

UUSJ Newsletter - Fall 2012

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

An affiliate of the Chicago Area Unitarian Universalist Council

Andrew T. Fisher, Editor & Communications Director

1448 East 52nd Street, PM Box 144

Chicago, IL 60615

Phone: 773-595-4921 / E-mail: uusj@sbcglobal.net

Web site: <http://www.uusforsocialjustice.org>

Chair's Corner:

If you were at our most recent board meeting in August, you know we had a rousing meeting! We had 13 people (five guests and eight board members) sitting at the table. The afternoon held animated discussions and lots of interest in the activities of the UUSJ and its five very active task forces. As you'll see in the task force reports below, there is a lot going on at UUSJ!

I thank Sue Rekenhaller, Reverend Sean Parker Dennison, and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of McHenry for hosting the meeting in their new church. It was a lovely and comfortable venue. The program presented by the Immigration Task Force was well attended and very well received. Sister JoAnn Persch and Sister Pat Murphy were truly inspiring.

Illinois Fair Tax Campaign

Peter Starzynski of Citizen Action Illinois joined us to ask the UUSJ to support the Illinois Fair Tax Campaign. The goal of the Fair Tax Campaign is to create a graduated income tax in Illinois. According to the group's fact sheet, the unfairness of the current tax structure in our state is severe: The bottom 80% income group averages a 12.2% tax burden when all Illinois taxes are taken into consideration (including sales and excise taxes, property taxes, and income taxes, less federal deduction offset). The top 20% of income earners average a 9% Illinois tax rate. The discrepancy is even more pronounced at the edges: The bottom 20% pays 13.7% of Illinois taxes and the top 1% pays just 5.3%. Peter pointed out that such a

regressive tax system is not only unfair, but unsustainable.

We learned that the process to establish a graduated income tax is likely long and steep. The Illinois Constitution mandates a flat tax, so the first step is gaining public and legislative support for a constitutional amendment to implement a graduated tax system.

After Peter's presentation, the board voted to endorse the Illinois Fair Tax Campaign and have our name added to their list of supporters.

Upcoming Workshop for Social Justice Chairs

UUSJ will offer a workshop for Social Justice Chairs of Chicago area congregations. The goal of the workshop is to offer support and education for those who coordinate social justice activities. We formed a steering committee that will work with the Central Midwest District to plan the workshop. Watch for announcement of an early spring program.

UUSJ annual meeting

November 11th at the
Unitarian Church of Hinsdale
11 West Maple Street
Hinsdale, IL 60521 from 2 to 5 PM

Nominating Committee

This year's nominating committee is starting the process of filling the slate for board positions for 2013. They'll present the slate at the UUSJ annual meeting. The members of the committee:

Past President of UUSJ: Allan Lindrup
Immigration Task Force: Shirley Lundin
CAUUC representative: Doug Erickson

Resource: Take Love to the Polls: Elections 2012 Webinar

On September 12, 2012, Standing on the Side of Love hosted an online webinar, "Take Love to the Polls: Elections 2012." You can download the slides from the webinar along with speaker comments at: <http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/take-love-to-the-polls-elections-2012-webinar/>

Anne Ward, Chair anne@creativecore.com or 847-854-1111

Report of the Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness

This task force organized the program for the UUSJ Spring Quarter meeting, which was held at People's Church in May. We had an activist with Occupy Chicago speak about that organization's goals and strategies, followed by a lively discussion with the audience.

Since the last UUSJ newsletter this task force initiated two action alerts. The first one pressed members of the Illinois General Assembly to pass a cigarette tax increase to fund a chunk of Illinois' Medicaid expenses and to reduce the amount of cuts that would be needed in the Medicaid program. That action alert was a success, as the General Assembly did pass that cigarette tax increase and the scope of Medicaid cuts needed was reduced as a result. The more recent action alert focused on Senator Kirk and Republican members of the U.S. House, protesting, from a religious/moral ground, the severity of cuts to the SNAP (food assistance) program passed by the U.S. House last spring and asking for a different outcome when the Farm bill is again considered this fall.

The most recent Home and Hope Booster grant approved by this task force, which ended up being for \$500, was to assist the DuPage U.U. Church's Bridge Communities program, where they pay the rent and provide mentoring for a homeless

family as it works on acquiring the education and job skills needed for economic independence. The program costs the church roughly \$10,000 per year in rent and involves over 700 hours per year in volunteer time, roughly half of those hours in mentoring. We congratulate the DuPage U.U. Church, and in particular their Bridge Community team, for keeping at this service to the homeless of DuPage County for several years.

We held a preliminary discussion on developing a new workshop, on matters related to the Move to Amend movement. We would hope to have such a workshop developed by year end.

The next meeting of this task force will occur on Saturday, October 20, from 12:30 p.m. to about 2p.m. The location will be Third Unitarian Church, 301 N. Mayfield, Chicago. All are welcome.

Allan Lindrup, Chair uusj@sbcglobal.net or 773-595-4921

Report from the Immigration Justice Task Force

The Immigration Justice Task Force met at 2nd Unitarian on June 10, 2012. Before our regular meeting we listen to a presentation about domestic workers, immigration, and worker justice. 2nd Unitarian provided a wonderful lunch during the presentation. The task force took some time during their regular meeting to reflect on what was presented.

Members of the task force have been very active in their congregations working towards immigration justice. Unity Temple is taking the steps to become an Immigration Welcoming Congregation. Janet Holden from Unity is the UU representative for the Chicago New Sanctuary Coalition. Contact Janet for information about volunteer opportunities with regard to court watch,

detention and post release. Unity also did a 4 week immigration curriculum for their RE program.

Two members of Countryside Unitarian have been trained to do ICE detention pastoral care jail visits.

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of McHenry will be doing a four week immigration unit during their religious education classes for the children of the congregation. They also held a concert at the church to raise funds for the Interfaith Committee Immigration Post Release project.

The Immigration Justice Task Force presented the program for the Summer UUSJ meeting. The meeting was held at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in McHenry, Illinois. The speakers were Sister JoAnn Persch and Sister Pat Murphy. They spoke about their work with the Interfaith Committee for Detained Immigrants.

The task force participant for the UUSJ nominating committee will be Shirley Lundin.

Upcoming events include a presentation at North Shore Unitarian Church on Sunday October 7th at 1 pm. The presentation is part of their free public lectures entitled Our Immigrants Then and Now. The speaker on October 7th will be Luis Urrea, a Pulitzer Prize finalist for nonfiction and member of the Latino Literature Hall of Fame. The Immigration Justice Task force also will be cosponsoring the Chicago New Sanctuary Coalition and Immigrant Welcoming Congregations First Anniversary event on Sunday October 14th, 2012. This event will include workshops, an interfaith service to honor the work of current Immigrant Welcoming Congregations and welcome new congregations, and advocacy for

Driver's License Campaign for Immigrants.

Sue Rekenhaler tomatos@mc.net
Immigration Justice Task Force
Chairperson

Report from the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Caucus (UUMUAC)

Let me begin by presenting an essay which I submitted to the Essex County Unitarian Universalist Church in New Jersey for their newsletter. It is my last word, more or less, on UUAGA 2012.

The purpose of this essay is to present a descriptive analysis of my perceptions of this historic assembly held in Phoenix Arizona, June 20 – 24, 2012, an assembly which, in fact, consisted of three General Assemblies, ideologically speaking. The first one was what I would call the traditional General Assembly. This began on Wednesday with the always inspiring parade of the banners, actually works of art, identifying the varied UU congregations and fellowships which form our denomination: from Maine in the Northeast to California in the Southwest, along with the music, both of choir and gathered throng, both from soloists and instruments. There were also the informal and formal workshops which were designed to enrich our understanding of our work as UU's and of course the democratic activity of trying to develop a statement of conscience. Around this process, two events stand out: A group called the UU Abolitionists, centered in the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Santa Cruz County, led this charge to make the struggle against modern slavery the key issue for our Statement of

Conscience. We failed but we heard some powerful testimonies.

Let us now look at the second GA. How sad: there was the constant emphasis on anti-white and anti-people of color racism masquerading as anti-racism. Whites were depicted as conscious or unconscious beneficiaries of white privileges based on the domination of people of color; people of color were presented as being victims of internalized racism which filled them with helpless rage or deep-seated feelings of inferiority, with Native Americans being presented as the most degraded and self-destructive people as a result of some Doctrine of Discovery. I walked out on the speech by Steve Newcomb, the leader of the Doctrine of Discovery Project, having read his neo-racist description of Native Americans on his website. ... This was the tragic result of the type of multiculturalism, based on racial separation, which is now the dogma of our UUA leadership. As a result, the Doctrine of Discovery resolution was passed by an overwhelming vote, even though only 1/8th of the thousands at the plenary had read it, based unhappily on the systematic use of white guilt by the proponents of the resolution.

The last General Assembly, #3, was the best and helped to negate the second while forming a synergy with the first. Though denied permission by the UUAGA Programming Committee to be listed as a part of the General Assembly, there was this wonderful movie called THE MINISTER'S WARS, dealing with the role which the American Unitarian Service Committee played in the Popular Front against Fascism Movements of the 30's and 40's, a history which has been

sadly suppressed because of anti-communism.

And, of course, the high point of my participation, the Worship and Witness with the Partners on Saturday evening of the 23rd, especially those from the National Day Laborer Organizing Network. This is when at least 2000 of the almost 4000 delegates who attended the Assembly took buses to what was called Tent City or what I could call a concentration camp, housing hundreds of men and women whose only crime was needing to cross a border to find work. There our delegates led by Rev. Morales demonstrated the General Assembly's opposition to this gross mistreatment of immigrant workers, most of whom were Latinos. There were so many of us who wanted to go to this demonstration that we ran out of busses, and so I took it upon myself to lead a mini - rally out in front of the Convention Center where we were stranded.

To conclude: This Tent City Demonstration was for me the climax of the General Assembly #3, the one I had come out to in the 99 degree heat of Phoenix Arizona to take part in, the one for which I fought alongside others to break the boycott against Arizona in order to show solidarity with our brother and sister UU's in multiracial unity.

Other notes: Upcoming Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus Event: Building Multiracial Unity in Predominantly White Congregations, Saturday October 27, 2012 at the First Unitarian Church of Chicago (Hull Chapel) 5650 S. Woodlawn, Chicago IL 60637. Call

773-230-3883 for more information. More information coming up.

There was also a meeting of the UUMUAC Executive Committee following the Cauuc meeting on September 15, 2012. The following plans were made: the workshop on October 27th, an Indigenous American Support Day on October 8th, Columbus Day, which we propose to call Multiracial Unity Day since as a result of the Columbian invasion, a new group of people came on the scene, the Americans – a mix of European, Native American, and African folks – stretching from Alaska to Chile including North, Central, Caribbean, and South America. And in November, we will be presenting a shorter version of our workshop at the Hinsdale meeting. And I am planning to go the New York on the tenth to check out a radical interfaith group which is meeting. So that's it from UUMUAC. Join us.

By Finley C. Campbell, Member of the Executive Committee, UUMUAC
Finleycampbell5222@comcast.net 773-752-4019

UUSJ Environmental Task Force Report

The UUSJ Environmental Task Force issued three recent Action Alerts:

(1) To Illinois representatives urging opposition to the Taylorville Energy Center as coal gasification in SB 678. It will add 6.5 million tons of CO₂ annually, cost Illinois taxpayers over \$400 million each year, and will impede other development of clean energy.

(2) To Illinois Governor Pat Quinn urging him to veto SB 3766 for the

Leucadia coal gasification project for Chicago's southeast side (issued June 27). The Leucadia project would both raise the natural gas rates by up to 85% and create billions of pounds of new air pollution for southeast Chicago and near suburbs with no plans to control it! Governor Quinn responded to the public by vetoing SB 3766.

(3) Another to Illinois representatives urging them to support SB 3280 for a moratorium on oil and gas fracking (issued August 23). This moratorium on fracking would last until June 1, 2014, and give time for a balanced taskforce to determine the best interests of all parties. Contaminated drinking water, faucets on fire, increased seismic activity, and deceptive leasing have all been the negative results of other states where unregulated fracking has occurred.

We issued one environmental educational insert on "Growing Organic Produce Locally" near August 12. Two others are being worked on for issuing in the near future: (1) Today's Recycling Issues, and (2) An update on Hybrid and other Alternative Vehicles. Any wishing to read or reproduce this latest or any other insert can easily access them on the Environment page of the UUSJ website.

Recent environmental UU congregational activity: **First Unitarian Church of Chicago** established a Green Sanctuary Group with Allan as Chair. They have 10 members, have completed the congregational assessment, and plan to be certified by the UUA in 2014. **Elgin** has solar panels on its roof and is reviving its Green Sanctuary group. The church, through the City of Elgin Sustainability Plan, is planning a 5 acre fish breeding educational project. **Evanston** is continuing to compost its

food. The Green Sanctuary Committee is concentrating on improving its existing rain garden and planning a new one. Plans for roof solar panels are so expensive and have minimal long period return, they are a low priority. **Beverly** has an active Green Sanctuary group which puts on forums and continues to collect electronics and hazardous waste materials for recycling and proper disposal.

Our next meeting on October 21 will be in or near the LaSalle Street Metra station at 2:30 PM. Those unfamiliar with the LaSalle Station will meet Allan at 2:15 at the southwest corner of Van Buren and Clark.

Andrew T. Fisher – Chair
847-492-1832 or fishorgn1580@att.net

UUSJ Peace Task Force Report

The Peace Task Force initiated an action alert, urging U.S. Representatives to cosponsor H.R. 3974, the Smarter Approach to Nuclear Expenditures Act. It would cut U.S. nuclear weapons spending by \$100 billion over the next decade.

Task Force members attended local International Peace Day celebrations (Sept. 21, 2012).

The Peace Task Force will meet Saturday October 20, 2PM at Third Unitarian Church, 301 N. Mayfield in Chicago. All CAUUC area church members and friends are invited to attend. For more information Contact Gene Horcher at (773) 561-5296 or horcher@att.net

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