

TOWARD A REVOLUTIONARY MANIFESTO

UUMeN's General Assembly Lecture

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Introduction

I am profoundly honored to be the first Unitarian Universalist Men's Network lecturer. I bow in gratitude. There is no more important soulful and prophetic work that I have pursued as a practitioner of Unitarian Universalism than comforting and challenging men precisely where I'm planted—in San Diego, throughout the Pacific Southwest District, and across our continental landscape.

One of my perennial mantras has been the Zen Buddhist invitation to "hasten slowly."

Therefore, as we launch the newly formed continental organization, UUMeN, I urge us to "hasten slowly." *Hasten*, because our task is prodigious and time is fleeting; *slowly*, because ours is not an ad hoc, quick-fix project, but a life-long quest that will occupy Unitarian Universalist men and women all our days.

The central phrase of our UUMeN's mission, "nurturing a positive liberal religious masculinity," summons the membership to be a revolutionary force for greater justice and joy within our chosen religious tribe of Unitarian Universalism and beyond. For the white, heterosexual males among us who occupy seats of abundant franchise, our UUMeN's behest is even more specific —urging us to redistribute power and to resist further injustice, while rejoicing in our own maturing masculinity.

Incidentally, our UUMeN's enterprise to dismantle patriarchy and build a more equitable gender community is being inaugurated at the same time there is a burgeoning men's movement within America's radical religious right called "Promise Keepers," replete with a \$28-million budget and a staff doubling from 75 to a planned 180. Last year, 280,000 evangelical men packed seven football stadiums, glorifying God, slapping "high-fives," and pompously greeting one another with "Thank God you're a man." Their uncompromising objective is to "take the nation for Jesus Christ."

"Promise Keepers" refer to gays "as stark raving mad...an abomination against Almighty God." They proclaim the primacy of the male in the household and unabashedly command one another to "take back the reins of spiritually pure leadership God intended men to hold." One of their pastoral leaders Tony Evans, upon instructing husbands how to recover their manhood, declares: "*The first thing you do is sit down with your wife and say: 'Honey, I made a terrible mistake. I gave you my role. I gave up leading this family, and I forced you to take my place. Now I must reclaim that role.'*" He goes on: "*Don't misunderstand me, men. I'm not suggesting that you ask for your role back, I'm urging you to take it back... Be sensitive. Listen. Treat the lady gently and lovingly. But LEAD!*"

"Promise Keepers" target "sissified men" as the main cultural problem in America. They invite racial reconciliation without even mentioning systemic racism. And when they talk about "privilege," they aren't referring to unearned male entitlements in modern society, they are talking instead about the privilege of knowing Jesus.

Well, their promises and ours are substantially different, and while these fundamentalist men are sincerely trying to regain male supremacy, our Men's Network aspires to forge a more just and merciful intergender reality. A brutal clash of religious worldviews prevails in our land and, ready or not, the men and women of our Unitarian Universalist faith must rise up and be counted for an inclusive, compassionate, life-affirming sacred path.

Prophetic and healing reverberations will echo throughout the entire interdependent web of existence when men pursue increasing maturity of soul and behavior. May we remain faithful to our fundamental charge as an affiliate UUA organization! However, if UUMeN should ever deteriorate into but another, self-serving chapter of the "good old boy's club," then may our members be sensible enough to bury the project!

Lest we contemporary Unitarian Universalist male standard-bearers get carried away with expanding egos and lofty dreams, let it be known that we aren't the first cluster of men to organize within either our Unitarian or our Universalist folds. Hence, an abbreviated history of continental UUA men's organizations is in order.

Our first such alliance of men was created in 1907 and named the National League of Universalist Laymen, later becoming the Order of Universalist Comrades. This fellowship was organized primarily due to the comparative lack of involvement of men in ongoing church affairs. The Order focused on engaging every man in special projects in his local church, thereby strengthening the overall Universalist faith. This enterprise also promoted recreational and educational plans for boys in every community where there was a Universalist church.

Additionally, our Universalist forebrothers promoted an annual Layman's Sunday and recruited men for the ministry. Sound business professionals, they raised considerable money, and attendance of males at Universalist worship services took an upswing. In the early 1960s the shrinking 300 member Universalist Men's Association merged with the larger Unitarian Laymen's League, forging a significant philanthropic and prophetic endeavor.

The Unitarian Laymen's League emerged shortly after the end of World War I, during the period when American society spawned legion men's clubs and organizations. Prominent League members included United States President William Howard Taft and several U.S. congressmen and senators, plus an assortment of writers, academics and scientists. In its heyday the League boasted a membership of over 10,000, comprising more than 150 chapters and a membership-at-large.

In reflecting on its history, Robert Hohler, one-time executive director of the Laymen's League, recounts that *"perhaps its most significant contribution was to the growth of the overall Unitarian denomination through its sponsorship of an innovative advertising campaign in magazines and newspapers. The ads that asked 'Are You a Unitarian Without Knowing It?' evoked a flood of inquiries from people wanting to know more. This campaign still stands as the most successful outreach program liberal religion has ever sponsored."*

Hohler also recalls that *"the League played a leading role in the Memorial Society movement, stood in the vanguard of civil rights, promoted anti-Vietnam policies, and was staunchly behind the empowerment of minorities and women...Ironically, the one issue that divided the League most bitterly had nothing to do with public policy, but centered rather around the admission of women to its membership...a move that did not endear the League either to the Women's Federation or to many of its older male members. When the League 'integrated' in 1968, several of the major chapters protested and refused to follow suit. This opposition led to the return of previous policies which signaled the ultimate end of the organization."*

Nothing structurally emerged among continental Unitarian Universalist men until the 1983 General Assembly when a General Resolution entitled *Support Groups for Liberal Religious Men* "affirmed the commitment to the equal treatment of both sexes; and encouraged the formation of support groups for liberal religious men within their respective Districts and communities." That imperative and blessing

assisted, however modestly, in nourishing some of the embryonic men's groups throughout our faith during the past twelve years.

In 1990, Bill Gardiner (Director of the Department for Social Justice at the UUA) and I plotted the formation of a revisioned male-specific fellowship within our Associational ranks. Our aim was to create and sustain an organization that would prove responsive to both the cultural shifts of our era and the enduring imperatives of our life-affirming faith, while building upon the solid foundations of our Universalist and Unitarian forebrothers.

For eons, the entire globe, including our Unitarian Universalist bailiwick, has lived under the governorship of "generic man," wherein maleness has been the presumed reference and norm for everything human. In so living we not only have denigrated the feminine perspective but have also lost men's authentic experience insofar as it is specifically male. One reason for the genesis of UUMeN has been to understand better and support more intently the experiences of masculinity as distinctive male phenomena rather than as pseudo-universals. Hence, our Network will emphasize the history and biology, the gifts and poverties, the yearnings and imperatives of Unitarian Universalist men.

It seems evident to UUMeN why we need male-based (not male-biased) chapters across the continent, but some women and men still question the value of our mission. So here are but two bedrock reasons for establishing local Unitarian Universalist brothering communities.

First, there are gender-specific angers, hopes, and fears that are more naturally shared male-to-male. This has long been acknowledged among women; the same wisdom obtains for men. Mixed company tends to derail men and women from experiencing the necessary camaraderie for developing our distinctive souls. The whole world needs the fullness of each of us. Consequently, women and men must labor independently but alongside one another to create a globe of greater gender justice and joy. As Alice Walker comments: *"As a womanist, I am committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. I am not a separatist, except periodically for health."*

Second, there is lots of healing to be achieved among men because we have been pounding on, climbing over, and even destroying one another ever since Cain snuffed out his brother Abel. We hanker to learn more respectful ways to be brothers—not our brother's boss, keeper or lackey, but our brother's brother.

A primary way for men to heal our brother-caused wounds is to spend intimate time sharing our real stories, as peers, in supportive, non-competitive places. UUMeN is dedicated to nourishing such stations of brothering throughout our religious movement.

The governing mission of our Unitarian Universalist Men's Network is to establish an intentional community of brothers and sister-allies committed *"to building a positive liberal religious masculinity that is pro-feminist, gay-affirmative, culturally and racially inclusive and diverse...We understand such positive masculinity, working in alliance with various movements for social justice, as essential for personal and social progress, healthy spirituality, and the good life"* (by-laws adopted on August 18, 1993). This lecture will offer beginning notes on what a "revolutionary manifesto" of the UUMeN might entail for the invigoration of our common and cherished religious movement.

Why *Revolutionary*?

When selecting the title for this address, I agonized over the use of the term "revolutionary," wishing neither to tame our organizational vision into polite irrelevance nor to espouse a concept that might unnecessarily alienate mainline Unitarian Universalists. But it has become increasingly clear to me that contemporary times require more than new *information*, more even than the gradual *reformation* of attitudes; they demand the full-fledged *transformation* of being, wherein our male lives might be turned both outside-in (reflectively) and inside-out (prophetically).

UUMeN exists to remind men that we could benefit from an overhaul and that, with grace and grit, the perils and tyrannies pervading our lives can be diminished. And we men, both individually and organizationally, must take the lead in our own growth! Consequently, the founders and supporters of UUMeN are not solely interested in the evolution of male consciousness but more critically in the revolution of male conduct. Altering the psyche of Unitarian Universalist men and changing ingrained gender patterns throughout Associational life will necessitate nothing short of a revolutionary manifesto.

The word *revolution* comes from a Latin word meaning to "roll back, to unroll." Therefore, the unclouded purpose of UUMeN is to roll back the assumptions, biases, and behaviors that suppress men's emotions, oppress women socially and economically, and wreak ecological havoc. Rolling back the negatives so that positives might be unrolled is the joyous duty of practicing revolutionaries committed to growing a mature liberal religious masculinity.

I appreciate the way Kate Millett phrased it in her trenchant book entitled *Sexual Politics* (1970): "*Guys still have it in their heads that a revolutionary is a murderer. Uh-uh. A revolutionary is a changer, a teacher, somebody who hangs in and keeps at it, and keeps loving people until they change their heads.*" And I would add: until they change their hearts and souls as well! Norman Mailer, in *Christians and Cannibals*, made a similar observation: "*Masculinity is not something given to you, something you're born with, but something you gain. And you gain it by winning small battles with honor.*"

Although the term "warrior" is sullied, perhaps irredeemably (what with its legacy of paid soldiers whose single purpose is to find and destroy opposition), there resides in the sacred literature of contemporary women and men a useful interpretation of the warrior archetype as denoting those individuals who are fiercely compassionate, protectors of righteousness, boundary setters, and guardians of goodness.

Countless men know only too well the harm of cowardice when determination and force are called for in the endless struggle to combat evil and approximate justice. It is difficult for temperamentally sweet guys like myself to ruffle feathers, raise unseemly voices, or, God forbid, engage in disorderly conduct in the hallways of any smooth-functioning "patriarchal" institution. It would be so much more comfortable to remain a thoughtful, stand pat *liberal* and ignore the unsettling requirements of the summons to *liberation*. But, alas, UUMeN won't let us transact business as usual.

The operative word for me, as a reluctant yet aspiring revolutionary, is FORCE, a term spineless do-gooders are loath to claim. Yet being a resolute force is precisely what is needed within and beyond our religious association. Our male lives must be sufficiently evolved to practice forceful alternatives to hostility and withdrawal, to incarnate what Gandhi called "satyagraha," which translates as "soul or truth force."

Every contemporary problem facing us as men—whether among family or friends, between races, governments or religions—will be addressed ultimately either through violent or nonviolent force. The sagacious and stouthearted Unitarian Universalist men among us will learn how to employ the force of justice, the force of healing, the force of noncooperation, the force of unyielding resistance to wrong, the force of imaginative, radical ideas.

Life is a partisan fray, and the tests and tribulations facing the men of our Unitarian Universalist Association are colossal. To confront our own stubborn aches and buried wounds will require revolutionary honesty. To modify the course of our chosen faith-tribe will require revolutionary defiance. To cultivate inner soil while navigating political waters will require revolutionary balance. To stop the emotional and physical harm we daily perpetrate on women, children, other men, and ourselves will require revolutionary courage. To bridge the power gap between whites and men of color, and to melt the fear paralysis between straight and gay men will require revolutionary *chutzpah*.

Forming a continental organization specifically to challenge the privileged status of one's own gender takes what African-American writer Toni Cade Bambara terms "sheer holy boldness."

To evolve from being *males*, our biological fate, to *brothers*, our relational destiny, requires revolutionary strides.

Being a brother to other men and women, to plants and animals, to the deities and demons roaming the universe signals nothing less than a radical passage from dominator to collaborator. To trade in the attitude of *power-over* for *power-alongside* all living entities demands extraordinary masculine fortitude and, yes, will extract a substantial cost.

Christian philosopher Beatrice Bruteau reminds us that the greatest revolution in the history of humanity occurred on Maundy Thursday when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. Until that moment the whole point of human reality had been for someone, invariably a man, to get ahead or on top! My sisters and brothers, in envisioning a revolutionary manifesto we counsel the men of our liberal religious faith to do the riskiest thing imaginable: to fashion a truly mature masculinity—both soulful *and* prophetic!

UUMeN, while not a thriving revolution yet, is, indeed, searching for more than a few good men. We are shamelessly agitating for every registered Unitarian Universalist man and every supportive sister-ally to join our revolutionary voyage. Our by-law objectives are clear and simple: we "challenge men to confront gender injustice, homophobia, racism, loneliness and distrust between men, and violence by men against women, children, other men, themselves, and the earth." And to do so at our places of residence, work, play, and worship. Now, if that's the kind of organizational manifesto that reflects your Unitarian Universalist credo, then we urge you to accompany our caravan.

As Alice Walker reminds us: "*When Martin said, 'Agitate non-violently against unjust oppression,' I assume he meant in our own home, if that's where the oppression was.*" So, wherever injustice rears its ugly head in our own household of faith is exactly where we ought to be focusing our revolutionary fervor. We Unitarian Universalists are notorious for feverishly passing resolutions toward changing

institutions in the outside world while failing to modify the policies and deeds of our own religious clan.

Don't expect the revolution we are pursuing at UUMeN to be either effortless or pleasant. We are still, for the most part, a male-entrenched and controlled operation, and manifold men and some women will not easily alter the comfortable arrangement in our religious tribe from which so many of us gain considerable and unquestioned benefit. Heterosexism, racism, and sexism remain intractable and insidious monsters in our own progressive religion.

Truly radical religious experiments that exemplify what Unitarian forebrother Roger Baldwin called "holy discontent" are seldom popular or centrist. So, our Men's Network must persist and plod, remaining true to its purpose, marked by what Gloria Steinem calls "outrageous acts and everyday rebellions," and ever striving to embody the sentiments of Adrienne Rich:

*My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
so much has been destroyed
I have to cast my lot with those who age after age, perversely,
with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.*

Principles of Our Revolutionary Manifesto

At the height of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, William Sloane Coffin was one of a group of ministers who urged Henry Kissinger to withdraw U.S. troops. Kissinger, pushing the clergy on the complexities of such a proposal, asked, "Okay, how would YOU get the boys out of Vietnam?" To which Coffin, turning to the prophet Amos, responded, "*Mr. Kissinger, our job is to proclaim that 'justice must roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.' Your job is to work out the details of the irrigation system!*"

Well, today I offer a bold framework highlighting four fundamental elements of what I perceive to be a mature liberal religious masculinity: male-positive, interconnected, inclusive, and balanced. All who join the ranks of UUMeN will be vigorously working out the details of our system in the days ahead.

I. Male-Positive

The last thing we need in any fledgling men's movement today is horizontal contentiousness, men chewing on men.

Unfortunately, that's the case in numerous corners of the secular world. On the far right are reactionaries who disregard male privilege or gender violence, espousing that men are basically as oppressed as women (simply in different ways), and in the opposing camp reside militant leftists who claim that masculinity is inherently flawed, an incurable disease, a hopeless cause.

Whereas men harboring such extremism may join our organization, the fundamental nature of UUMeN does not nurture such zealous views. On the one hand, we contend that male economic and political power is indeed dominant, and, on the other hand, we hold that masculinity is not an irredeemable condition. Simply put, we can be proud of being men without doing so at the expense of others.

When we claim to be a male-positive organization, we are declaring that no matter what social travesties men perpetrate, ours can become a healthy and honorable estate. The history of men is amply filled with both delivering and receiving wounds, but we are never exhaustively described by those wounds. Therefore, in the name of our Network, we do not tolerate the bashing of women, gays, lesbians, bisexuals or persons of color, **and** we refuse as well to scorn or humiliate men *qua* men.

We are positive about the male gender. We believe that men can relate, repent, resist, reconcile, and rejoice on the pathway to fullness of humanity. As radical black feminist Bell Hooks urges: *"So many people have expressed this real hard-core sense that men are never going to change. And I have thought, can you imagine the despair of black people under slavery had we felt that there was nothing about that system that was going to change, that there was nothing about white people as a group, or as individuals, that would change? One of my favorite statements that I say a lot...is the whole notion that 'what we can't imagine, can't come to be.' So, we've got to believe that men can change, and I believe profoundly that we have individual incidents of men changing!"*

II. Interconnected

We men are socialized to lead fiercely independent lives, but as a member of our Unitarian Universalist Men's Fellowship in San Diego once remarked: "I'm a self-made man, but if I had to do it over again, I would call in others." All is not lost for this particular individual, for he is now fortified by the transformative embrace of caring brothers in one of our dozen men's support circles.

Our Unitarian Universalist heritage has always revered its rugged individualists like Thoreau and Emerson. However, we seldom remember those distinguished Universalist men who formed spiritual-prophetic brotherhoods such as the Hopedale Community and the Humiliati. What have we learned from them? We proclaim the interdependent web as an ecological and cosmic principle, and so we should, but we fail to embody it in the smaller kinship groups where we dwell. We remain gravely underdeveloped in the craft of relational power.

Therefore, among the eleven members of the UUMeN's steering council, a group that attempts to represent the varied voices of our movement, we are laboring valiantly to share power, refusing to create yet another monolithic structure of "kings on the mountain." UUMeN abides primarily as a clearing house to start and sustain local Unitarian Universalist men and groups in their personal aspirations and public responsibilities toward shaping a more just, gladsome universe.

A continental men's organization, such as UUMeN, forces us to admit that we are not self-sufficient either as individual males or as autonomous brotherhoods. Mature masculinity necessitates men migrating from solitariness to solidarity, from lone rangers to a brothering community across the gulfs of age, profession, theology, race, lifestyle, ability, and class that continue to segregate men from men.

In every Unitarian Universalist society throughout the land, there exists some form of worship life, religious education, and social action. There are also innumerable programs for singles, couples, and families, and usually a female-focused federation prospers on campus. What we need, as well, in every one of our local congregations is a structured, ongoing men's presence that welcomes adult male members into its fellowship and nourishes them through its program life.

Furthermore, shouldn't every boy who is a part of our children's religious education effort know that he is on a lifespan quest accentuating "positive liberal religious masculinity"—surrounded and guided by exemplary men (other than his own father or brothers) who can serve as challengers and comforters for his religious journey? And what about the importance of girls and women experiencing mature men in our Unitarian Universalist communities?

III. Inclusive

Additionally, our brothering tribes must be spacious and inviting, not merely in print but in deed. As Unitarian Universalist Bernice Johnson Reagon of the singing group *Sweet Honey in the Rock* says: "If you're in a coalition and you're comfortable, you know it's not a broad enough coalition!" Our Unitarian Universalist men's groups need to be available for the countless white, heterosexual men in their 30's and 40's searching for meaningful community, but we must also reach out to other diverse constituencies of men. African-American poet June Jordan cuts to the quick of authentic community when she asserts: "My hope is that our lives will declare this meeting open!"

**But every man is our brother - including those men who frustrate,
anger, and desert us, including those men who abuse, abandon,
and kill women, children and us, and, yes, including those fellows
who think UUMeN is irrelevant or worthless.**

UUMeN heartily agrees with our forebrother Walt Whitman that "all men are my brothers," not just the progressive, stimulating, agreeable ones of our choosing.

All these men are our brothers too!

As an intentionally inclusive Unitarian Universalist brothering community, we would recognize men of all sexual orientations and celibates as well; men of every capacity, condition, color, class, and conviction—the outcast and the dictator, the hermit and the knight, the foe and the lover, the welder and the lawyer, leaders and followers and those who saunter to their own drumbeat, the magician and the impostor, the right-winger and the socialist, the notable, the heinous, and the incorrigible mixture in us all.

Now, don't misunderstand me, we are not *responsible* for all these guys, and, most certainly, we will engage in fierce, moral wrestling matches with many of them, but we remain *related* to them. We share the same gender embodiment, our histories are interlocking; hence, we are beckoned to engage the otherness of fresh and foreign brothers along our life-journey! As Parker Palmer notes: "Community is that place where the person you least want to live with always lives!" *Genuine* community, that is!

In an intentionally diverse, welcoming male community we also acknowledge our irretrievable linkage to those brothers who have come before us and who will come after us. Generational bridging is conveyed in this adapted poem from traditional West Africa:

*Do not seek too much fame,
but do not seek obscurity.
Be proud.
But do not remind the world of your deeds.
Excel when you must,
but do not excel the world.
Many sages and crones are not yet born,
many have already died.
To be alive to hear this song is a victory.*

We pay holy tribute to those male ancestors, from the North and South, East and West, in whose debt we stand and who are cheering us onward. Kokopelli, the native American humped-backed flute player; Orpheus, the father of music and poetry; Jesus of Nazareth, an incarnator of love; Francis of Assisi, a brother to the animals; John Sigismund, the first and only Unitarian monarch in history, whose ground-breaking edict established religious toleration and freedom; Unitarian Universalist Whitney Young, Jr., an unyielding warrior for racial justice; Mark DeWolfe, an openly gay Unitarian Universalist minister who, in the throes of dying with AIDS, wrote: "remember your love as a source of strength; remember who you are: lovers tossed by these difficult times." All these prominent and unsung men are truly our brothers, our holy kin.

IV. Balanced

The purpose, objectives, and program venue of the UUMeN are committed to wholism rather than faddish causes or regional preferences. While addressing the deeper hungers of the male mind, body, conscience, heart, and soul, we adhere to Carl Jung's wisdom that "the definition of maturity is holding greater and greater opposites without coming apart."

In our literature you will recognize a fast commitment to **balance**: being male-positive, gay-affirmative, pro-feminist/womanist, racially inclusive, intergenerationally sensitive, ecologically responsible, and dedicated to bridging with all extant organizations within our movement from the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation (UUWF) to Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU), from Interweave to the Economic Justice Task Force, from the Black Concerns Working Group to the Seventh Principle Project.

To maintain spiritual and structural equilibrium, the Network encourages its members to encounter the deeper demons and desires of existence, to be mystical activists as well as discerning fools, to embrace life and consent to die, to honor family and welcome the stranger, to delve deeply into poetics as well as ethics, to cherish the treasures of endarkenment *and* enlightenment, to confess our vulnerability while claiming our might.

But perhaps the quintessential hurdle for men along our revolutionary journey is learning how to juggle the twin vocations of justice-making and joy-sharing in a society that tends to major in either duty or delight to the detriment of the other.

We want to be known as an organization that occasions for men a rhythmic blend of personal growth, social justice, and spiritual awakening.

Justice-building. In the annals of human history it's quite unusual for men, basking in entitlements, to commence an organization essentially to jettison rather than fortify their empire. Yet, according to our Men's Network, now is the time, for the white, heterosexual men of our culture and association, still the single most empowered group of human beings that ever inhabited the planet, to rise from our seats of privilege and to commit the revolutionary deed: extending the realm of justice to enfold every living reality.

An Hasidic tale underscores the primacy of our male accountability. When Rabbi Ammi's hour to die came, he wept bitterly, not because he wasn't a thoughtful gentleman or a learned scholar of the sacred Torah, both of which he exemplified, but because Ammi failed to become a public servant. He wept because, as he put it: "I was given the ability to extend justice, but never carried it out." If UUMeN progressively embraces rather than eschews our founding mission, we will become imperfect yet persistent justice-builders.

Our classic path as men has been to *ascend* to power or, as is currently the custom practiced among mytho-poetic men, to *descend* into ashes. Ascending and descending are both necessary, even noble, paths for men to take, but there is another more difficult bearing for mature men to assume today: that is, to saunter *sideways*, neither ahead of nor behind, but alongside other human beings—co-existing as respectful allies in the arduous quest of making peace and building justice for all. Our revolutionary manifesto calls us to be men of conscience, laboring both on our selves *and* our society! Radical gay activist John Stoltenberg puts it baldly: "The core of one's being must love justice more than manhood! Justice-building is acting not in one's self-interest but acting in the interest of one's OWN BEST SELF!"

There are three interlocking and mutually reinforcing zones of justice-building that we are centering on in the Network as evidenced in our purpose: anti-racist resistance, gay-straight bridging, and pro-feminist work. These are, by no means, our only prophetic charges as mature liberal religious men, but toiling in these vineyards will surely embolden us to confront other inequities.

Perhaps the major import of UUMeN will prove to be that men *as* men will no longer elect to simply meld, even hide out, amid the vast crowd of conscience-workers, but rather, through deliberately forming our own organization, we will face our male culpability and complicity in societal evils and to make the necessary sacrifices in our individual and institutional lives.

Confronting Racism

There is probably no more cantankerous sin for Unitarian Universalists to confess and combat, not as a three-year task force but as a lifetime effort, than our *liberal* denial of the intransigent racism that permeates Unitarian Universalist culture and results in paralyzing guilt or resignation rather than heartfelt repentance followed by change.

Racism is primarily a white responsibility, and we men must battle it in our souls as well as carry our burden in its institutional elimination. Lamentably, we Unitarian Universalists are often more enamored with maintaining a positive self-image or looking good to the outside world than dedicated to opposing the demon of racism itself. Yet being an agent of revolutionary justice transcends being cloyingly polite or politically correct. It means pursuing the path of prophetic compassion in a society that escalatingly undermines racial and gender affirmative action.

White folks are doing the best they can to keep tight-control of my home state of California, precisely when minorities are rising to power in numbers and the demand for equity. Where will we Unitarian Universalist brothers stand as matters heat up, as lines are drawn, and as the culture clash intensifies across the continent? What will we say and do when the forces of intolerance, bigotry, and exclusion grow more intractable in the outside world, and, subtler within our own religious walls? Will we stand tall for justice as members of the UUA, the UUWF and the UUMeN, or will we step down, back off, and sneak away to a more fashionable social cause?

Diminishing Homophobia

As a religious movement we have been pacesetters in the drive for the full dignity of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered folks, although evidenced by the letters printed in the Fall 1994 issue of the *World*, the dehumanizing monsters of heterosexism and homophobia are alive and well in our ranks.

Issues of erotic preference cause men to squirm, become defensive and rigid, often lash out belligerently. Conversely, when gay, straight, bisexual, and transgendered persons risk moving from closets to closeness, speaking our deepest truths, venturing beneath surfaces, beyond expectations, and beside prejudices, the results can be utterly transformative. But don't be lulled. We live in a culture that is both homophobic and philiaphobic. This double whammy renders male intimacy a rare accomplishment. So the task of growing affectional honesty, if not friendship, across sexual orientation lines, constitutes a revolutionary adventure.

Repelling Sexism

To be a pro-feminist man means simply to oppose male supremacy and female subordination in our culture and to labor steadfastly for gender fairness socially, politically, economically and religiously. It is critical that men play a relentless, supportive role in women's struggle for equality. The health and welfare of our mutual destinies are interwoven.

As a man I will never discover my full humanity merely by reclaiming my emotions, making peace with my father, or becoming more expressive with my brothers. Ultimately, the way to fully restore our lost masculinity and to heal the fractured earth is through working for a scope of revolutionary justice that will serve the disenfranchised of our globe: women and children; persons of color; sexual minorities; the physically and emotionally disabled; the homeless, the incarcerated, the marginalized.

I often hear my male comrades saying, "I don't have the energy or time to be political. I'm hurting too much myself." I offer two plain responses.

First, I care about the personal plight of my brothers and regularly invite them to join a men's support group. I understand, even applaud, the process of men revealing long-suppressed internal woes and agonies. Wounded animals are the most dangerous, and mature men must positively face our hurts on the road toward healing. But being wounded is only part of our story. Men are also *wounders*, and we must answer for that. We need to heed the unbearable pain and terror that women and children feel, living in a world in which one in four will be raped and one in six is the victim of child sexual abuse.

Second, since we're incorrigibly social animals, we men can ill-afford to smugly gaze at our navels without being public contributors as well. Mature masculinity requires that we heal both the body personal **and** the body politic!

Feminism reminds us that women's rights and concerns have not been satisfactorily addressed yet and that sexism has not been conquered even in our liberal Unitarian Universalist community. UUMeN encourages us to be pro-feminist supporters up close with the partners, mothers, daughters, and women who share our personal and professional lives, recognizing that gender justice that is practiced publicly but not privately is fraudulent.

Privilege, while granting men power, causes costly, irreparable damage to our bodies and souls. Consequently, it is the steadfast conviction of UUMeN that feminism lies in men's deeper interests. Working as allies with women to make the ideals of equality substantive is integral to the fullest expression of what it means to be men.

In summation, a "positive liberal religious masculinity" cries out for justice-building. Our Men's Network exhorts all males to do one more thing today for racial and gender, ecological and sexual orientation justice, and one more thing tomorrow than we accomplished today, all the way to the grave. As Thomas Sankara said during his Presidency of the West African country of Burkina Faso, "You can't make fundamental changes in society without the occasional mad act." Brothers, let us dare to engage in mad, revolutionary acts of justice.

Challenge some bit of gay-baiting or lesbian-bashing humor. Care for a child so an overworked mother can have a day that is her own. Be willing not only to assist women caught in harm's way but also to support women in times of their power and glory. Refuse to hold a men's retreat until you have included the presence of blue-collar men and men of color. Dare to be a true husbandman, prudently conserving the earth's resources, cultivating the soil, and exhibiting kinship toward plants and animals.

I confess to believing that racism, homophobia, sexism, and ecological travail will not be eradicated during my lifetime. I cannot hold to optimism, but neither am I a pessimist who cynically throws in the towel. As a Universalist Unitarian, I am rather an inveterate hoper, one who knows that on occasion our faulty revolutionary talk and walk may, as the Native Americans like to say, grow some corn.

However, remember that the justice-building of mature men must be balanced with joy-sharing. Justice-builders quickly turn into grim crusaders unless there is adequate time for foolery and drumming, chanting and gamboling. A joy, deeper than happiness and more enduring than pleasure, is central to any revolutionary program. Therefore, our Men's Network heartily agrees with socialist rebel Emma Goldman who liked to say: "I don't want to be a part of any revolution where there isn't dancing!" You've probably heard about the bishop who lamented: "Wherever Jesus went, there was a revolution; wherever I go, people serve tea!" Well, that's but a partial truth—for, in fact, Jesus was both a party-goer and a prophetic force. And while the Nazarene didn't attend tea parties, he did gravitate to wine feasts.

Even one of our premier work-horses for justice, Theodore Parker, noting the glaring absence of any exuberance among his mid-19th century Unitarian colleagues, was impelled to write: "*Most powerfully preaching to the conscience and the will, the cry was ever 'duty, duty! work, work!' They failed to address with equal power the spirit, and did not also shout 'joy, joy! delight, delight!' Their vessels were full of water, but they did not gush out, leaping from the great spring...*"

Indeed, our Network hankers for an abundance of laughers, singers, clowns, and dancers among its revolutionary company.

Closing Reflections

While the accomplishments of UUMeN will rarely match our aspirations, we contend that individuals **and** organizations are finally measured by the size of our hopes and the integrity of our principles more than by the tally of our achievements. Therefore, we march gradually forward—rolling back assumptions and prejudices while rolling in greater **approximations** of justice and joy.

There is a legend that tells of a contest between an elephant and a thrush. The elephant boasted that it could make itself heard the farthest and dared the thrush to accept the challenge. The thrush did. Then the elephant raised its trunk and sent forth a piercing blast. The thrush quietly sang its song. The judges went forth to find out how far each contestant had been heard.

On and on they went, until they found no one who had heard the elephant's trumpet, yet they could still hear "ever so softly" the song of the thrush. "How could the thrush's song carry farther than the elephant's cry?" asked the befuddled judges.

With gentle insistence the little bird explained "our thrush family has sentinels throughout the forest, and when one sings, another takes up the song and then another and another. So they pass it along until it is carried throughout the land."

Surely, if our song of justice is to resound joyfully throughout the far-flung reaches of our movement, even beyond our walls, then we're going to need men and women alike to enlist as sentinels in the grand and noble transmission of our revolutionary manifesto.

Tom Owen-Towle

Delivered at the Spokane General Assembly (June 17, 1995)

Tom Owen-Towle has served as a parish minister since 1967 and a leader in the men's movement since 1972. He is co-senior minister with his wife Carolyn of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego. Tom is a founder of UUMeN and a member of its Steering Council.



Response by Mark Belletini

I thank you Tom, and the UUMeN, for this opportunity to respond to this first of many Men's Lectures.

It came as a surprising request, however, since this is not the area of my expertise.

I have attended few men's groups of any type. I find myself wondering askance at reports of men drumming in the woods. Robert Bly does not ring my bell. And I've read little of the diverse literature on this subject now crowding bookstore shelves.

Like you, Tom, I am a parish minister, trying to serve the spiritual needs of a diverse community, men, women and children. I'm also a teacher, leading classes on worship or history or the gospels at our seminaries. I love these areas of study. These are my true joy, my most comfortable expertise. I must say, though, for the past 10 years, I have been serving and teaching more women than men.

Yet, when I think about it, perhaps my areas of expertise place me closer to the concerns of the Unitarian Universalist men's movement than I first imagined. Jesus, after all, was a *male* teacher. The names that rise up from our earlier history, i.e. Servet, Castellio, Sozzini, Biandrata, David, Coornhert, Reily, Lindsey, Priestley, Murray, the Ballous, the Channings, are resoundingly male. Yes, Katarina Weiglowa's witness moves me, and I quote with due praise the anticipatory wisdom of Judith Sargent Murray or Mary Wollstonecraft. I can lionize the Iowa Sisterhood, and rejoice in the great women now serving in our free churches.

But so much of our past history is the history of men that it is vain to pretend otherwise. And, I too am a man.

Perhaps then it is fair to build my response with the non-expert realities of my own life, the life whose fleeting present face you graciously asked to respond to your paper.

Take my wrestling with Jesus, for example. When I grew up, the church of my youth taught me the doctrine of Chalcedon. This teaching says that Jesus was somehow God *and* man at the same time, the Christ. When I was twelve I began thinking about this teaching. How could Jesus, I wondered, be a *man* if he could see the future, raise the widow's son to life, and walk on the waves of the sea? If I tried to see the future I saw a perfectly blank wall; If I said "rise" to my dead parakeet it stayed dead; and if I walked on the sea I had to use the Australian crawl like everyone else.

So long before I ever read Bultmann, Sanders or Crossan, I began to recognize that the gospels were probably adjusted a bit by pious people years after Jesus died. I did not know what it could mean to be God, because I was not one, but I had some idea of what it might mean to be a young man, to know finitude, lack of knowledge, limits, edges. If Jesus died on the cross, he could not have known he was going to survive death, otherwise this was not the death of a man but of a God, and thus his death could have nothing to say to me. He had to be a true mortal, and the resurrection is only a lovely symbol.

My life's reason led me to a human christology, i.e. Jesus was a man, period. He was not God in any sense of the word, and when he died, he stayed dead, his corpse lost in the lime pits surrounding Skull Hill like most other unfortunates crucified before him.

But I cherish the insight that my theological wrestling gave me: *To be a man is not to be a god*. It is to be mortal, to not know as much as I sometimes pretend or want to pretend. To use your word, Tom, it means humility.

Hubris is the chief mocker of authentic manhood.

I also remember the day when I was fourteen and my family was visiting Washington, D.C. My sister was wearing a pink pantsuit on the day we visited the Washington Monument. On the way down some steps I noted with some alarm that my sister's pants were soaked with blood. My sister, though she had no idea, has just discharged her first menstrual flow. My parents ushered her quickly away from the crowds, and as the phrase goes, "took care of things." Later my mother explained to my brother and I what happened. That was the day "the obvious" struck me with force. My sister, *as a female*, was subject to a clear rhythm I did not know as a male, a rhythmic reminder of her capacity to bear life.

And that was the day I began to resist any attempt, however humanistic and noble in grounding, to talk as if some abstraction called "human nature" existed in *all* human beings. As a man, I really can have no first-hand experience of what it is like to be a woman, or better, any woman in particular, and so it is not exemplary honesty to speak as if I know. Nor must I imagine that all women are alike. I'm not sure that I can find any meanings for the words "masculine" or "feminine" that do not arouse my suspicion, I find that I must root these words in the stories of particular human beings of particular genders. Tom, my *yes* to your invitation to repel sexism is rooted in this story and my life-long reflection on it.

When I first learned that other families on my block did *not* eat polenta and *bacala* for supper, I realized that *culture* was an important idea too, and that no talk of what it means to be a man (or a woman) can have any meaning abstracted from that particularity. I am a male, but my last name reveals to most people that I am likely a male of Italian descent. Yet none of the common caricatures of what it means to be "a *typical* Italian male" are welcome to me, since there is no such things as a "typical" Italian male. With men like Danilo Dolci, Fellini, Pasolini, Eugenio Montale, Berlinguer, Quasimodo, Basani, Silone, and Umberto Eco in the mix, (and all of these men have influenced me) does anyone think they can predict my opinions and ways? Furthermore, I am not just an Italian-American male, I am an Emilian-American...my grandparents were Emiliani, from villages in the Appenine mountains above Modena and Bologna. Although I'm sure there are different personality types in Emilia as anywhere else, I must recognize that I glean some of the ways I see myself as a man from wide Emilian fields, not just from amber waves of grain.

Just two weeks ago I heard a woman named Devborah speak at a reading of African American poets. "With Mr. Thomas in the Supreme Court," she said, "we must realize that racism no longer protests against skin color, but ways of relating to the world, culture itself. Judge Thomas is there because he displays a *cultural pattern*, a manner of living that is accepted among the powerful. No dark skinned man, however extraordinary, will ever serve on such a court if his way of life, his culture, is found 'different' and thus 'threatening' by the powers that be. Systemic racism is about culture, the grand old idea of the melting pot turned upside-down and grown perverse." I agree with the poet. I'm not interested in being blended in a pot, or lumped in a group, or buried under *presumed* universals. My life has so far taught me that my concern as a man cannot lie with slogans or abstractions, or worse, universals, of which there are few indeed, but with details and particularities. In short, I do not focus on mankind, but on the lives of individual men in their setting. This is very hard discipline, and a profoundly spiritual one. Letting go of abstract philosophies is inconvenient, but then I suppose many things worthy of the word spiritual are just that, inconvenient. It is in letting go of abstractions, Tom, that I begin to say *yes* to your invitation to fight the sin of racism.

I am also a gay man. I have made love with members of my own gender. And yes, I have watched many brothers close their eyes around the exact same death that Jesus saw coming. For me to call myself "a man" who is also gay means to say that I am a male human being who is learning to live

with forthrightness, grief, rage, pleasure and love all mixed up together; forthrightness, in that *I will not lie* about my erotic center; grief, in that I, *like many others, gay or not*, must endure unendurable losses; rage, in that I must live in a world of televised male clerics and congressmen in their nifty three-piece suits daily tossing off haughty opinions about my "lifestyle," the word they use to dismiss my one, dear life; pleasure, in choosing to befriend and yes, make love across class and cultural boundaries; and love itself, the necessary ground of my sense of the holy. When I wake up in the morning and see my own gay face in the mirror, I begin to say no to homophobia once again, it is not a theory to me, but my life-blood, my breath.

Thus, my life teaches me that the most manly words in our ample language are: morality, particularity, culture, humility, honesty, pleasure, rage, grief, listening, disclosure and love.

Tom, in sum, I offer you these distillations from my life as a man; I am concerned about *men's stories* first, men's lives disclosed, opened up, their text laid bare. Philosophical interpretation is *always* second for me. Thus I am thankful for your Zen warning: "hasten slowly," and the great care you took in your Manifesto to steer a path between the breast-beaters and chest-thumpers. I'm not sure I'd applaud you if the UUMeN thought of itself as a liberal version of the disturbing Promise Keepers, with religious liberal truisms in the place of Evangelical certainties.

Tom, your manifesto has sketched a most valuable map that not only outlines a structure and a purpose, but which can lead many men to greater spiritual depth as Unitarian Universalists. Thank you.

Mark Belletini is currently senior minister of our Columbus, Ohio, church. Mark also chaired the Hymnbook Commission that created Singing the Living Tradition.

Response by Ron Mazur

Some Priorities for UUMeN

It is a privilege to respond to Tom's prophetic and compassionate inaugural UUMeN's annual lecture. At the outset, however, I acknowledge that my reflections in no way represent the leadership or membership of UUMeN. I beg your indulgence to speak from my convictions and passions with personal responsibility for what I share. I confess to excitement as we begin this promising adventure of public dialogue and education of each other; it is in that spirit that I proceed.

My 23 years dealing with men's issues; 18 years of University teaching in human sexuality and men's sexual health; and nine years managing an electronic men's network on Delphi Internet called "MensNet" (which, with over 40,000 online members, is the largest men's support group in the world): These experiences inform my commentary.

Menswork

This, in my opinion, is the guts of the Men's Movement. My definition of **menswork** is men teaching and supporting men to free ourselves from the diseases and oppressions of male supremacy. As I apply this conceptual framework to Tom's address, four topics command my attention and concern: individual and group identities; social justice priorities; pro-feminist alliances; and what I call "the ultimate male power."

Individual and Group Identities

I rejoice in Tom's assertion that "the last thing we need...is horizontal contentiousness, men chewing on men....(W)e refuse...to scorn or humiliate men qua men." With his continued spiritual guidance, I am confident that UUMeN will avoid those pitfalls. Nevertheless, I do have some concern that "white, heterosexual men" can be set up for a bad rap. This is a phenomenon that I call the "WH-HETMEN" scapegoat. If I were a white heterosexual male (1), I would feel some degree of resentment—if not some anger—at the implication that I am the singular source of relational and earthly destruction! That is, oddly, biblical literalism—the legacy of poor, inept Adam, who couldn't handle creation's first group relationship. I believe that ALL men, of whatever skin color or sexual orientation, face the transformational challenges so brilliantly described by Tom. And we all need each other for this to transpire. As UUMeN grows in numbers, I can foresee the creation of caucuses or special interest groups, e.g., African-American UUMeN, Latino UUMeN, Native American UUMeN, Gay-Bisexual UUMeN—maybe even White Heterosexual UUMeN—but it is my fervent hope that we, with our sister-allies, will be one, unfragmented, dynamic, and loving organization. This will not be easy to accomplish, but Tom has wisely made no promises that our work together will be easy. While all of us need to face the painful truth about our social justice sins of commission and omission, the litany of white heterosexual male mea culpas cannot go on indefinitely. For our spiritual and emotional health, we ought not to wallow in scrupulosity; rather, we ought to grow and move on toward forgiveness, reconciliation, and social change.

Social Justice Priorities

UUMeN is an infant organization, and its developmental future is unclear. Nevertheless, the doing of social justice is a central UUMeN commitment, eloquently stated by Tom. My major concern in this area is that I feel Tom overstates the case for the primacy of anti-racism in our menswork, especially in his dare to men not to "sneak off to a more fashionable social cause." There is a danger here of pressuring us into an orthodox or rigid approach to the work of anti-racism—which I prefer to describe, by the way, as pro-racial equality. I find it more inspiring and energizing to be FOR something than AGAINST something. In any case, I agree with Professor Bill Jones that, in our time, "oppression is the geopolitical megatrend." Wherever men and women struggle for freedom from any oppression, they contribute to racial equality, and I honor them in my heart, if not with my help, whatever the name of their social cause.

If we affirm the interconnected web of all existence, it behooves us to understand critically the interconnected web of all oppressions!

As we creatively and energetically pursue anti-racism education, training, and social action within our UU culture, it is imperative, in my opinion, to step out of paradigm boxes to act for liberation from related oppressions which foster the conditions of racism. No one should be intimidated or shamed that they are sneaking off "to more fashionable social causes." I can assume that this is not Tom's intention, but I would like to prevent this kind of misinterpretation. All of us have our own list and record of social justice priorities. My top four are: sexual ignorance and oppression; the crises in national and global public health; American political oligarchy; and global economic exploitation of workers and the planet.

Time does not permit an exposition of those four social justice issues, but I simply urge all men to contribute generously to the UUA project for producing a new, comprehensive life-cycle program on human sexuality. As one of the core members of the curriculum team that developed the original "About Your Sexuality" multimedia program, I know how costly and time-consuming such a project

can be. Yet, as unfortunate as it is that a special fund-raising effort must be made to accomplish the new sexuality curriculum, I plead for UUMeN take an active role in addressing this need. I especially commend Cornel West for his courageous facing of the sex issue in RACE MATTERS (2), and I firmly believe that unless we, in Tom's words, "dare to be mad," we will continue to propagate myriad forms of violence caused by sexual ignorance and oppression. Society at large, including UU culture, just doesn't get it: human sexuality, sex ethics, and gender freedom and equality require a radical reframing of intimate relationships, family structures, and social mores.

Pro-Feminist Alliances

There are feminists and there are feminists, some groups of which are in vigorous disagreement with each other. I would like to qualify Tom's assertion that "feminism is in men's deeper interests," for I can imagine some conflicting positions on some social issues such as the regulation of pornography and the changes in family law related to divorce, alimony, and child custody. There is still a very strained area of conflicting interests in this awkward transitional time in intergender relations.

UUMeN will quickly wither away if it does not pay serious attention to hurting, often angry, men. It is ironic that we have been sensitized to take seriously the victimization of women while, ideologically, we distrust male claims of victimization. The magnificent services of healing conducted by such UUMeN's groups as the Seattle and San Diego chapters are good examples of dealing with the pain of men and women-friends. I anticipate some very exciting and transformative collaborative programs in the future between UUMeN, the UUWF, and other women's groups. Nonetheless, at the risk of occasional tension between some feminists and UUMeN, it is my conviction that UUMeN must be helpful in a variety of ways to enraged males who feel unfairly treated or falsely accused by women. Enraged men are more susceptible to violence and self-destructive behaviors, and UUMeN must have a mission and services for these brothers without fear of being labeled reactionary by some feminists.

The Ultimate Male Power

The ultimate male power is the self-empowerment of saying NO to violence. This transformative power is, however, subversive of political power, and it is feared and must be controlled by the rulers of all nations. Why do you think that the media of this country portray the men's movement as just drum-bangers in the woods and wimpy crybabies rolling in the mud? They don't want us to know about each other and they don't want to assist us in finding each other. Why do you think that the reactionary power elite so vehemently oppose abortion, sexuality education, sensitivity training, and the social change agenda of the men's movement? They need a ready supply of cannon fodder—men who can quickly be transformed into terrorists and mass murderers for the expediency of military solutions to political problems as well as to protect and propagate the entrenched global power of the military-industrial complex. In the contrived and maintained culture of sick masculinity, it is incredibly easy to dehumanize the enemy and glorify the home warriors.

The most amazing men's movement in American history was a watershed in male moral evolution. Although not recognized as such at the time, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War—and all those men who proclaimed at the outset, "Hell no, we won't go!"—put the most powerful nation on earth on the alert: Cannon fodder will not come cheap any more.

Is it possible to grow a global movement of brothers of all faiths and colors to covenant never to take up offensive arms against each other? The answer of my heart and my head is YES, YES, YES! I conclude with three brief stories to illustrate the evolving self-empowerment of men to end violence against each other, and against women, children, and the planet.

The NBA Championship Series

If any of you watched the basketball playoffs this year, you may have noticed some very unusual public service announcements. I do not know who developed them, but they were brilliant and powerful. They depicted young African-Americans in confrontive, potentially violent situations with other young African-Americans. As the endangered person began to clench his fist, a voiceover from an NBA superstar would say something like, "... and one of the hardest decisions of my life was to walk away." The fist would unclench, and the young man would avoid violence by just shrugging and walking away. This is a powerful message to young black men who are murdering each other in horrendous numbers. This is men teaching men a better way.

Ataa Adjiri, Ghanian Woodcarver, Artist and Intellectual

Although he currently has his studio in Seattle, Washington, Ataa Adjiri, now forty-something, spent the first half of his life in his home country of Ghana. Under the mentorship of his grandfather, the boy learned the art of woodcarving. When, with his grandfather, he went to the forest to select a tree for his use, he ritualistically explained to the tree the purpose for which it was being cut down, and he asked the tree for forgiveness. His magnificent carvings, whether in native soapstone or mahogany, reflect his deep spirituality and his commitment to world peace. When I was compelled to enter his studio by a work I saw in a window, he explained to me the meaning of the three entwined moveable men carved from one piece of mahogany. "It has a special place in our culture," he said, "because it represents the unity of the family." Ataa went on to explain several aspects of Ghanian culture, and he shared how he had first missed the nurturance of the men of his village.

It was with great excitement that I shared with him the emotional power that his "Unity of the Family" piece had for me. It symbolized, I said, the enduring and essential unity of all men everywhere—our global brotherhood. And I explained to him that I was on my way to Spokane to be with a gathering of UUMeN, and that I wanted to purchase his piece so that I could share it with UUMeN. I also revealed to him my vision of a universal peace brotherhood. He, too, was very moved, and he said to me, "Only men can teach other men, and even if it takes one man at a time sharing the dream with one other, we can do it; we can create a new world of peace." Inside, my heart was bursting with joy, and, as we embraced, I knew I had found a spiritual brother.

If you are ever in Pioneer Square, Seattle, visit Ataa Adjiri at 214 1st Ave., So. (98104); phone (206) 464-4089.

All Quiet on the Western Front

Perhaps you have read the World War I novel by Erich Maria Remarque (German, 1928; English, 1929) or have seen the movie versions. In any case, I remember one scene as follows. A young German soldier jumps into a shell hole to hide from the fierce explosions around him. Suddenly, for the same reason, a French soldier jumps into the same crater. The German soldier plunges his bayonet into the Frenchman, and then endures the long death throes of his enemy. Out of curiosity, the German reaches into the dying man's pocket and discovers an unfinished love letter to his wife, along with the identity of the man as a baker—a baker with a family, whose blood is now soaking the shell hole. The German holds the now dead Frenchman and says, "If it were not for my rifle and your grenade, we could be brothers. But they don't want us to know that, do they?"