

## For Further Exploration

## Books

- *How To Be Black*, by Baratunde Thurston
- *Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the Story of Race*, by Debby Irving
- *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, by Susan Cain
- *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*, by Parker Palmer

## Movies

- *Moonlight* (R), 2016
- *Inside Out* (PG), 2015
- *Dear White People* (R), 2014
- *A Borrowed Identity* (NR), 2014

## Articles, Videos &amp; Podcasts

- Check out the 'How You See Me' series on YouTube (highlights a variety of identities)
- 'Lost Voices' — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpPASWInZIA>
- Angry Black Woman with Porsha O. — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSolTsaSsOM> (contains language)

## Children's Books

- *Unitarian Universalism is a Really Long Name*, by Jennifer Dant (available in Norelma Walker Youth Library)
- *I Like Myself*, by Karen Beaumont
- *Let's Talk about Race*, by Julius Lester
- *The Breadwinner* trilogy, by Deborah Ellis
- *One Crazy Summer*, by Rita Williams Garcia

# February Theme

## Identity: The Practice of Essence

February 2017

Who am I? My answer: I am everyone whose being-in-the-world affected or was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I've gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter; each 'I', every one of the now-six-hundred-million-plus of us, contains a similar multitude. I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow the world.

~ **Salman Rushdie**

One of the major shifts in human understanding has been a move away from seeing ourselves as solitary, independent agents in charge of our destiny toward a more complex awareness that who we are is a direct function of who we are with. We are relational creatures. Everything about us is shaped by our connections (or disconnections).

~ **Rev. Kenn Hurto**

The earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons [and daughters] of the earth. If [we] spit upon the ground, [we] spit upon [our]selves. This we know. The earth does not belong to [us]; [we] belong to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. ~ **Chief Seattle**

There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self. ~ **Ernest Hemingway**

We are lonesome animals. We spend all our life trying to be less lonesome. ~ **John Steinbeck**

Self-deception remains the most difficult deception. ~ **Joan Didion**

If you will think of yourself as coming out of the earth, rather than having been thrown in here from somewhere else, you see that we are the earth, we are the consciousness of the earth. These are the eyes of the earth. And this is the voice of the earth. ~ **Joseph Campbell**

I am a frayed and nibbled survivor in a fallen world, and I am getting along. I am aging and eaten and have done my share of eating too. I am not washed and beautiful, in control of a shining world in which everything fits, but instead am wandering awed about on a splintered wreck I've come to care for, whose gnawed trees breathe a delicate air, whose bloodied and scarred creatures are my dearest companions, and whose beauty bats and shines not in its imperfections but overwhelmingly in spite of them.

~ **Annie Dillard**



I wish to be misunderstood; that is, to be understood from your perspective.

~ **Bill Knott**

To rise through hard earth, be plant desiring sunlight, believing in water.  
To enter fire, be dry.  
To enter life, be food.

~ **Linda Hogan**

When people try to tell you who you are, don't believe them. ~ **Maria Popova**

When people show you who they are, believe them; the first time. ~ **Maya Angelou**

The nitrogen in our DNA, the calcium in our teeth, the iron in our blood, the carbon in our apple pies were made in the interiors of collapsing stars. We are made of stardust. ~ **Carl Sagan**

## What Does It Mean To Be A Community of Identity?



*Afraid that our inner light will be extinguished or our inner darkness exposed, we hide our true identities from each other. In the process, we become separated from our own souls. We end up living divided lives, so far removed from the truth we hold within that we cannot know the “integrity that comes from being what you are.” ~Parker Palmer*

*Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes. ~Walt Whitman*

It’s one thing for a religion to offer you an identity; it’s quite another for a religion to celebrate your identity. At our best, we Unitarian Universalists seek both.

Our entire monthly worship theme program is about UU identity. Each month, we lift up a unique value or human quality that our faith calls us to live and lean into. Together, our themes tell us who UUs uniquely are. But that’s only half of the equation. In addition to “UU identity,” there’s also “your identity.” And our faith communities are just as committed to that.

In a sense, every UU congregation hangs two signs on their front doors:

One that reads “**Hidden Parts Allowed in the Open!**”  
And another that says “**Contradictions Welcome!**”

We agree with Parker Palmer that our society has separated us from our souls. Indeed, the only relevant religions today are the ones that take this seriously. Hell certainly exists; it’s the state of having to hide ourselves. And we also cheer on Walt Whitman’s celebration of messiness and contradiction. We don’t just want people to be honest about their contradictions; we want them to see those contradictions as great gifts! Bottom line: we want our congregations to be places where you don’t have to pretend.

And it’s not just the pressure to pretend that breaks our hearts. Our faith also worries about the way our culture urges us to live small. As social critic, Courtney Martin points out, “It’s never been more asked of us to show up as only slices of ourselves.” The risk of this, of course, is that if we live too long only in our “slices,” they become all that we are. There is no greater spiritual warning than one Kurt Vonnegut lifted up: “We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.” Friends, this identity work isn’t a game or merely a pastime. It’s unquestionably life and death stuff.

And here’s the kicker: our faith wants you to stop hiding and live fully, not just for *your* sake, but for *our* sake as well. We are all struggling to escape our slices and connect to our hidden wholeness. Seeing you be real gives us permission to be let our true self out of the dark! Your brave honesty about your contradictions, allows us to proudly strut around in our multitudes! We save each other by being true to ourselves.

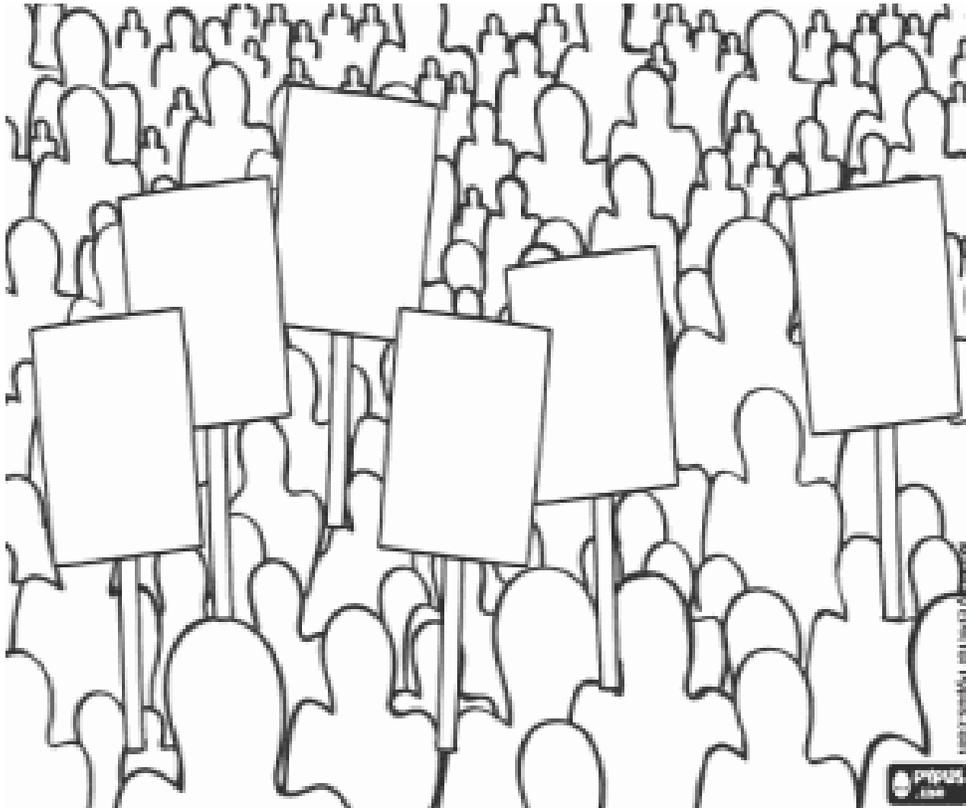
So this month, maybe those signs need hung on your own personal doors. Hidden Parts Allowed Out in the Open! Contradictions Welcome! No More Pretending! For all of our sakes.

~ *From the Soul Matters Sharing Circle. Author not cited.*

Hidden parts  
allowed out in  
the open!  
Contractions  
welcome!

## Kids' Corner

'Have you been to any protests or rallies lately? There have been a lot! Color in this picture and add some things that you would write on a sign.



### The Artist Who Helped You Find You

*Artists are always in the vanguard of social change ... The music proclaimed our identity; it made every statement we truly wanted to make.* ~ Dizzy Gillespie

Art and artists help us find our way. They provide mirrors and containers for our identity. Seeing their work, we see ourselves. Hearing and reading their work, we remember who we are. So hunt down and share with a friend or family member one of the books, songs, paintings, photos, or movies that has helped you find (and hold onto) yourself. Brainstorm here what some of those things might be.



## Personal Reflection

*Don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Pick the one question that "hooks" you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal of these questions is not to help you analyze what story means in the abstract, but to figure out what a deeper awareness of story means for your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?*



**Which of your contradictions needs to be celebrated as a wonderful multitude?!** [*"Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes."* ~Walt Whitman]

**Is it time to pick a new group to tell you who you are?** ["Who we are is a direct function of who we are with. We are relational creatures." - Rev. Kenn Hurto]

**Has your struggle become your identity?** ["Don't let your struggle become your identity." ~Unknown]

**Is your identity longing for more alone time?** ["Privacy is crucial to the sense of self." - Oliver Stone]

**Have you thanked your wounds for making you you?**

**Are you living only a slice of yourself?** ["It's never been more asked of us to show up as only slices of ourselves in different places." ~Courtney Martin]

**Are you not listening when people tell you who they are?** (<http://www.oprah.com/oprahs-life/class/when-people-show-you-who-they-are-believe-them-video>)

**What are you besides your work?** (<http://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/who-are-you-this-breathtaking-video-might-change-your-life/#.vongl35h-3i.facebook> )

**Are your Valentine's Day plans about more than filling a loved one's stomach with good food?** Did you remember to make sure they also celebrate the part of their identity you love the most?

**What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

*All contents adapted from the Soul Matters Sharing Circle resource materials for February 2017.*

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## Justice Corner

### Standing on the Side of Love — 30 Days of Love

<https://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/ourstories/30-days-of-love-2017-update>

At Standing on the Side of Love, we believe we are entering a time where we need every ounce of spiritual muscle that we can muster (or find) to do the work ahead of us. We led Standing on the Side of Love in 2016 in a way that centered deep partnerships, developing leaders so they flourish, trust building, widening the circle, and sharing the wisdom we find in community organizing with the world. **We use the theme of fortification because it centers the spiritual work at hand: not by any of us alone will it be borne, and it will need deep collaboration and support to thrive and grow now.** The work will require us working deeply with one another: practicing what we preach, showing that the courage to face the time ahead can be as close the next pew over, or down the street if we are willing to do the face-to-face work.

Check out the resources available here. Print out their postcards and send them to your friends who are doing social justice work for spiritual rejuvenation. If we burn out, we won't be any good to the movements we're supporting.



FAITH  
IN ACTION