

# Classroom News

April 2021

## Upcoming Events

- April 18th - All Ages Earth Day Service: In Praise Of Dirt
- April 25th - Beacon's AGM following the service
- May 14th - 16th CUC Conference - registration is live

## Reminders

- CYRE programs will remain remote/virtual for the remainder of this church year. For more information on how to get involved email Ashley at [dre@beaconunitarian.org](mailto:dre@beaconunitarian.org) or check out the programs tab on the Beacon website

## What's Ahead

By: Ashley Cole

Hello everyone,

I hope you are looking forward to the all ages services on April 18th as much as I am. Hope to see you all there with your dirt/plant/compost in hand!

The theme for April is the newly suggested 8th principle that states "*We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.*" There is not yet a confirmed children's version of this principle but a couple I've seen include, "*We must work together for diversity and against racism & oppression.*" Another one reads, "*Build the Beloved Community, free of racism and oppression.*" As you learn more about the 8th principle, consider how you might interpret these words yourself.

For more information on the 8th Principle:

- Check out the 8th Principle website [here](#)
- Read Rev. Meg's article in the April edition of the Beacon Newsletter (Available on Beacon's website)
- You can also download the April Soul Matters Packet from the Beacon website, which includes resources for families.

Warm regards,  
Ashley Cole  
Director, Religious Exploration

## April Theme - 8th Principle

We must work together for diversity and against racism & oppression

### Head

With your family, read the story of Marley Dias (attached). Once finished, discuss with your family the question Marley's mom asks her in the story, which prompted Marley to action, *what can we do about it?* If you had to ask yourself, "what can we do about it", regarding the 8th principle, what might some of your answers be?

### Heart

Colour in the attached 8th Principle colouring sheet (designed by Kimberlee Carson and shared with permission) and reflect on what types of journey's you have been on in the past. What might a journey towards diversity look like for you?

If you practice lighting a chalice, use these words with your family:

*We are the ones we have been waiting for.\**

*We are not perfect, but we are perfectly fitted for this day.*

*We are the ones we have been waiting for.*

*May we be bold and courageous to chart that new future*

*May we have faith in a future that is not known*

*We are the ones we have been waiting for.*

\*the words of June Jordan in "Poem for South African Women," which she presented at the U.N. on August 9, 1978

### Hands

Join the all ages Earth Day Service April 18th to celebrate the communities around the world who care for the Earth and share in small groups how we individually connect with the dirt/Earth around us.

Help out during a Sunday morning service! No need to stay for the entire service. Is there a poem or quote you would like to read for opening words or a reflection you would like to share, we would love folks of all ages to add their voices to Beacon services. If you are interested contact me at [dre@beaconunitarian.org](mailto:dre@beaconunitarian.org).



## The Story of Marley Dias

*Adapted by Ashley Cole from Carolyn Barschow's TFAA script*

Watch the NJTV YouTube interview with Marley here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NupFFMPBUOE>

What does it mean to feel proud?

Marley Dias (Die-es) lives in the town of West Orange, New Jersey. She goes to the public elementary school and she's in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Marley is proud of who she is. She is proud to be a part of her family, proud to be a good student and proud to be a black girl. She learned how to be proud of who she was from her parents and her teachers, her friends and her family.

Things were going along fine in school until the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Marley started feeling tired and unhappy about school. The reason Marley was tired was because a part of who she was so proud to be was becoming invisible in school – the black girl part. Even though she had lots of classmates with skin that looked like hers, something was different in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

Marley thought about it and figured out what it was. In the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 4<sup>th</sup> grade, for book reports and reading assignments, Marley could read any book she chose. Her mom helped her find great books about characters that looked like her – black girls. She read picture books about black girls including *Amazing Grace* and *The Other Side*. She read chapter books about black girls like the Nikki and Deja series, and historical books about black girls and women who lived during the time of slavery, stories about bravery and courage. The stories she chose were all very different, but they showed characters that reminded Marley of herself.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the reading assignments changed. Marley was only allowed to do her assignments from a list of books the teacher gave the class. All the books were about white boys. Marley talked to her mom about this and her mom encouraged her to take action. Her mom asked Marley, "What are you going to do about it?" Marley thought about it and decided to start a social media campaign requesting donations of books that featured black girls as the main characters.

At first, she had 1000, then 2000 books donated. Word kept spreading and, with her mom's help, she has now collected over 8000 books, all with black girls as the main character. Because there are so many, Marley donated books to six different schools, including her own elementary school in West Orange, New Jersey. The project continues today and Marley has written a book, published by Scholastic teaching kids how to take action like she did.

Marley says, "The main goal really is not just to be about black girls, it's really about inclusion of different races and different genders for kids to be able to read and for school boards to give to the teachers to teach," she said.

### Questions for Further Discussion

Can you think of some reasons why someone might not feel so good about school?

Do you think it was fair that Marley didn't have any choices of books with characters that looked like her?

Does it help you learn when you get to see and hear stories about people that look like you? Act like you? Does it help you learn when a story tells you about people who are different? Can you learn new things that way?

Why do you think the teachers in the school didn't notice that problem until Marley pointed it out?

In the story Marley's mom asks her "what can we do about it?" which prompted Marley to action. If you had to ask yourself, "what can we do about it" what might some of your answers be?

### Further Learning

1000 Black Girl Books Guide:

<https://grassrootscommunityfoundation.org/1000-black-girl-books-resource-guide/>

Marley Dias Gets It Done (And so Can You!) Book

<http://www.scholastic.ca/books/view/marley-dias-gets-it-done-and-so-can-you>

Vancouver Public Library *Stand Up! Racial Identity, Racism and Resistance* Resources

<https://vpl.overdrive.com/library/kids/collection/1085869>

