



Mary White
Ovington

WE MAKE THE WORLD BETTER FOR
EVERYONE.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ALPHABET
Please read the Overview before using this Plan.

O O Letter O introduces Mary White Ovington and the need for people of differing racial and economic backgrounds to work together for opportunities for everyone.

MATERIALS: Construction paper with hole punched in top, yarn for necklace
Snacks—Oranges, orange juice, olives, oatmeal cookies, Oreo-type cookies (used under Affirmation)

GETTING STARTED:

Welcome. After each person says his or her name, the group responds, “Welcome, (name).” For a child who is attending for the first time this year, add name to the letters that have been posted, to the attendance sheet, and make a nametag during or after the session. Leave an empty chair for someone who is not present or for someone who has not joined the group yet.

The Letter of the Day:

- Talk about the Letter.
- Give the Letter necklace to a person with that initial.
- Talk about the things that the children have brought for the Letter, and/or Letter grab bag.

SPECIAL PERSON: Mary White Ovington
(Apr. 11, 1865-July 15, 1951)

Sometimes people are paid different amounts for the same work, or cannot even get a specific job, because of the color of their skin. (If you have used the session on Lewis McGee, remember that it was many years before he could be a Unitarian minister with a white congregation.) But there are also people who work hard so that everyone gets equal pay for the jobs that they do!

One woman who did this was Mary White Ovington. She worked to get better housing for people who worked in factories. She realized that the living and working conditions were worse for the Negroes (called African Americans, or blacks), or people with darker

skin, than for people with white or lighter skin. She started working in a housing development where all of the people who lived there had dark skin. She started to study their problems in getting good jobs and good housing. She felt that to make things better, people needed to work together. Mary White Ovington started working in Brooklyn, New York, for change, and she published books on the status of Negroes (blacks) in New York. She was one of only a few white people to become a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She wrote books about breaking down the barriers or walls that kept people from having things as white people because of skin color. She also wrote children's books.

Mary was raised in a Unitarian Church (Brooklyn Heights, New York). Her grandmother and mother had been raised Unitarians and heard people in their churches speak out against slavery, or people owning other people. As she grew up, the laws changed so that Negroes were free, but she was concerned that they did not have the same opportunity for education, good places to live and jobs. They also had to have the motivation, or reason, for wanting better conditions. She knew that all people had to work together for change.

One of her books was published in 1996, more than sixty years after she had written articles for a magazine in Baltimore, Maryland. These articles had been stored on microfilm, a way of storing information that takes less room than stacks of paper. Her writings are still important.¹

AFFIRMATION: *We make the world better for everyone.*

Oreo Cookies: Look at the cookies. There are the black outer parts and the inner white part. If either were missing, would the cookie be an "Oreo?" Black people, or Negroes, or African Americans could not make the changes by

themselves; the white people could not make the changes for them. Both have to work together.

THE LETTER **O** IN THE CHURCH

Organ. If there is an organ in the church, have the children heard the organ play? Have pictures of different kinds of organs, or have someone talk about the organ. The organ has been an instrument in churches for generations. Play some organ music. (Children could draw to the music.)

A-B-C

Animals: Owl, oyster, otter, osprey, opossum, otter, ox

Octopus: Make from yarn. Wind yarn around cardboard twice as long as you want the legs to be, at least 12 complete winds for thickness. Remove from the cardboard. Fold the lengths in half. Tie a piece of yarn around the bent end to get the head, about an inch from the top of the bend. Cut the lengths, so that there are 24 loose strands of yarn. Tie 3 strands together with tie at bottom to create legs, or braids and tie. Repeat for all 8 legs. Eyes can be made from buttons sewn on or from small pieces of paper glued on.

Body:

Calendar: October

- Note the date of the session and any special events for the day, including birthdays.
- Note items beginning with that letter
- Note events between today and the next session

CLOSING: Gather around the Special Place where the things related to the letter have been placed. "We give thanks for the Letter O. We have shared and learned about special people and animals and ourselves and our church. May we leave in love and peace. Next week we will meet again. Our letter will be ____ and our leader(s) will be _____." Make sure that people take home things that need to go.

Black and White Sat Down Together: The Reminiscences of a NAACP Founder, Mary White Ovington, New York: The Feminist Press, 1996, based on articles in 1932-1933 in the *Baltimore Afro-American*.

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