

## Q&A:

### UUMFE's Environmental Justice Curriculum

**QUESTION: When will the curriculum be ready? How can we obtain it?**

The curriculum will be available on-line through the UU Ministry for Earth website on or about November 1. The URL is: <http://www.uuministryforearth.org/>. Those downloading the curriculum will be required to register and will be asked to make a donation which will enable us to continue the curriculum work. Guidelines will be provided for donations and will be related to the number of participants in your course and/or the size of your congregation. We're thinking that it will be between \$5 and \$10 per person taking the course or something like \$100 for a large congregation and \$50 for a smaller congregation.

**QUESTION: Is there an instructor's manual?**

**Yes! The downloadable package consists of the following:**

- a) Curriculum learning objectives
- b) Recommended advance preparation
- c) Step-by-step facilitation script and instructions for each session, including suggested opening and closing meditations
- d) Downloadable music and videos
- e) Homework assignments and homework research tips
- f) *Appendix*: Additional facilitation tips
- g) A "how to" video for facilitators to introduce the simple mural drawing/mapping process used to depict and analyze the information gathered about your congregation's place in the web of life.

**QUESTION: Since the curriculum is inter-generational, what age should the youngest participant be?**

It is difficult to make a blanket statement about the youngest age for participants. It all depends on the maturity level of the particular young person. It is best to gauge their willingness to participate in a conversation for up to two hours, to do a bit of reading between sessions, to help with a research assignment, and to think critically about some of their personal choices and values. In terms of the gravity/complexity of the material, we think that certainly most high school age youth can handle it.

**QUESTION: How large should a group working on the curriculum be?**

The processes we use are meant to encourage a lively conversation. It is our experience that it is difficult to truly engage everyone once you rise above about 15-20 people. However, if you are able to interest more people than that in the course, do not discourage them – rejoice! Instead, break the group down into smaller sized units to promote stronger participation and bring everyone back together for pieces where individual conversation is not needed.

**QUESTION: What kind of time frame is best between each individual session?**

You have to balance between keeping up momentum (and so offer more frequent sessions) and allowing people enough time to do the homework and make space for this in their often busy lives. We'd recommend that you consider offering this class about twice a month (i.e. skipping a week in between sessions). You could probably go as much as 2-3 weeks between sessions if necessary. Currently, it is constructed as a 4-session, 2 hour class. If you want to format it as a 1 hour class, then you may be able to offer it more frequently -- just plan ahead more with certain homework assignments to give people sufficient advance warning and time to complete them.

**QUESTION: In many communities, organizations are already engaged in working on environmental justice. How will the curriculum encourage coalition-building?**

The curriculum can help you accomplish this in two ways. First, an important part of the curriculum has participants researching what is going on in your community on some key themes (water, land, energy, toxics, etc.) AND examining the kind of impact your congregation has in these thematic areas. Engaging in this research – IF it is done by talking with, if not more actively meeting and touring with other groups to actually see things through their eyes -- will enable you to build or strengthen relationships with other groups. Secondly, your congregation might consider inviting members of other groups/congregations to engage in this study with you as a way of building a stronger relationship. In fact, one of the smaller congregations that field tested our pilot module considered inviting other neighboring congregations and local groups to do the study with them.

**QUESTION: How does this curriculum compare to “Awakening the Dreamer”?**

First, our curriculum is geared specifically for Unitarian Universalists, “Awakening the Dreamer” is not. “Awakening the Dreamer” presents a lot of information about the state of the planet, how we got to this place and what can be done about it personally and collectively. It touches on the inequities, but looks broadly and generally at the issues. The intent of our environmental justice curriculum is to help congregations identify specific environmental injustice in their own communities, with a focus on racism and economic privilege, in order to help congregations develop insight and strategies in order to collaborate with communities of color and other marginalized communities to effectively address priority concerns.

**QUESTION: How does this program compare with the issues raised in the Ethical Eating study related to the UU Congregational Study/Action Issue process?**

UUMFE's environmental justice curriculum focuses on six issues, of which food and land are two. Participants do research on your congregation's place in the web of life in terms of the “upstream” and “downstream” impact of your use/consumption of these resources on people and ecosystems. The mapping process also enables you to see the inter-connections of your impact in all the thematic areas. The Ethical Eating study guide is not an actual curriculum per se. It provides some suggested questions for discussion and some short readings which offer an excellent

general overview about where our food comes from and broad issues of justice and inequity within the food system. It offers a menu of ideas for practical actions. Some of the readings would be helpful compliments to the “food” section of the UUMFE curriculum, or a Part 2 to our curriculum. They definitely do not cover the same ground.

**QUESTION: How does the curriculum address climate change?**

Climate change has not been broken out as a singular issue instead it emerges as a thread weaving throughout the analysis. We felt that as an introductory approach to environmental justice, the curriculum would be more effective if congregations studied their use of some key resources like energy, water, air, land, etc. and see how that connects them with people and ecosystems “upstream” and “downstream” in the web of life. We expect that climate change will enter the discussion as the group assesses the impact of congregational energy choices as well as local air quality, if not also in the water and food sections.

**QUESTION: We have been working on some environmental justice projects, but would like to understand the concept better and learn about what other UUs are doing. How can the curriculum help with that?**

Environmental justice (ej) has many facets. The UUMFE “Green Papers” are a great resource for better understanding these facets and the evolution of ej as a movement. They can be found at: [http://uuministryforearth.org/green\\_paper\\_intro](http://uuministryforearth.org/green_paper_intro). We recommend you read “Understanding Our Roots,” “How Shall We Name Our Work?” and “Identifying Issues, Becoming Partners”. These will serve as background readings for the curriculum. The curriculum is designed to help you see the connections between various environmental justice issues in your community and some of the systemic drivers of the problems, which hopefully, will enable you to address them in a more sustained and systematic way in collaboration with others, rather than through one-off projects or events. We also hope it will enable you to better see, articulate and address the justice dimensions of what you may already be doing.

The EJ Curriculum will have some congregational examples embedded in it, but a more comprehensive set of examples can be found under the Resources and Publications Tab on the UU Ministry for Earth webpage (<http://www.uuministryforearth.org>) and through the Green Sanctuary program at the UUA (<http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml>)