



Religious convictions are easy to hide—you don't have to reveal your beliefs about the nature of God until you're ready. But racial identity is harder to hide. As soon as someone sees my face, they want to know "what" I am—Chinese? Japanese? And when I tell them Korean, they sometimes want to

know if I'm going back "home." Often there isn't time to tell the whole story, but I long to tell it.

As an American of Korean descent, I would like you to know my story. And I realize that responsibility comes with that desire. It is my responsibility to speak up, show up, and express myself honestly.

I'd like you to know that I come from an extremely homogeneous ancestry; I can trace my family's clan back a thousand years. I want you to know the word *Jung*, which refers to an unbreakable bond between humans. And I want you to know that in our collective hearts we carry a deep inconsolable sadness (called *Han*) that comes from centuries of foreign domination.

I want you to know that members of my family were executed for planning the overthrow of the Japanese occupation in the 30's. During the Korean War, my father witnessed the brutal shooting of his father, and my mother's oldest sister was killed by an American bomber that mistook her office for a North Korean target.

When I became a Unitarian Universalist in my late 20's, I knew that I had found a faith tradition where I could develop and express the fullness of my complete identity. And it is this church that helped me to see my undeniable connection and responsibility to all people in our society who are ostracized, harassed, belittled, ignored, imprisoned, denied, rejected and forgotten.

We are *one* in the struggle for peace and justice; we are *one* in the voice that cries with the oppressed; we are *one* in the love that will liberate all beings.

—Jennifer Youngsun Ryu
UU Seminarian
Berkeley, California

The Asian/Pacific Islander Caucus (A/PIC) endeavors to build a safe and sacred community in Unitarian Universalism for those who identify as Asian and Pacific Islander (API).

To this end, we pledge to:

- *support one another in our UU faith communities*
- *advocate for our API needs within the UUA*
- *maintain open dialogue between APIUUs and the larger faith community*
- *work with DRUUMM (Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multi-cultural Ministries) and other identity-based caucuses toward an equitable, inclusive and just community*
- *provide authentic cultural resources for the UUA*



Asian American Voices in Unitarian Universalism



ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER CAUCUS
of Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian
Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM)



I first heard the word “Unitarian” in 1976 from a Taiji student of mine who was a member of the Unitarian Church of Los Alamos. This was back when transcendental meditation was the “in” thing. I was comparing Taiji as a meditation in movement with transcendental meditation and this student said to me, “Oh yes, we meditate

in our church.” This intrigued me. What kind of church does meditation? She said, “Unitarian Church.” I said, “Never heard of it.” I looked in my Chinese-English dictionary and I couldn’t find a translation of the word.

I heard the word for the second time that week when I met a young woman at the newcomer’s playgroup who also attended the Unitarian Church. When I indicated an interest, she simply called up the church office and put me on their newsletter mailing list. Through reading the newsletter, I followed the activities of this church for several months before attending my first service.

This was a service about Amnesty International. It blew my mind. Back home in Malaysia, I grew up without political freedom. As students, we were told to avoid any involvement in politics. Our job was to study. Leave politics to the politicians. Accept the status quo. Don’t rock the boat. You’ll be OK. Try to make trouble? You’ll mysteriously disappear and rot in a jail somewhere.

I suddenly felt this connection of humankind for one another, that there are people here in the free world who care enough to fight against injustices in the world. I never knew of a church that would take a stand on human rights issues. After that first service, I returned again and again. The more I found out about Unitarian Universalism, the more it suited me. I was particularly attracted to the use of science and reason to explore and to determine for oneself what is the truth, what are myths, what to accept and what to reject in building one’s own unique theology. I didn’t have to take everything on blind, unquestioning faith.

*-Kok-Heong McNaughton
UU Lay Leader
Los Alamos, NM*



I was born to two teenage parents in Portland, Oregon. My mother of Czech-European-White descent and my father of Chinese-Hawai’i-Asian descent had an unpopular decision to make in an unpopular time for multiracial families. I was given up for adoption and

whisked away to a Unitarian Universalist family, the Lyons.

Both my adopted parents are white, and both of their families worked hard to become white over the years. My parents were loving, and raised me with great privilege through education and personal attention. All in all, I recognize the gifts my parents, Paul and Helen, have given to me. They are truly my parents. There was something however that they could not give me, and I do hold feelings of resentment for their failure to give it the good old American effort - a connection to my identity and a dialogue about “Who am I?”

Not just within my ethnic/birth identity, but even within their own family of origin. Who are the people who have struggled to bring me and my parents into this world? What experiences have they had to live through that shape their worldview? How does the community of my birth family and my adopted family exist in our society and within the spiritual theology of Unitarian Universalism? How does racism and oppression affect my families?

Through my college experience, I grappled seriously with these questions and found many answers. I am still finding answers today but I have a new found sense of confidence, understanding and identity. Knowing my identity has made me a strong, healthy, productive person, and has given me a sense of groundedness in this world. I identify as Hapa, which is a Hawai’i term for a person who is part white, part Asian.

*-Joseph Lyons
UU Seminarian
Portland, OR*



India...home of Hinduism, Buddhism, great vegetarian cooking, and the land from which my parents came to the United States. Because I was born in the U.S. and raised as an orthodox Hindu, identity has always been a huge issue for me. What did it mean to be non-white, Hindu, and veg-

etarian, growing up in a Jewish neighborhood, in a Christian country? Add on the gay identity I later came to understand and accept, and it’s easy to see why others have always looked at me, and my life, as a symbolic representation of diversity.

But I never asked to “represent” any community (gay, Asian, non-white, Hindu, or any other). These are facets of identity that, in part, have been layered onto me by the majority culture in our country. They are also layers of identity that at times make no sense at all to me. What is “Asian,” anyway, but a convenient term that Caucasian Westerners have come up with to inadequately describe an entire region of the world comprised of people who are very distinct.

While I’m lumped into this catch-all “Asian” category, I watch as both my religious and cultural roots are increasingly appropriated by liberal Americans, many of whom do not fully understand the meaning behind the symbols they are drawn to. I increasingly find that the majority culture not only imposes its own definitions on me, but that my own symbols and roots are being redefined and/or taken away by the majority culture.

Amidst this tug-of-war, I have found great comfort and joy in the UU movement. I’ve found a religion that is by-and-large willing to hear about my struggles and walk that path supportively with me. I have found other UUs of color who understand what it means to be non-white in a majority white denomination. The Asian/Pacific Islander Caucus and DRUUMM have added positively to my life in ways I could not have imagined.

*-Manish Mishra
Young Adult UU Leader
Boston, MA*