

## Morning Plenary

Intersectionality: Challenge and Invitation      Powerpoint to be made available

Ruth S. Idakula of Nigeria and New Orleans, in partnership with Rev. Deanna Vandiver of New Orleans and Westside UU Seattle, presented an educational and inspiring session. Citing Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw's research at the University of Chicago that identified the marginalizing of persons at the intersection of race and sex, they made clear how oppression often comes from multiple as opposed to singular situational factors.

Intersectionality is a framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by a number of discriminations and disadvantages. It takes into account people's overlapping identities and experiences in order to understand the complexity of prejudices they face.

We learned of the "Oppression Equation: Prejudice + Systemic Power = \_isms;" understanding that systemic power, e.g., race prejudice leads to the racism system of oppression. (The systemic racism of institutions led to chaos following the flooding in New Orleans. Following the Katrina hurricane, blacks and whites experienced markedly different experiences.) Racism was identified as a special classification of human beings created by colonizing Europeans (white) placing themselves at the apex of human worth, value and achievement, for the purpose of maintaining privilege and power.

Relationships claim the most intimate and ultimate crux for organizationally addressing this systemic dilemma. Using the power of naming the situations as well as interactively exploring by asking and offering help allows a power interchange within one's community. The challenge is oppression....the invitation is collective liberation. Relationship building remains the constant.

Nancy Curtiss