

UUSJ Newsletter – Spring 2018

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

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Chair's Corner:

Unitarian Universalist for Social Justice held their retreat followed by the Quarterly meeting on March 24, 2018. The retreat was facilitated by Cindy Sammons and me. Those in attendance were Eileen Klees, Evan Freund, Andrew Fisher, Allan Lindrup, Finley Campbell, Nancy Cowger, Jane Bannor, Gene Horcher, Linda Groetzinger, and Mike Wolf. One of the reasons for the retreat was to evaluate our direction after losing affiliation from the Chicago Area Unitarian Universalist Council. We looked at several ways to address the issues and agreed on several things to change. For example; clarifying, when communication goes out from UUSJ, whether it is from the overall organization, a task force, or is a personal opinion; create a column in the newsletter for personal opinions; and seeking a meeting with CAUUC to clarify concerns. Because we know how important it is to grow our organization, we discussed ways of reaching out to the younger generation; such as the Youth and Young Adult group that Jane mentioned. Minutes of the meeting are available by writing to uusj@sbcglobal.net.

I opened the meeting feeling very uncomfortable because I had not chaired such a meeting and I felt it would be contentious, but the meeting went especially well with the help of. Cindy, the other facilitator, as well as the cooperation of those in attendance. I also felt that we saw the importance of addressing the serious problems we are facing, not only in our organization but in

society in general, which needs organizations like us to continue to educate and agitate for social justice. Because of this awareness we were able to move forward with the agenda and look forward to applying it to our work.

We decided that I would contact Mike Gilley, the current president of CAUUC, to try to arrange a meeting of our boards (or significant representation from each) to see how UUSJ and CAUUC can continue to work together for social justice. As I said before, our world seems to be going to hell in a hand basket and we don't have the luxury of not being able to work together.

Marie Cobbs, Chair

Spring Quarterly Meeting

The UUSJ Spring Quarterly Meeting is at the First Unitarian Church of Chicago on Sunday, May 6, from 2 to 5 p.m. The task force on Economic Justice and Homeless has organized the program (see details below)

UUSJ Economic Justice and Homelessness Task Force Report

The Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness has the responsibility

for the program for the UUSJ Spring Quarterly Meeting, which will be held on Sunday, May 6, between 2 and 5 p.m., at the First Unitarian Church of Chicago. We are pleased to report that we have lined up a program on "The Poor People's Campaign in Illinois". Rev. Said Richardson, one of the Co-Chairs of the Poor Peoples Campaign in Illinois, will address what the Poor People's Campaign will look like in Illinois and how UUs can get involved. There is, of course, be time for questions and answers, etc. A flyer with further details will be shared in the near future.

We support the work of UUs for a Just Economic Community (UUJEC) nationally. They have organized a conference titled "Resist Inequality!", which is being held at the Unitarian Church of Evanston on Saturday, April 21, between 9:30 a.m. and 3 p.m., at a registration cost of only \$15.

This task force initiated an Action Alert in support of putting an Illinois Constitutional Amendment that would end the requirement that Illinois' income tax be a flat rate, on the November ballot. Both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly must pass the Joint Resolution no later than six months before the November general election for the proposed Constitutional Amendment to go before the voters this year.

We only had one Home and Hope Booster grant nomination to consider when the task force held its Winter Quarter meeting rather belatedly on March 31. The nomination, by members at the First Unitarian Church of Chicago, was in support of the Ujima Shelter, a program of Unity Parenting and Counseling. Ujima Shelter provides emergency, low-threshold shelter for homeless youth ages 18 through 24. The shelter, which is open from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. (around the year), provides

beds, dinner, breakfast, showers, referrals, transit cards, and other services. Located at the border of Englewood and Grand Crossing, it is the only emergency shelter for homeless youth located on the south side of Chicago.

There are not a lot of volunteer opportunities, as all adults interacting with the youth must be fingerprinted and pass criminal background checks. For the past several years First Unitarian Church of Chicago has raised and contributed significant financial support for the Ujima Shelter. In 2017 First Unitarian raised and contributed \$2,429 for the support of the Ujima Shelter. First Unitarian is taking six special collections for the Ujima Shelter during the January through March, 2018, quarter, which will be combined into a single spring contribution. The RE classes have held collections for supplies that the Ujima Shelter needs. The Home and Hope Booster grant pledgers have been informed and asked to send in their contributions, which are combined into the grant, by May 4.

The spring quarter meeting of the Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness will be held on Saturday, April 28, between Noon and 1:30 p.m. The presumptive location is Third Unitarian Church, 301 N. Mayfield, one block south and one block east of the Austin stop on the Green Line, but this writer had not yet received confirmation of the availability of space there at the time this article needed to be submitted for the newsletter. If you are interested in joining us, please advise the task force Chair, so that you can receive the reminder notice, location, and proposed agenda about four days before the meeting.

Allan Lindrup, Task Force Chair
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UUSJ Environmental Task Force Report

Congregational Reports:

First Unitarian Church of Chicago – Allan reported that for Earth Day on April 22, they are having an environmental worship service lead by one of their co-ministers, followed by a forum on home energy audits, to reduce energy waste from our homes.

(2) Second Unitarian Church of Chicago Gene said there is still no Environmental Task Force at 2U, but the church does recycle and Gene is usually the person who does it.

(3) Beverly – Fran reported that BUC is having an Earth Day service on April 15. They will conduct a hazardous waste collection in the Pullman neighborhood on May 5th.

(4) Evanston – Andrew reported from the Green outreach team that:

(1) UCE is approaching zero waste. On Earth Day the green team will conduct a letter writing campaign after the 11 AM service to support the RECLAIM (Revitalizing the Economy of Coal Communities by Leveraging Local Activities and Investing More) Act.

Action Alert: Since the Winter UUSJ Newsletter, the Environmental task force has issued one action alert, on April 8 to Illinois senators and representatives protesting SB3292 and HB5134 which bail out Dynegy's coal powered electric power plants

Educational insert: We finalized one drafted by Elinor Hall - "Divestment from Fossil Fuels and

Reinvestment in Clean Energy: What Can You Do?" It is a 4-page fold-out when printed. It will be even longer when uploaded to the UUSJ website.

Allan mentioned that a new Chicago Ordinance prohibits new manganese storage facilities in Chicago, but does put adequate limits on the current facilities.

Next meeting: – We agreed to hold our next meeting on Tuesday, June 5, from 2:30 to 4 p.m., at Bee Zee Restaurant at 424 S. Wabash Ave, Chicago.

With any questions, contact:
Andrew T. Fisher – Chair
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UUSJ Peace Task Force Report

By Jane Bannor, Peace Task Force Chair

The UUSJ Peace Task Force is making plans for its annual Tax Day Demonstration at Federal Plaza on Monday, April 16. The event will highlight the high proportion of US taxes that go to pay military and Veterans' expenses. According to the War Resisters' League, fully 47% of all government spending goes to pay for on-going military expenditures and for retiree benefits for veterans.

At the rally, to be held in front of the Loop Post Office at 211 So Clark Street, participants will pass out the War Resisters' League flyer, containing a well-known pie-chart graph that breaks out all levels of US

spending on the military, armaments, Pentagon research, and VA services. We will be joined at the demonstration by folk-singer Chuy Negrete. Chuy is a popular singer and guitar player at many local immigration rallies. A portable AV system will also be available so participants can make brief statements to those assembled about US tax policy and the need to re-direct spending from the military to social services.

The event is being co-sponsored by the UUSJ Peace Task Force and by the US Pacifist Party, led by long-time activist Brad Lyttle. Lyttle is a tax-resistor who has been arrested numerous times due to his opposition to US military spending.

“The rally always goes well,” said organizer and task force chair Jane Bannor. “In recent years there have been fewer folks visiting the Post Office at lunch time to file their tax returns – they’re filing their returns electronically. But folks walking in the plaza still seem interested to hear what we have to say.”

Recent past activities for the Peace Task Force include participating in the March 23 – 24 UUANI information session on prisoners’ rights at Countryside Church. Task force members were very impressed with the leadership and articulate speech of the young people who moderated Friday night’s discussion. They were members of the UU Youth and Young Adult (YAYA) group.

The Task Force also helped to provide a moderator for the Winter

Retreat held at the Evanston Unitarian Church on Saturday, March 24. They felt that as part of their role as “peacemakers” they should make sure that contentious discussions at the board retreat, focusing on recent organizational differences and how to resolve them, didn’t lead to bad feeling.

In March, the task force also issued an Action Alert on Federal SJ Res 54, which calls on the Senate to end the war in Yemen by applying the War Powers Resolution to the conflict. The action alert never got sent out. Due to delays in distribution of the letter, the resolution was voted on by the Senate before our letter was sent out.

Finally, the Peace Task Force held their most recent meeting as a phone conference call on Saturday, February 17. The meeting was poorly attended, so the group decided to only use conference-only phone meetings in limited circumstances. At the meeting the group discussed the upcoming Tax Day protest and kicked around ideas for several possible Action Alerts. Members were also polled about their ideas for improving UUSJ in the future and what changes they’d like to see as a result of the upcoming board retreat.

The next meeting of the Peace Task Force was set for Sat, May 12 at 2pm in or near (at a coffee shop?) Third UU Church.

Introduction of Interfaith Criminal Justice Taskforce-

Vision

A criminal justice system that restores our communities to safety, trust, and health and recognizes the humanity of all people involved in the criminal justice system.

Mission

Empower people and communities of all faiths and backgrounds to join in re-aligning criminal justice practices to our shared vision of a truly just society.

Action

- Promote local action opportunities through groups involved in criminal justice reform.
- Bring diverse communities together to implement criminal justice goals.
- Share access to educational media and enlightening speakers regarding operation of the criminal justice system and efforts to make change.
- Encourage public involvement in the politics of criminal justice reform.
- Rebuild relations between people returning from confinement and communities and between communities and law enforcement.
- Demand civil rights for all who are involved in the criminal

justice system, especially those alienated or marginalized.

- Highlight criminal justice policies that reflect racism and that worsen poverty, prejudice, addiction and violence.
- Support efforts, including allocation of resources, to improve the lives of those who are incarcerated and of people returning from confinement.
- Prioritize healing of those victimized by criminal or legalized violence through restorative justice.
- Promote the use of diversion and restorative justice processes.

The Task Force has already appointed an Outreach Committee that will begin to contact other congregations in the Chicago region to join the Task Force. We intend to be a source of intelligence for member congregations, and to identify resources to increase awareness of the need for reform in criminal justice laws and practices for members of the ICJTF to bring back to their congregations. We retain the ability to act independently to call attention to needed reforms, without approvals from participating congregations.

The Task Force also agree to co-sponsor a workshop/forum entitled Taking Action For Criminal Justice scheduled for April 22nd at St. Chrysostom Episcopal Church, [1424 N Dearborn, Chicago](#) from 1:00 to 5:00 PM. A registration form for the

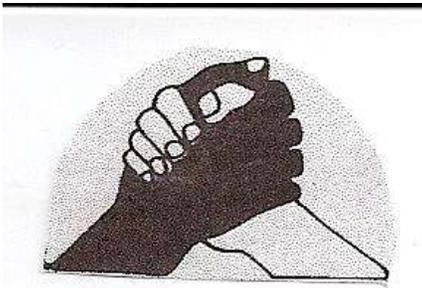
event is at <https://goo.gl/forms/QJD0u6vpbLkNMrN32> , more information at <http://incarcerationreform.com> . The prior workshops in the series attracted over 100 participants. John McLees, the principal organizer, has also compiled an extensive catalog of volunteer opportunities at a broad range of organizations to promote justice for defendants, re-entry support, and improvement in prison conditions.

Evan Freund, Interim Chair

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Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus (UUMUAC) Report



“The Unity of the Light and Dark-Skinned People of the World.” by Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell, spokesperson
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Greetings to members and friends of Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice – the Chicago Area. First

of all, let’s give a brief overview of our activities since our Winter report. From January 2018 to April 2018, we held our monthly meetings where we laid out plans for the year up to July 2018.

The main aspect of all these meetings was to lay out future projects, deal with current issues, and look back over past events. Our future projects, April 21st to July 8, 2018, consists of the following: support of and participation in the Peace Task Force annual income Tax Day action at the Federal Plaza on April 16, with a MAC flyer outlining the racist imperialist nature of much of our military spending (to be approved), We also endorsed the upcoming UJEC Conference on Inequality with a plan to have an informal MAC gathering following the conference. Brother Carl Wolf will be leading this effort.

At the same time, we have concluded that there will be no April 21st conference on neo-racist unemployment in Ann Arbor Michigan due to a low number of RSVPs and last minute opposition from powerful neo-racist forces in the UUA causing our major ally to back off. However, in the last-minute hopes that anti-racist UU and non UU folks might RSVP for that event, we will stick to the deadline of April 15th . Come what may, we will continue to raise the concept of neo-racism and (un) employment, beginning with an essay explaining this new concept.

We affirmed our continuing support of the Poor People’s Campaign, even though getting updates has proven difficult. Brother Allan Lindrup is leading that effort with a program on the Poor Peoples Campaign in Illinois at our

next UUSJ meeting on May 6. The Poor Peoples Campaign is scheduled to kick off on Mother's Day with actions of civil disobedience.

On a positive note we will be having a booth at the UUA 2018 General Assembly, June 19 – 25: Marie Cobbs, Allan, and myself in charge. Sister Fahima Gaheez, of the Afghan Womens Fund, which we have supported, will also have a booth in our general area. We are planning to have literature, buttons, and a variety of programs on neo-racism and multiracial Unitarian Universalism, including showing segments of the movies *Gettysburg* and *Glory*, powerful films dealing with the Great Abolitionist War aka the Civil War.

This latter activity will tie into our last major event on this six-month sequence, a gathering on July 8, 2018 at Little Round Top during the 155th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, where we will honor the white brothers who helped to prevent a Confederate victory, especially the Maine 20th Volunteers who kept White Supremacist forces from outflanking the Union Army. Brothers Dwayne Matthews, Carl Wolf, and I will be heading up this effort and developing a feasibility report.

Our main past event was a gubernatorial forum held on February 28th dealing with the theme, the Arc of Criminal Justice Reform: from Pre-criminalization to Post-incarceration. Candidates Tio Hardiman and Bob Daiber were the only two candidates to show up,

although all were invited. Some 60 people attended, and Brother Evan Freund, acting chair of the Interfaith Criminal Justice Task Force described the event as very positive. In addition, we had good coverage in the local Hyde Park Paper. Also, Brother Taye Woldesmiate in March attended, as a MAC representative, a conference on Neo-colonialism and Tribalism in Nairobi, Kenya. A full report will be in the next issue of the MAC Arrow. He is available to do forums on the China/US/African nexus in East Africa. You may contact him through the MAC mailing address.

To conclude: Despite all the contradictions and setbacks, the vision remains the same – building UUMUAC nuclei and chapters throughout the UU Association of congregations, enlisting both UU and non UU anti-racist, multiracialists in the struggle to lay the foundation for the elimination of anti-black racism once and for all, not only because it is the right thing to do but because without this elimination we cannot move human history forward to the next level of political economic existence.

OPINION COLUMN

This column offers the opportunity for members of the UUSJ (Chicago Region) and other UUs from the Chicago area, to share signed opinion pieces which may not represent the views of the full UUSJ and have not been claimed as such.

**From Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell,
Spokesperson of the UU
Multiracial Unity Caucus**

In the struggle for dealing with issues of dismantling racism, there are two key positions. I will present the Multiracial Unitarian Universalism position. Our present discussion had to do with the various attacks coming down on UUMUAC, especially from the handful of powerful individuals in the Unitarian Universalist Ministerial Association who are oppose to the concept of multiracial Unitarian Universalism. This is difficult work in this day and age, where a neo-liberalist compassion trumps the need for a radical indignation at false ideas which hinder the advance of the beloved community. And yes, to be self-critical, I have offended honest anti-racists by my sharp attacks. I often forget that some people support Black Lives of UU because their professional survival depends on such support or because they honestly feel that this is the right way to fight racism or because many of my white brothers and sisters have had little or no experiences with black working-class folks. So, I have agreed to be more judicious when I accuse a person of being a neo-racist, especially those who use the term white supremacy to explain modern day structural racism.

However, in my opinion, it was this neo-racist opposition which led to the disaffiliation of UUSJ from CAUUC, to the withdrawal of vital support from our chief ally in advertising our conference on neo-racist (un)employment in the Ann Arbor area, and to a great deal of

disaffection among traditional Unitarian Universalists in general with the current approach to dismantling racism in the UUA as a whole. And because of my outspoken leadership in defending multiracial Unitarian Universalism and opposing neo-racism, especially as a black man opposing some of the key African American leaders who push the doctrine of white supremacy-ology in our Association of Congregation, I and my general political beliefs have been used as a way to attack UUMUAC as a whole, with the hope of isolating us from the mainstream of Unitarian Universalism.

So the point of synergy at our recent meeting was this: the UUMUAC Executive Committee will monitor my public utterances as the spokesperson for MAC to make sure that I am more precise in my analysis of the issue of racism in our Association of Congregations, especially in light of one of the moral founders of our vision, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, whose murder we will remember on this 50th anniversary year, pledging to pick up the bloodstained banner as we participate in the Poor People's campaign and the struggle against neo-racist (un)employment.

**From Linda Groetzinger, PhD,
member of the Second Unitarian
Church and of the Peace Task Force
of UUSJ**

Rev. Dr. Campbell's implicit analysis of WHY racism exists, and has existed, worldwide and for time

immemorial, is close to mine: i.e., racism has always served a capitalist structure of society which serves the perceived needs of those who have wealth and power. To overcome capitalism, we must work across racial, and other, divides.

However, I believe Rev. Dr. Campbell, in his opinion piece, makes two grievous errors.

First, he moves too fast from his analysis of cause of racism, to his convictions about the path to eventual remedy. He too quickly opposes “identity based” caucusing.

Second, he risks alienating a wide swath of potential UU allies, by using labels like “neo-racist” which offend and drive away people of good intention, whose long term goals may be congruent with his. The people who promote separate, identity-based caucusing do not oppose interracial Unitarianism Universalism. They see the identity-based caucusing as a path, and to allege otherwise, is both provocative and alienating, violating the spirit of the recent Board Meeting as mentioned by Chair Marie Cobbs: to work together peaceably.

On the first point: I believe the paths to remedy racism can and must be many. One – but only one – of these many paths is the one Dr. Campbell promotes: to work, interracially towards a non-racist society. Another path, currently receiving denominational approval and support, is to foster the development of voice and participatory power of the often-

silenced groups through identity-based caucuses. I support this method as well, and I encourage UUMUAC and Dr. Campbell to join me in doing so. Even if it may cost time and money to promote the strength of the oppressed, it is our obligation, as a denomination dominated by members of the economically and racially dominant groups.

We are a multi-racial but predominantly white denomination, with a mixed history in terms of anti-racism. Racism is a problem belonging to all of us, but it belongs to us in dramatically diverse ways. In defining the best paths forward, I consider identity-based caucusing to be an essential path – one of many, perhaps a temporary method, if not a long-term ideal.

Dr. Campbell notes that there have always been white people who have contributed to and are contributing to the struggle for racial justice. He is correct. He is opposed to my being considered a “racist,” as he implies is the approach of what he calls the “doctrine of white supremacy – ology”; I am one of those who have tried to do what I can against racism. To be sure, I don’t like such labels. But to acknowledge that I, as a white person, am influenced by and operate within a racist society, is a truism. That my racism-influenced behavior and words sometimes feel like racist depreciation or like white supremacy, to some of my African American friends and colleagues, is also a truism. My insensitivities and those of others hurt and

systematically silence many people; that they would seek a “safe place” to be together as an identity group to find the confidence and power to speak up, seems natural to me.

On the second point, the Rev. Dr. Campbell is provocative of conflict, undermining his own work against racism and for a multi-cultural / multi-racial society, in his use of language and allegations. “Neo-racism” may be an acceptable term in an academic analysis, but even there, it is subject to debate; in my view, racism by definition can only be propagated by those with power, i.e., the mostly white power elite. It is not acceptable in a community of faith where one of our goals is to build a more welcoming

community that works together for racial and economic justice. Name-calling, labeling, and blaming, provoke conflict.

I believe that most of the white people, as well as most of the African Americans, in UU churches are people of good intentions regarding overcoming racism. But this does not remove the fact the people of color have experienced racism, including in our congregations. From these injustices arise the need and the right of people of color to meet together to express their voice, and to guide us all, as we work together to overcome racism and create a truly racially and economically just world.

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