

UUSJ Newsletter - Spring 2012

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

An affiliate of the Chicago Area Unitarian Universalist Council

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Chair's Corner:

Why do we do it?

It must be time for Spring Cleaning. I just got a message about our city's annual Spring Cleanup schedule, a definite sign that it's time to come out of hibernation, clear the detritus, and move into action. Oddly enough, thinking about spring cleaning reminded me of the UUSJ February meeting, our first meeting of the year.

At the beginning of the meeting, each of us talked about what got us started down the path of Social Justice. As each person told the story of his or her journey in the work, I realized that we were answering more than "How did you get started?" Our stories also answered the question "Why?" What's important to us about this work? Why do we make time in busy lives and dig so deep for the energy needed to plan, collaborate, organize, and act—over and over again? Why do we persist when it often feels like the rest of the world doesn't even understand the importance of what we're fighting for let alone join us in the challenge?

We each had our own reasons: "I show up because I want to be counted!" "The fight itself is important; it's not always about results or success." "When you really see the right thing to do, it's hard to not do it!" Someone—I think it was Jean Darling—gave us this analogy: *social service* work is like cleaning the kitchen. You know when it's done, you

can see the difference, and it feels good. *Social Justice* is more like clearing the clutter, organizing all the stuff, and buying the most nourishing food. Which brings me back to spring cleaning.

So how about you? Why do you take on this work? Perhaps because it can be so deeply satisfying. You've chosen to truly see the injustice that is right in front of you and not look away. That refusal to numb the discomfort is the opposite of hopelessness. It's saying "Yes" to your own core, to the values that you know bring you fully to life.

Resource: Inspired Faith, Effective Action

The Washington office for Advocacy and the Congregational Advocacy and Witness team have published, in PDF form, the workbook for their workshop, *Inspired Faith, Effective Action: A Social Justice Workbook for Unitarian Universalist Congregations*. It's a marvelously complete resource for starting almost any kind of Social Justice project or group.

Each section of the workbook takes you through a thinking process that will help make every phase of a project more successful. The sections: Religious Grounding; Congregation, Community and Acting with Accountability; Strategic Planning and Implementation; Skills and Tactics; Successful Social Action; and UUA Resources.

The guide was published in 2009 and is a great resource whether for a single person wanting to learn more about Social Justice or for a group of people who truly want to make a difference.

Get it here:

<http://uua.org/documents/washingtonoffice/ifea.pdf>

Enjoy this spring. It's time to come alive.

Anne Ward, Chair

anne@creativecore.com or 847-854-1111

Report of the Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness

The task force voted to support Occupy Chicago's *Chicago Spring* activities on April 7. These include morning activities in the neighborhoods, by groups sympathetic to righting the economic balance between the top 1% and the remaining 99%. Consequently, we offered our Corporate Personhood workshop, at Third Unitarian Church on that morning, as an activity of interest, particularly for Occupy sympathizers on the far west side of Chicago and in the western suburbs, prior to the many Occupy activities being held in Grant Park in the afternoon of April 7. Later in April, around Tax Day, task force members plan to be involved in public witness activities focusing on the need to reduce tax breaks for the wealthy.

The task force also voted to set-up a sub-account, within its account with UUSJ, as a way of showing financial support by U.U.s for Occupy Chicago activities. We are encouraging contributions to UUSJ (address shown on the front page of this newsletter), with "Occupy" in the Note section. A member of this task force is

offering a dollar for dollar match of such contributions, up to \$500 on his or her part, that are received by UUSJ by June 15. Funds collected will be used to pay for Occupy Chicago expenses, either directly or in the form of reimbursement.

At its April meeting the task force reviewed two very worthy nominations for the next Home and Hope Booster grant. The task force selected the nomination submitted by a Co-Chair of the Social Mission Committee at Unity Temple, U.U. in Oak Park, which nominated West Suburban PADS, as that organization had not been previously nominated, nor had Unity Temple U.U. previously submitted a nomination. The other nomination will be reconsidered as part of the next round of nominations, after securing some updates.

West Suburban PADS serves 20 near-west suburban communities in Cook County. It provides funds to prevent homelessness, operates an emergency shelter system, provides some transitional housing, provides support for basic needs as well as medical, mental health and substance abuse issues, and lastly helps homeless individuals prepare for a successful, sustained re-entry into the work place. The organization served 845 unduplicated clients in 2010.

Unity Temple, U.U., has assisted West Suburban PADS in the following ways during the past year. Seven members of the congregation comprise a "Monday morning breakfast team", responsible for purchasing, preparing and delivering breakfast for 50 to 70 shelter guests once a month. Two members of the congregation are on West Suburban PADS 20-member Board of Directors. Both also play an active role on West Suburban PADS Special Events fundraising committee. Unity

Temple members gave approximately 500 volunteer hours to PADS in the past year, 20 hours per month by the breakfast team and 10 to 12 hours per month by each of the two Board members. Unity Temple collected \$4,800 for West Suburban PADS via collections in December, 2011 that were designated for PADS. Members of the congregation also provide in-kind donations of supplies and food, plus as-needed volunteer time in setting-up and cleaning-up at West Suburban PADS emergency shelters.

Members of the task force are checking on the information in the Chicago and suburban versions of the If YOU or Someone You Know Needs Help resource sheets, so that the task force can issue, most likely in May, updated versions of those resource sheets to the roughly 100 churches, social service agencies, social workers, and other individuals who want one or both of those sheets when we create our annual updated version. New organizations and individuals can also come forward to request being added to the list to get the updates. The updated versions are also placed on our web site for others to access.

The task force initiated one Action Alert in recent months, targeting members of the Illinois General Assembly, urging that they oppose Governor Quinn's proposal to cut state funding for emergency and transitional shelter by over 50%, and to also fight to restore all or some of the funding for programs serving homeless youth, since programs serving that population were severely underfunded even before the recent cutbacks.

The UU Just Economic Community is developing a program for UU congregations to become an 'Economic Justice Church'. We understand the focus will be on what congregations can

do to influence economic justice in the broader society. We look forward to reviewing their program when it is ready for sharing.

Our next meeting is on Saturday, May 5, between 12:30 and 2:15 p.m., at Third Unitarian Church, 301 N. Mayfield, Chicago. Ring the door on the south side of the building for entry. All are welcome.

Allan Lindrup, Chair
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Report from the Immigration Justice Task Force

A day does not go by without news hitting the airways or newspapers pertaining to the problems with our current immigration laws and treatment of undocumented immigrants. The Immigration Justice Task Force is attempting to sort through the information and pass along updates on proposed changes and upcoming events.

The task force has been sending out information to the various congregations on ways that they can become involved in protesting the proposed detention center in Crete, IL. We are working on getting our action alerts out in a timely fashion.

As task force chair, and a member of the Interfaith Committee for Pastoral Care, I have been very excited about the number of members from the various congregations who have taken the training to be part of the post release program, or part of the pastoral care volunteers.

Members of the task force have been active in their congregations doing workshops and programs on immigration.

First Unitarian Church of Chicago offered a course on anti-immigrant racism (around the world) through history. The church did a special mission grant collection one Sunday a month for three months to support an orphanage in Mexico.

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of McHenry County held a Social Gospel in Words and Music concert on April 6th to raise money for the Post detention release program of the Interfaith Committee for Detained Immigrants.

Countryside Church UU in Palatine hosted a cultural outing in February to see the play Home/Land by Albany Park Theater Project. In March they led several discussions of the UUA Common Read “The Death of Josseline.” At the end of March they had an interactive Immigration Café at the church with speakers from Chicago Workers Collaborative, Immigrant Youth Justice League, and the Interfaith Pastoral Care for Detained Immigrants team. Several of their members attended a march in Crete, IL to protest the proposed detention center. They have also added a website: <https://sites.google.com/site/ccuuimmigration/>.

North Shore Unitarian Church, through the social Action committee, has been doing many activities on the issue of immigration and is submitting a proposal to the church board that immigration be an all-church social action project for 2012-13.

Their major goal for this year has been to educate the congregation on past and current issues on immigration, especially as it is experienced in their communities. Social Action has made available a great deal of current information and has held two classes of

the UUA curriculum, “Immigration as a Moral Issue.” They sponsored two potluck dinners, one with an activist who shared her personal story and another with Jenny Dale, Coordinator of the Chicago new Sanctuary Coalition. Ms. Dale presented a history of immigration in the US. They are working with the ICIRR “Uniting America” program and hope to have some events next year that bring their congregation together with immigrant communities in their area. Several church members have helped people complete their application for citizenship through HACES. Many of their church members serve as tutors and mentors through Waukegan to College, a comprehensive college readiness program for immigrant families. Members of their committee are doing immigration court watch and attending deportation vigils. Some of the women from the church are working with a new Hispanic women’s shelter, teaching the women to knit and crochet.

Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Oak Park has just completed a four session study group based on the UUA curriculum, “Immigration as a Moral Issue.” The immigration action team will bring to our congregation's annual meeting our proposal to become a Welcoming Congregation, which requires 80% positive vote of a quorum of UT members to be enacted. Team members are actively involved in the Chicago New Sanctuary Coalition by attending meetings, Broadview vigils, creating survival backpacks for released detainees, and participating as Detainee Accompaniment team members to immigrants released from the Chicago area detention and processing centers. Interested team members will be trained as court watchers, as well. We have

officially added our name in protest again the proposed CCA detention facility at Crete, IL.

The next Immigration Justice Task Force meeting will be on May 20th, 2012, 2PM at Unity Temple, 875 Lake Street, Oak Park, IL. All are invited to join us. The issue of Immigration Justice touches all of our Task Forces.

Sue Rekenhaller
Immigration Task Force Chairperson at tomatos@mc.net

Report from the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Caucus (UUMUAC)

Our main event of the spring was the Open Forum held on March 24, 2012, at First Unitarian Church in Chicago. The title of the forum was “White Skin Privilege vs Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity.” The event was also sponsored by the Raial Justice Task Force of the Social Justice Council of the First Unitarian Chlurch of Chicago. There were 26 in attendance for part or all of the Open Forum. including three seminarians, attendees representing a variety of UUSJ groups and UU churches. Most important, there were seven new UUMUAC members.

Jenny Peek, a new UUMUAC member from Hobart Unitarian Universalist Church served as moderator. Our three panel members were

1. Rev. David Breeden, minister at the Minnesota Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bloomington, Minnesota and on the board of UU’s for a Just Economic Community and also a member of the UU Committee on Social

Witness. He spoke as a proponent of multiracial unity.

2. Then there was Rev. Chip Roush, interim minister at First Unitarian Universalist Church in Hobart, Indiana, who sought to reconcile both racial identity caucusing and multiracial unity caucusing. He is also one of the co-authors of the definitive text on the history of the UUA’s struggle against racism and oppression, *the Arc of the Universe is Long*.

3. And finally there was Prof. Lorelle Kirkpatrick, adjunct instructor in the Department of Sociology at Purdue University-Calumet who spoke on the issues of multiculturalism. She teaches introductory sociology and an introduction to multiculturalism course there and has been active in anti-racist struggles since her college days. Unfortunately, we were unable to get representatives from Allies for Racial Equity (ARE) or Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM).

The panel discussions were structured in the form of discussions questions which each of the panelists would answer. Some of the key questions were as follows:

1. What is multiracial unity?
2. What is white privilege?
3. What is the difference between multiracial and multicultural?
4. Do all white people have white privilege? What about poor whites? White women?
5. Is this privilege based on class or race? What is racism?
6. What is neo-racism?
7. Is racism based on prejudice plus power or ideology plus power?

The answers were quite provocative and there was both agreement and

disagreement among the panelists. All agreed that it was a worthwhile panel, with special commendation to Prof. Kirkpatrick, the only woman and black person on the panel. If we were to cluster the answers around three key points, I believe that they would be as follows:

1. That there are various forms of privilege which can be called “white” represented by the racial disparity between the average white and the average black, but the issue is this: does the privilege create the racism or does racism creates the privilege? Rev. Breeden raised the idea that it is not whether or not a white UU has this privilege, but what does he do with it to fight racism and oppression?
2. That while there is some disagreement over whether the focus should be on multicultural unity or multiracial unity, Prof. Kirkpatrick argued that in her mind they were equivalent terms.
3. That while there were disagreements over whether racism should be defined as prejudice plus power or ideology plus power, it was all agreed that racism in today’s world has a class component and that for some people being in race identity caucuses is a needed way to deal with that racism, provided that the groups reconvened as a group and provided that there was a caucus space for those who believed in multiracial unity, regardless of their so-called racial identity.

An executive summary of the panel discussion is being proposed and a compact disk of the panel discussions and the questions and remarks from the audience can be made available at

a reasonable rate as a fundraiser for UUMUAC.

There was a break for a delicious lunch and informal discussion and then we reassembled into two workshops, based on enumeration and not racial makeup. It would be the purpose of the workshops to generate ideas for bearing witness actions. One workshop was led by Carl Wolf, UUMUAC member from Hobart, and the other by Douglas Erickson, UUMUAC member from the Unitarian Church of Evanston. We then returned to a plenary session, led by Allan Lindrup, Co-Chair, UUMUAC and a member of First Unitarian. Some of the bearing witness projects which were voted on were as follows:

- Support March to Crete 3/30-4/01/12
- **Publicize the plight of falsely convicted individuals, most of whom are youth of color.**
- **Focus on anti-immigrant racism, particularly leading up to the 2012 General Assembly.**
- Support the April 7 protest, in Chicago's Hyde Park, against Friedmanism.
- How do we act in a multiracial way across UU congregations?
- **Encourage education in our congregations, for both children and adults, about racism.**
- **Support bills to seal records for non-violent crimes, and to bar use of old records on the internet, once sealed by a court.**
- **Try to build bridges, based on reciprocity, with ethnic communities that are underrepresented in one's congregation.**
- **Support the Reading Reduces Recidivism program, or others**

that will help convicts re-integrate with society upon their release.

- **Engage in racial justice activism in a way that will bring broad engagement from your congregation.**
- **Have UUMUAC apply for recognition as part of the anti-racism/anti-oppression work of the UUA.**

After the plenary, I had final words based on the following ritual: I had each person hold out their hands, palms down: this showed the multiracial unity of light and dark skinned people; then I had people hold out their hands, palms up: this showed we were all one race, the human race. I then extinguished the chalice.

The consensus from many people that I have talked to is that it was a very useful and worthwhile program and that we should have more, especially for our predominantly white UU congregations.

By Finley C. Campbell, Scribe and a co-chair, UUMUAC

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UUSJ Environmental Task Force Report

Congregational Reports:

The UU Church of Elgin – Their Green Sanctuary Group will be filing for recertification as a GS and can submit a record of what they have done since certification. They had solar panels put on the church's roof, funded by a single person.

First Unitarian Church of Chicago – At a First Forum on April 15, Allan will lead a

presentation on what is involved if a congregation chooses to pursue becoming a Green Sanctuary (GS). Part of the forum is discussion and getting a sense as to whether that congregation has enough interest and volunteer energy to make pursuing GS a realistic goal.

Second Unitarian – The church is participating in the UUSC's "Water as a Human Right" campaign. The March 24 worship service was devoted to the subject. Several members of the congregation recently went on a tour of the Water Filtration Plant near Navy Pier.

Unitarian Church of Evanston – They are continuing to compost foods left over from Sunday coffee hour. The evaluation of whether to install solar panels on the roof is continuing – there are zoning and money issues.

Beverly Unitarian Church – The congregation hosted a community forum on "The Environment and Jobs." A winter farmers market will be held at BUC on March 31. Then, on April 7, the congregation has one of its periodic household hazardous waste and electronics recycling collections.

Action Alerts: (1) for the RESTORE act to help the Gulf coast along Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas after the BP oil spill, and (2) against the Taylorville coal gasification plant in Illinois – much more CO2 and higher electric rates.

Future Educational Inserts: (1) Hybrid vehicle update by Kerry Nelson, (2) Today's recycling issues by Allan Lindrup, (3) growing more local organic produce with links to Growing Home and Growing Power by Andrew Fisher, (4) longer lasting batteries and more photovoltaic cell options for solar panels.

Next meeting is Sunday, June 3, 2012 from 2:30 to 4:30 PM at the Unity Temple, 875 Lake Street, Oak Park. All are welcome.

With any questions, contact: Andrew T. Fisher – Chair
847-492-1832 or fishorqn1580@att.net

**UUSJ Peace
Task Force Report**

The next Peace Task Force meeting is scheduled for Saturday, May 5, 2012, 2:15 PM at Third Unitarian Church , 301 N. Mayfield in Chicago. All CAUUC area church members and friends are invited to attend. To attend by conference call dial 1-800-704-

9804 then enter the code 892781#.

Peace Task Force members plan to distribute Flyers on the cost of war 4-17-12 (Tax Day) at the Federal Plaza in Chicago. The War Resisters League figures show that 48% of income tax money goes to pay for current and past military expenses.

The Marshall Rosenberg peace system will probably be the basis for the next UUSJ program assigned to this Task Force.

If you have questions or comments on the Peace Task Force please contact Gene Horcher at (773) 561-5296 or email horcher@att.net

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