

UUSJ Newsletter - Fall 2013

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

An affiliate of the Chicago Area Unitarian Universalist Council

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Chair's Corner:

Wonderful to see so many of you—20+—at our summer UUSJ meeting in Hobart, IN. Sharon Welch, Meadville prof and provost, furnished us with an idea-laden thought-inviting program on peace possibilities.

At my request Dr. Welch came with a stack of her book *Real Peace, Real Security: The Challenge of Global Citizenship* (2008). When she hosted a 2-day national peace conference at Meadville, she gave us this book. It is a fine primer for peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. Moreover its forward, written by William Schultz, is also must-read. .

That stack of books went like a stack of hotcakes. Our Peace Task Force is considering reading and discussing it together.

Another highlight for me was the UN's 9/21 International Day of Peace, annually noon-celebrated at Daley Plaza. Gene Horcher, peace task force co-chair, came with multiple handouts and even our Unitarian-Universalists for Social Justice banner that takes two to carry. We didn't display it, however, as the program was more like a ceremony than a rally. Most of our regular task force attendees attended the ceremony, including Jane Bannor from Evanston. The crowd of us present inspired this fond fantasy – once annually a Chicago-area “justice” event is attended by at least one member of each task force, and that we congregate by our UUSJ banner and maybe have lunch/dinner afterwards at a progressive place like the Heartland Café.

One unique-to-me annual September-weekend event I think might be of interest to

many of you is the Chicago International Social Change Film Festival. Emile Cambry, a Chicago African-American professor-activist has found how to provide social-action opportunities to his film audiences.

Consider the upcoming documentary **'63 Boycott**, centering on the 200,000 students who boycotted CPS Supt. Ben Willis' racist segregationist actions in 1963. The film, still unfinished, was announced at the film fest along with this social-justice event:

On Tuesday October 22, at 6:00 PM, at Dusable Museum, 740 E. 56th Place in Washington Park, 57th and Cottage Grove, *Lessons from the 1963 Boycott: The Struggle for Quality Schools in Chicago begins Reclaiming Our Past to Build a Better Future for Our Schools.*

Organized by Education for Liberation Network, Teachers for Social Justice, and Chicago Teachers Union Black Caucus.

1963 – 2013: Connecting the Past and Present.

There will be a screening of the in-progress film *'63 Boycott*, spoken-word poetry, and a panel of CTU president Karen Lewis and 5 other educators.

The list of 18 co-sponsors is inspiration in itself. It is part of website *'63 Boycott*, link *Lessons from the 1963 Boycott: The Struggle for Quality.*

Another Tuesday, October 22 event is the Chicago part of a national day of protest: *Stop Police Brutality, Repression & the Criminalization of a Generation.* Noon at Daley Plaza (roost of Picasso's “bird”). Sponsors ask participants to wear black clothes and a hoodies up if possible.

At the recent Take Back Chicago Rally and Town Meeting, organized by the Grassroots Collaborative, consisting of “11 neighborhood and community organizations working for the working and middle-class people.” the crowd of hundreds to thousands, included 7 Unitarians--from 1st UU, 3rd UU, Evanston UU, and Unity Temple UU—4 of them UUSJ members.

Take Back Chicago advocates: raising minimum wage, * closing corporate loopholes, * ensuring that public tax dollars go to public neighborhood schools, not charters, *passing budgets prioritizing public services, * creating affordable housing.

Speaking of social media, UUSJ member Rev. Scott Aaseng reports he’s working on the IL UU Online Advocacy program.

So...outward...onward...upward... In the joyous struggle, to quote my first UU minister...

Jerry Parker jeryparkr@yahoo.com

UUSJ annual meeting

December 1st, at the
Unitarian Church of Evanston, Rm. 3
1330 Ridge Avenue
Evanston, IL 60201 from 2 to 5 PM

Report of the Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness

At this year’s General Assembly, members of the Just Economic Community and allied groups were among the main supporters of the Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) supporting a Constitutional Amendment, such as that proposed by Move to Amend, which would declare that corporations are not persons and not entitled to the constitutional rights of persons, and further, that money is not free speech and there is no constitutional right to

spend unlimited amounts of money to support a political candidate. That AIW passed overwhelmingly, putting the UUA on record in support of such a constitutional amendment.

Back in May this task force had an Action Alert in support of a Joint Resolution of the Illinois General Assembly calling on Congress to pass such a Constitutional Amendment and send it to the states for adoption. Illinois did pass that Joint Resolution, becoming the 12th state (which has now increased to 14) calling on the Congress to pass such a constitutional amendment. We realize the current Congress will not pass such a Constitutional Amendment, but there is hope that a future Congress will, just as many constitutional amendments took many years of effort before they were enacted.

In a more recent Action Alert this task force supported Illinois House Joint Resolution 33, which would place before the voters a proposed state constitutional amendment, which would eliminate the requirement that Illinois can only have a flat income tax. If such a constitutional amendment, which needs to pass out of both houses of the Illinois General Assembly by early March, 2014, were to go before Illinois’ voters in November, 2014, and adopted, the General Assembly would have the flexibility to enact a progressive income tax for Illinois.

It is noteworthy that in the recent Illinois General Assembly a Homeless Bill of Rights was passed, making Illinois only the second state to pass such a measure. In addition, despite Illinois’ fiscal constraints, the General Assembly increased funding for homeless services and affordable housing in the fiscal year that began July 1, 2013.

Somewhat belatedly, in July, 2013, this task force distributed updated versions of its Chicago and Suburban Chicago 'If YOU or Someone You Know Needs Help' resource sheets. There resource sheets – finished colored version, white master copy for making more copies, and a cover letter, are sent out to UU congregations in northeastern Illinois, to a wide range of other non-profits who may interact with homeless individuals and those at risk of becoming homeless, to a large number of social workers, and to some others who have requested the sheets. If you know of an organization or individual who should receive such sheets, but is probably not on our database, you are invited to send us a note about the potential addition to the database.

Our most recent Home and Hope Booster grant was awarded to the Community Crisis Center of Elgin, which serves the homeless of northern Kane County and far northwest Cook County. The grant check was for \$395. That organization was nominated by the Social Justice Council Chair at the UU Church of Elgin. The Community Crisis Center of Elgin provides a 24 hour crisis hotline, with information and referral; an emergency temporary shelter for 40 women and children who are homeless due to domestic violence or financial crisis; individual and group counseling; medical, legal and welfare advocacy; financial assistance to abate homelessness; emergency food pantry; batterers intervention program; a transitional living program; community education; offers winter clothing; filled backpacks for children at the start of school; and takes the lead in the annual children's toy giveaway.

Members of at least 12 families at the UU Church of Elgin donate

volunteer time to the Community Crisis Center of Elgin, including one who is a member of the Board of Directors of the Community Crisis Center. Church members volunteer about 700 hours per year to the Community Crisis Center. Financial contributions by the UU Church of Elgin include \$400 raised in share-the-plate collections, plus about \$450 in direct contributions by members of the church. In kind contributions included: over 2000 diapers (worth \$560), providing a dinner once a month for the homeless families at the shelter, and collecting food from restaurants and groceries for the food pantry, plus helping grow food in the community garden, which is also donated to the food pantry. We congratulate the members of the UU Church of Elgin for their volunteer and financial support for the Community Crisis Center of Elgin.

The next meeting of this task force will occur on Saturday, January 11, from 12:30 to 2 p.m., at Third Unitarian Church, 301 N. Mayfield Ave., Chicago 60644. All are welcome. Let this writer know if you would like a copy of the agenda in advance.

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

Report from the Immigration Justice Task Force

This task force had an action alert in June, urging the U.S. House of Representatives to pass immigration reform legislation similar to that passed by the U.S. Senate this past spring. Effective at the end of June, 2013, Sue Rekenhaller stepped down as Chair of this task force. No new Chair or Co-Chairs have yet been identified for this task force, which is consequently in

suspended status. **If you or someone you know would be willing to take leadership of the Immigration Justice Task Force, please email the details to uusj@sbcglobal.net, so the UUSJ Board and those on the Immigration Justice Task Force can be informed.** If no new leadership is identified for this task force by the end of November, it is expected that this task force will be dissolved at the UUSJ Annual Meeting on December 1.

Report from the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Caucus (UUMUAC)

Four members of UUMUAC aka the Mac attended this year's very exciting General Assembly: Allan Lindrup, Roberta Lammers-Campbell, A. J. Segneri (a newish member), and myself. We joined with other groups to have a literature table. We held informal lunches dealing with multiracial unitarian universalism. We also had a major showing of the film TWO WHO DARED, dealing with the role of Rev. Waitsill and Martha Sharp and their work with the original American Unitarian Service Committee (AUSC) in the World War 2, part of an anti-fascist, resistance movement known as the Popular Front. Furthermore, we distributed a lot of our literature to interested UU's. We even had a little ritual based on the insipid symbol of multiracial unity on the cover of the UUA Program. It showed a black kid and a white kid united by their pinky fingers. Instead, we introduced folks to our multiracial unity handshake, while reciting the following rap: Four fingers and a thumb, can you see where I'm coming from, Asian Latin Black Red White, against all racisms we must unite.

Along with other UU's, we successfully defended the anti-discrimination clause and the continuation of the Acts of Immediate Witness. The issue of becoming a movement instead of an association of congregations did not officially come up, but there was a speech in support of it at the last plenary session. In addition, we supported the successful passage of an Act of Immediate Witness opposing the New York and other stop and frisk laws focused on black and Latin youth. In this regard, we passed out a limited number of leaflets showing how stop and frisk laws also hurt white youth as well. Also, we witnessed the election of a white anti-racist male to the position of moderator. He was running against a female member of DRUUMM. Unfortunately, he is committed to strengthen clusters of Unitarian Universalists, whether by geographical region, spiritual affinity, racial or cultural background, or other groupings. So, neo-racism was still the victor.

Other items: At the UUSJ meeting in Hobart in August 2013 a young adult member of UUMUAC gave a moving report of his participation in the Mac's Africa Project. In late August members of the UUMUAC Executive Committee – Finley C. Campbell, Jerry Parker, and Allan Lindrup, along with Mac member A. J. Segneri attended the march against police brutality and murder held in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March for Jobs and Justice, (the March on Washington). Our executive committee also supported the Chicago Native American/ Indian Center's annual multiracially oriented Pow Wow held in late September. So far, we are trying to maintain an informational relationship with this important Native American institution.

And at our September 2013 quarterly meeting, we voted to allow me to begin developing material to show how white members of the rank and field are hurt by anti-black racism and to incorporate this vision in our brochure and our future workshops.

Lastly, on October 16, the UUMUAC Executive Committee attended the mass rally called TAKE BACK CHICAGO, opposing the plan to make Chicago a global city by driving out working class folks, whites on the one hand and black and Latin and other people of color on the other.

Our next major event will be dealing with Racism in the 21st Century, Friday, November 1, at 5222 S. Dorchester Ave., Apt. 1, 7:30 to 9:00 PM., a showing of the documentary, A JOURNEY TO MEMPHIS; November 3, at First Unitarian Church of Chicago, 5650 S. Woodlawn Ave, Hyde Park, 1:00 to 2:15 PM a celebration of the founding of the International Committee Against Racism (INCAR), the antecedent to Mac; and on Wednesday, November 6, also at the First Unitarian Church of Chicago, 7:00 to 9:00 PM, a panel discussion on this most important issue. This will be done in conjunction with the United Front organization, headed up by Mac member A. J. Segneri.

To conclude: we may be small but we aint all.

Finley C. Campbell, Executive
Committee UUMUAC 773-752-4019
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UUSJ Peace Task Force Report

The Peace Task Force met 9-19-13 to plan International Peace Day

activities. We also discussed the situation in Syria. We decided to send an Action Alert on Syria. Rev. Jean Darling developed the Action Alert based on our discussion and input from Task Force members Thanks to Allan Lindrup who sent out the Alert. The Alert expresses strong opposition against the use of military force in the Middle East and Syria in particular. Four members of the T F attended an International Peace Day event at Daley Plaza in Chicago. The event was a celebration rather than a protest, and it included a flag parade with the flags of 193 nations. Our next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, 1-11-14, 2 PM at Third Unitarian Church and all CAUUC church members and friends are invited to attend.

Gene Horcher at 773-561-5296 or
horcher@att.net

UUSJ Environmental Task Force Report

The UUSJ Environmental Task Force issued an Action Alert in July. It was to both Senators. It urges their support for The Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act of 2013 (S. 761). This sensible, bi-partisan legislation is a win-win. Consumers save money and pollution is reduced. The bill will promote energy savings in commercial buildings and industrial facilities, which together consume nearly 50% of the nation's primary energy. The bill will also reduce energy costs within the federal government, our nation's largest energy consumer, saving the taxpayers money.

We issued one environmental educational insert titled "Recycling Update" in mid-October. Another is

being finalized for issuing in the near future: An update on Hybrid and other Alternative Vehicles.

Recent environmental UU congregational activity: **First Unitarian Church of Chicago** is having a fundraiser for a high speed dishwasher which can clean 150 items in 5 minutes! This will cost over \$4,000, so members of the congregation can use permanent mugs, plates etc. **Second Unitarian** cleaned up and planted trees in their backyard. Their children also cleaned up part of the Chicago River. They also encouraged many environmental issues to be raised at their social action council. **Evanston** is continuing to compost its food. Andrew Fisher is the new Chair of the Green Sanctuary Committee. There are three new Task Forces: (1) Anti Fracking, (2) Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,

and Compost, and (3) Waste Water. The Waste Water group has successfully plated a new south rain garden and is improving the east one. **Beverly's** active green sanctuary committee puts on forums and continues to collect electronics and hazardous waste for recycling and proper disposal. Next collection is November 2 from 8:30 to 11:00 AM.

Our next meeting on January 5, 2014 will be in the LaSalle Street Metra station at 3:00 PM. The LaSalle Metra station is south of Van Buren and just west of Clark.

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