

THE DRUUMM BEAT

MARCH 2019



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Maria Cristina and Janice Marie are both former DRUUMM Presidents.

There are several traditions FOWH builds on. In the 1980s, the African American UU Ministries (AAUUM) was founded and served as the primary organized collective of People of Color. AAUUM leaders working in conjunction with Journey Towards Wholeness organizers laid the groundwork for DRUUMM to be organized in 1998 in what was originally a UU Religious Professionals of Color organization. In the early 2000s, as DRUUMM expanded membership to include lay UU with an emphasis on youth, a range of religious professional convenings took root. These included an annual Sankofa Gathering for Women of Color religious professionals at GA led by Michelle Bentley, and culturally specific gatherings of ministers of color. As new spaces and communities took root, a group of seminarians of color began to meet monthly in 2002 and by 2006 had made a series of asks of the UUA to support their mentoring and professional development. Meetings with then UUA President Bill Sinkford led to a commitment to host an annual ministers and seminarians of color gathering by the late 2000s.

The 9th Annual gathering of UU Religious Professionals of Color will be in Miami, Florida March 13-16, 2019 with 140 expected participants from across North America. This is an all-time record high participation from our faith's ministers, seminarians, religious educators, musicians, administrators, and membership professionals who are members of their respective professional associations. This major event is sponsored by the UUA, which provides a significant annual financial contribution to help cover travel, housing and program expenses.

Finding Our Way Home (FOWH) has evolved over the last decade from a primarily ministerial gathering to include all religious professionals who identify as People of Color, Latino/a/x, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Middle Easterners, Black and Indigenous/First Nations/Native American. This year the lead UUA staffer Michael Crumpler has convened a volunteer planning team to design and lead the program for the first time including Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa, Adam Dyer, Aisha Hauser, Dawn Robinson, Janice Marie Johnson.

Religious Professionals of Color also have opportunities to connect online via a closed FB group, culturally specific networks that are semi-formal, meetings during and adjacent to General Assembly, and increasingly in regional settings. Previous FOWH Retreats have been held in Albuquerque, NM (2018), Baltimore, MD (2017), Philadelphia, PA (2016), Denver, CO (2015), Boston, MA (2014), Chicago, IL (2013), New Orleans, LA (2012), and Silver Spring, MD (2011).



DRUUMM will be hosting a People of Color gathering at the UU Congregation of Miami, Florida on Sunday March 17th after the Sunday Service featuring long-time DRUUMM leader Rev. Marisol Caballero. Rev. Caballero will look at who is often subtly - and not so subtly - referred to when Unitarian Universalists use the words "we" or "us". How these notions have been internalized in our personal and collective psyches, and the practical effects this has on our association of congregations. RSVP with Sana Saeed via email at ssaeed01@gmail.com.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- March 13-16 Finding Our Way Home, Miami FL
- April 5-7 DRUUMM Programs at Mid-American Assembly, St Louis MO
- April 25-28 DRUUMM Programs at Pacific Southwest Assembly
- June 8 DRUUMM Convening, New York City NY
- June 11 DRUUMM Convening, Boston MA
- June 13 DRUUMM Convening, Oakland CA
- June 19-23 General Assembly, Spokane WA
- July 17-21 Thrive Youth, Minneapolis MN
- July 24-27 The Well, Saco, ME
- Fall TBD DRUUMM Annual Gathering

Have other key dates? Share with editor@druumm.org

NOTATIONS

*DRUUMM is launching an Organizing Project to strengthen our local connections and communications.

*Leslie Mac of the BLUU Organizing Collective was featured in Essence Magazine.

*Mark Morrison-Reed has an in-depth personal reflection and analysis of the Black Empowerment Controversy in the UU World. Adapted from his 2011 book *Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism*.

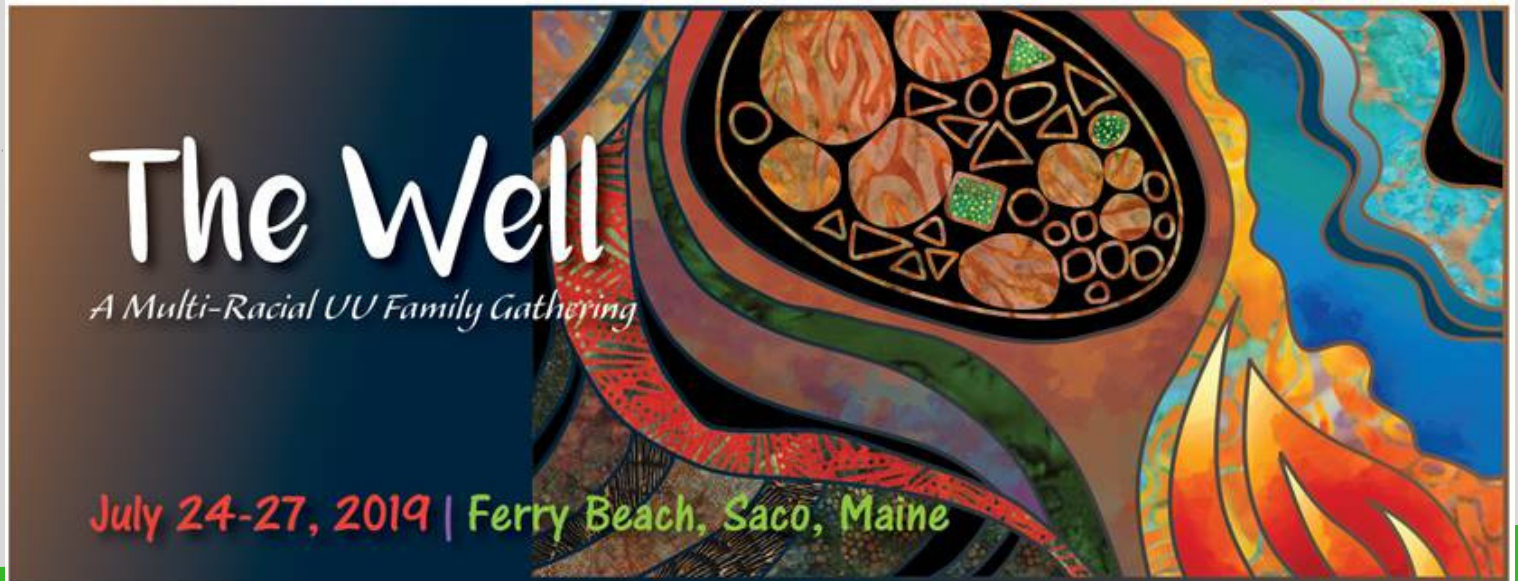
REGIONAL GATHERINGS

DRUUMM will be hosting a new series of programs, workshops and networking activities at the regional level this spring.

MidAmerica Regional Assembly 2019:
 "Intersectionalities"
 April 5-7, 2019
 St. Louis, Missouri

Pacific Southwest District Assembly 2019:
 "From the Ground Up: The Power of Our PSWD Communities."
 April 26-28, 2019
 Long Beach, CA

See full program details at www.druumm.org





LOCAL DRUUMM CHAPTERS

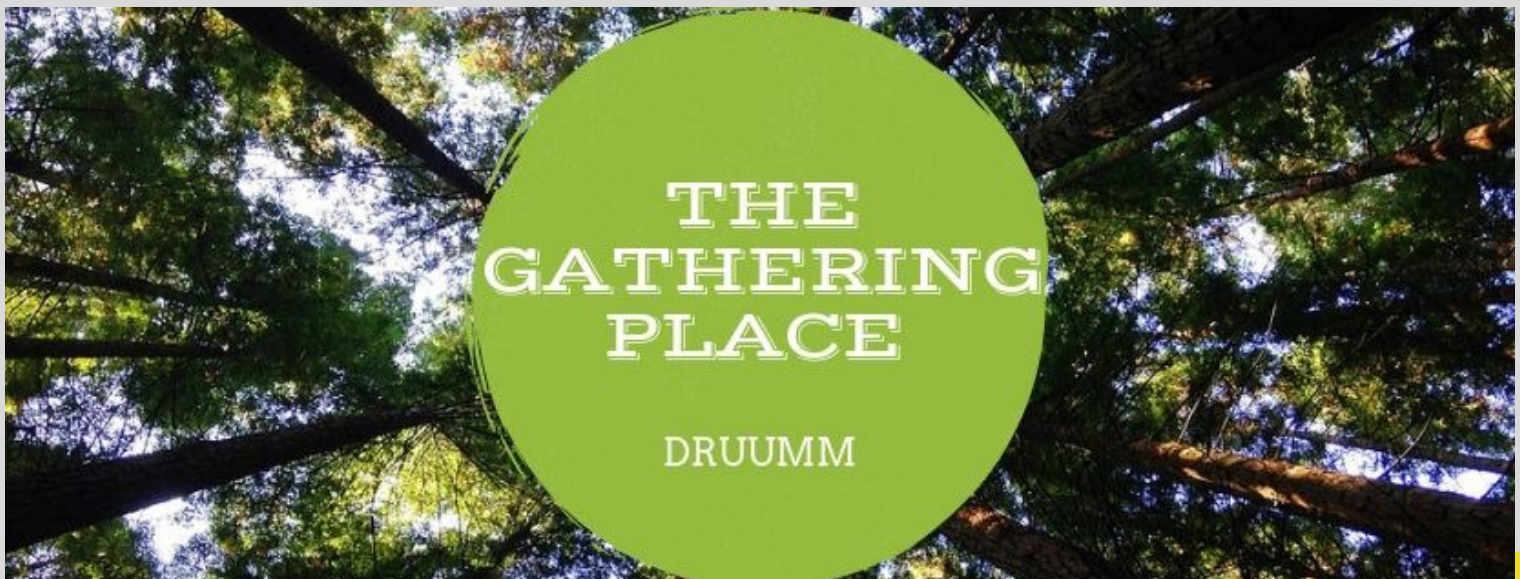
DRUUMM has long held a vision of cultivating and supporting a network of local chapters where our UU People of Color can meet regularly. We've imagined these spaces to be vibrant communities of care where people can develop their faith and spirituality. Over the years several dozen groups have started, mostly within our larger congregations. Some identify with DRUUMM, some independent. Their origins range from DRUUMM leaders convening the group drawing on inspiration from denominational events, to organizers coming out of the Journey Towards Wholeness, Jubilee and Beloved Conversation racial justice work of our association.

In some places, folks gather in their congregation on a monthly basis for a potluck, worship and/or meeting. There are also gatherings that draw UUs from several congregations, and meetings may only happen a few times a year. The Church of the Larger Fellowship has also convened UU POC virtually through Zoom. All the groups we are aware of are multiracial People of Color UU groups for individuals who self-identify. One of the common themes we've heard over the years is the great appreciation for such spaces, and the challenge of sustaining them.

We are not aware of any ongoing staff support from congregations for facilitating such programs at this time, although it is certainly possible. There is a long history of religious educators and seminarians taking on the responsibility as part of their professional interests. Most common this is as a volunteer, going above and beyond, although occasionally it has been woven into their work portfolio.

What do you imagine for yourself as a UU Person of Color? How would you envision a space and place you could be more fully engaged in on a regular basis to connect with ther UU and liberal religious People of Color in your area? If you've been a part of a POC group, what has your experience been? Let us know at editor@druumm.org or consider joining the closed DRUUMM Gathering Place Facebook Group where you can connect with other UU People of Color in a safe and sacred space.

We plan to share more of these stories with permission in future editions of The DRUUMM Beat. Stay tuned!





SOLIDARITY WITH OUR TRANS AND NON-BINARY COMMUNITY

On March 6, 2019, the UU World published an article entitled "After L, G and B" by Kimberly French that has caused a chain reaction of harm from our flagship global UU publication and the defensive reactions of cisgender UUs that perpetuated the marginalization and misinformation about our Transgender communities.

It is important to note that there is a higher concentration of Transgender People of Color in Unitarian Universalism than in our White UU community. DRUUMM and TRUUST (Transgender Religious professionals UU Together) have highlighted the deep intersectionality of this moment, and cautioned people against the "othering" of this incident.

The DRUUMM Steering Committee issued an immediate statement in solidarity. Transforming Hearts Collective issued a "Tips for Talking about the UU World Article" on their website, highlighting,

"It's tempting to see trans people as yet another community that has been harmed (in addition to people of color, for example) rather than the same people being harmed again and again and again. Trans people are also people of color, disabled people, low-income people, queer people, young people—in fact, all of these identities are more present among trans UUs than the general UU population. For this religion to survive, much less live into its potential and promise, Unitarian Universalists must stop using a "flavor of the month" approach to talking about oppression."

Learn more at:

- www.transformingheartscollective.org
- transuu.org
- Centering the Marginalized, by CB Beal on Medium

The "Progress Pride Flag" by Daniel Quasar adds new stripes to acknowledge the push for full inclusion by transgender people, with the white, pink, and light blue stripes, and people of color, with brown and black stripes. (© Quasar Digital, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

DRUUMM Public Statement

The Spring 2019 UU World article, "After the L, G, and B" demonstrates the need for an ethic of self-determination in the magazine's editorial policy; we call for a repair of relationship. Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM) offers this statement in solidarity with trans and non-binary siblings harmed by this article. This article has centered cisgender experience and silenced trans voices about their lived experiences, priorities, and right to self-determination, values which DRUUMM shares with trans and non-binary Unitarian Universalists. DRUUMM offers this statement to support an intersectional approach to equity building.

This article expressed homophobia (use of a homophobic slur) and transphobia (constant othering of the trans experience) that is not consistent with Unitarian Universalist values. While the UU World maintains an independent reporting position with regard to Unitarian Universalism, this cannot be an excuse for printing thinly veiled suspicion and disrespect of trans and non-binary Unitarian Universalists.

Alex Kapitan offered guidance to the UU World that the magazine disregarded:

"I named that a cis person writing a piece about trans people would cause harm. I suggested doing, instead, a feature story of profiles that showcased the diversity of trans UUs, in their own words. I offered to provide a list of folks who could be contacted for such a piece."

DRUUMM calls for a change to be made in the way the UU World reports on and represents trans and non-binary Unitarian Universalists. We want the change to be published, first on the UU World website and then in the next printed issue. We also join TRUUST in calling for representation of trans and non-binary UU's by and through trans and non-binary UU's.

The DRUUMM Beat is edited by Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons. We welcome submissions and inquiries to editor@druumm.org.

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