (JPD.) Including all of Delaware, Maryland, and Washington

graham's gripes environmentalists annoy the hell out of me. don't get me wrong, I don't want to stymie the work that people have been doing to stop the destruction of the environment... no, I just don't like most environmentalists. they focus so much on the details that they lose sight of anything resembling the big picture. abbey and I argue over this point a lot. just which big picture is more important? the rest of synapse shows a different point of veiw, so this is my little soapbox. every single environmental problem facing us today has to deal with one root cause; over-population. nothing else. there's approximately 4,000,000,000 too many people currently on earth. these people eat, breathe, consume, travel, destroy, etc. so when I see an environmentalist with kids, all I can think about is their hypocrisy. maybe I'm wrong, and they adopted that kid. but I'm sure that I'm right more often than I'm wrong. so personally, I believe that they way to saving the earth is through not procreating. not through recycling, not through saving the spotted owls, not through eating organic, not through saving the whales. just don't make any more screaming little diaper wearing eaters of re-sources.

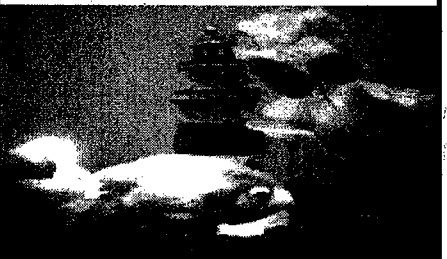
D.C., and parts of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and New Jersey, it's quite possibly the dancin'est district in the entire UUA. Well, I was sorry to hear about your recent budget cuts, which took the district reports section out of Synapse. You may have noticed that the JPD spot is usually blank. I'm writing to give all that live with a constant burning desire to know what goes on in that crazy Joseph Priestly District what you want. Despite problem with DYSC (District Youth Steering Committee, which sounds cooler than YAC) members absences, we have had a very productive year. Our theme this year was "positively aware," with focus on Social Action. Our wintercon this year was deemed social action con, and included many fun and successful hands-on social action workshops. DYSC also put into action a new program thought up mostly by last year's awesome co-chair, Jana Mickenly.

The Youth Empowering and Supportive congregations program (a.k.a. YES) awards churches in the JPD that take an active role in youth empowerment with official recognition as a youth empowering and supportive congregation, as well as a spiffy banner and certificate. Four churches are set to receive the award this year. We have also seen a dramatic increase in con-going this year, with successful outreach to those youth groups that had not yet seen the greatness of youth conferences. We also saw an increase in the number of non DYSC-run cons, with a grand total of six in the

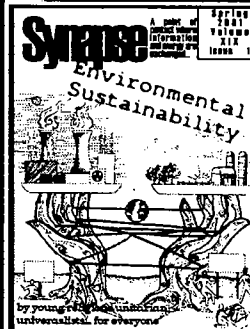
2000-2001 con season. Our voice on the JPD board is also increasing, with our board representative missing only one meeting this year, and we have plans to send a voting member to the board next year.

I hope that quenches your never-ending thirst for information regarding the JPDYSC, but if not, I encourage you to visit our new awesome website at jpdysc.org. Thanks a bunch, keep up the good work Synapse.

Pete Johnson -Joseph Priestly District
Youth Steering Committee
Youth Council Representative
and Energy Co-Ordinator.



WRITE TO SYNAPSE!



Would you like to have your letter printed in Synapse? Did you see something that you really liked? Did you see something that made you want to start a fire with a pile of Synapses? Well

this is your chance to speak up so you better use it. If you send us something that you would like to go in this section we will most likely use it so please send use your letters to tell us what you think.

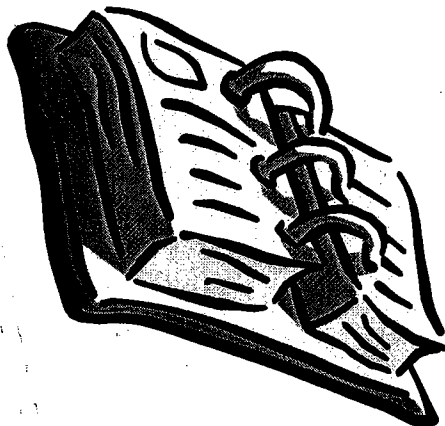
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The views expressed in these letters does not necessarily reflect those of the Editors, and shouldn't be interpreted as such. We reserve the right to edit letters for content and length.



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Steering Committee Speaks!

By Kate Kidder, 2000-2001 YRUU Steering Committee

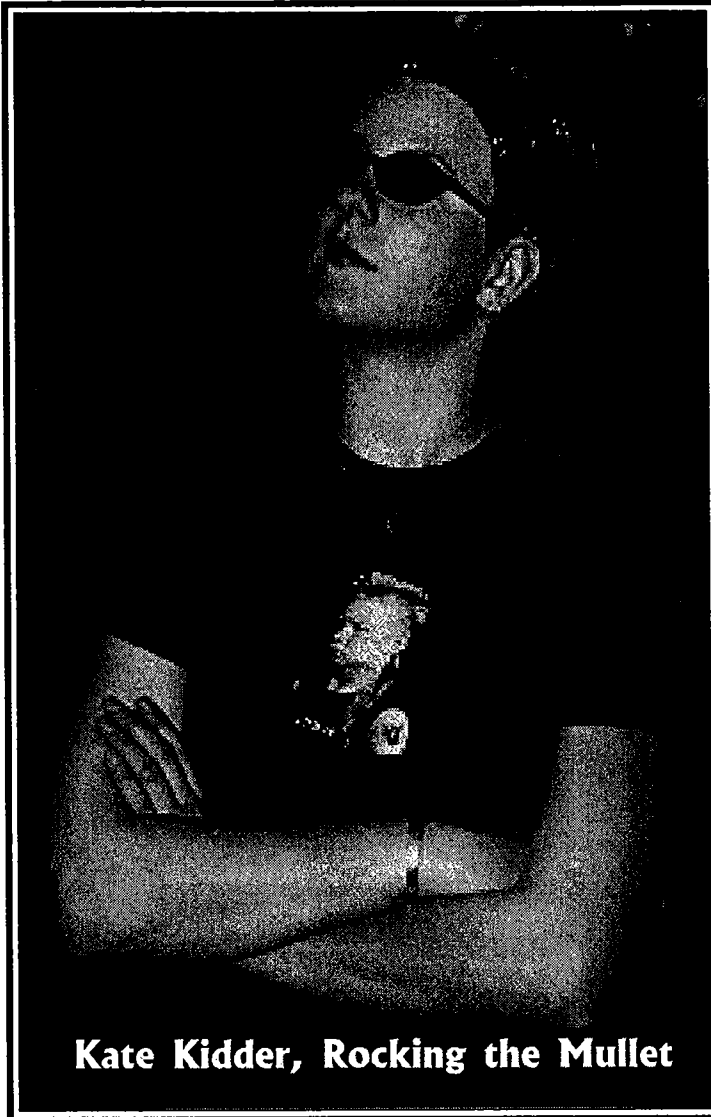
Hi! I'm Kate Kidder, a member of the 2000-2001 YRUU Steering Committee. Steering Committee, which is elected by Youth Council each year, is the executive body of YRUU. Essentially, this means that we implement the priorities and programs set by Youth Council, the governing body of YRUU.

We recently had our third meeting of the year. We made a lot of exciting decisions, came up with some great ideas, and had a little fun. You can check out the minutes from our meeting at www.uua.org/YRUU under the "Governance" section.

This year at General Assembly (GA), a new president and moderator of the UUA will be elected. As Denny Davidoff, the current moderator and chairperson of the UUA Board of Trustees, said, "Youth have the potential this year, for the first time ever, to swing the elections." This is exciting!

In order to swing the election, however, we need you, the youth, to be delegates and make your vote heard. At GA 1999, the bylaws were changed to allow congregations to send more delegates to GA. For many congregations, this means that they have more slots than they know

what to do with. Y'all should talk to your congregation's board or minister and let them know you are interested in being a delegate at GA. In many cases, your congregation will help you



Kate Kidder, Rocking the Mullet

(financially) get to GA if you are a delegate.

If you cannot be a delegate, you should still come to GA and be a part of Youth Caucus. You can find more information about Youth Caucus

and registration forms later in this Synapse (p. 22). Having a strong youth presence at GA and letting adults know about issues that are important to us will not only "swing" the elections but all other decisions of the assembly as well.

So that we can learn about and evaluate our denomination's future leaders, Steering Committee has asked all of the candidates for moderator and president to answer questions relating to youth concerns. These questions and the candidates' responses appear later on in this issue of Synapse (pgs. 20 & 21).

Also, the Youth Council/Steering Committee Restructuring Task Force will be meeting at GA. This task force is charged with making systemic changes so that Youth Council and Steering Committee are less elitist, hierarchical, racist, and classist and so that they are more inclusive and representational of all YRUUs, including you! At GA, there will be opportunities for you to give input. This could mean huge and exciting changes in the way YRUU is governed and structured.

See you in Cleveland for GA 2001!

Kate Kidder is the Jr. High Transitional Age Range Representative to Youth Council, she is also a member of the YRUU Steering Committee.



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People of Color Caucus

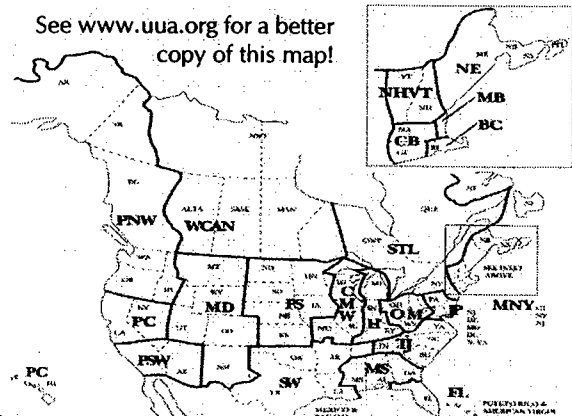
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**Contact your district
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information on district and
continental events**



Hey Look! It's the **YOUTH COUNCIL PEOPLE OF COLOUR CAUCUS APPLICATION!!!!**

Yippee!!

What is Youth Council?

Youth Council is the governing body of YRUU. The members of Youth Council (22 district youth, 4 at-large youth, 7 at-large adults, 1 UUA Board Representative, 1 Position on Appraisal, and the Youth Office (ex-officio)) meet once a year. This year the meeting will be held in Waterloo, ON! At these meetings, Youth Council members give and listen to reports, discuss what should be happening in YRUU and create policies to make it happen, do anti-racism work, worship together, and have a ton of fun! Throughout the year, members of Youth Council work on the resolutions that they passed, publicize the decisions that come out of Youth Council, and create agenda items for the next Youth Council. Youth Council makes decisions through a formal consensus process.

What is the People of Color Caucus?

The People of Color Caucus (PoCC) will be made up of youth and adults of color who are interested and invested in becoming the leaders of YRUU and helping to govern the organization. At Youth Council, the caucus will participate as a regular member of Youth Council. The PoCC was created last year as a step toward making YRUU an anti-racist organization. It involves youth of color in the leadership and decision making of YRUU. Because the PoCC is new, it is ever-changing and evolving.

Applications should include the following:

- Vital Information: Name, address, phone number, email (if applicable), date of birth, home church or fellowship, district, and a list of people from whom you are expecting letters of recommendation.
- A Letter of Intent: Why you want to be on Youth Council, what you feel you can offer to the position, what you feel you can offer to the group, experience you have to bring to the group, what YRUU issues concern you, and your dreams and goals for YRUU.
- Anti-Racism, Multi-Culturalism, and Diversity: How do you define racism? What sort of education have you had on issues of racism, anti-racism, and/ or multiculturalism (describe these experiences)?
- Two Letters of Recommendation: These can be from ministers, YRUU youth, RE directors, YRUU advisors, teachers, or others with whom you have worked (at least one letter from a youth and one from an adult).

Due
May 25th,
2001!

Send Applications to:
Steering Committee
c/o The Youth Office
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
yruu@uua.org
fax: (617) 742-0321



