

UUSJ Newsletter – Winter 2013

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:

From the President's Pen

I greet you at the top of our 2013 social-justice calendar, and welcome Doug Erickson (Chair-Elect), Jennifer Peek (Secretary), and Scott Aaseng (Ministerial Liaison) to the UUSJ Board. I invite you to ponder the State of the UUSJ Union. I'd like to begin our next Board meeting with our just-retired president Anne Ward's state-of-UUSJ-union remarks, and a brief discussion of the topic by all.

Also at our next Board meeting, after regular business and task forces reports, members/friends, please tell of additional actions you have taken personally or as part-of-another-group since our annual meeting in November. I'd like us to discuss any Social Justice (SJ) actions we might want UUSJ to take en masse, or as part of a UUSJ task force, or another group, or on our determined own. I think it would be helpful to run down the SJ groups we're part of in 2013, especially the ones we joined by midnight New Year's Eve. For example, I joined the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, and will mail them my NRA street theater script before giving Doug Erickson the UUSJ gavel in 2014.

Our next UUSJ Board meeting I'd like to schedule in February. Board members should email me which Saturday and Sundays you could meet, along with the hours you are available on those dates.

Also, task-force chairs, particularly those who did not host a program in 2012, should think about which quarterly meeting you'd like your task force to sponsor the program.

At your next task-force meeting, or otherwise early in 2013, task force Chairs should implement Treasurer Karla Chew's unanimously adopted motion that:

“... each task force member contributes \$5 or more per year to UUSJ, to help cover task force expenses, that those who receive the UUSJ newsletter and other communications via ground mail give \$10 per year to cover mailing and other administrative costs. Allan seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.”

New business from the end of our annual meeting: occasionally before a quarter meeting, the task force responsible for the program could discuss a book related to their focus, or some combination of book reviews, articles, essays and poetry, rather than have an outside presenter. Adjournment ended the budding discussion, which will continue as new business for our February meeting.

Task forces could collaborate . . . for example: economic justice and homelessness, and peace oppose the military budgetary madness and the war profiteering it spawns. We could do a Boeing action alert involving these two

task forces. Better yet, why not invite all task forces to participate in some action that affects all of our concerns.

We are always open to new task forces, provided they have at least five activists from at least three Chicago area U.U. churches, and have a Chair or Co-Chairs. Perhaps, in light of the Newtown shooting, someone will be motivated to organize a task force focused on gun control.

Jerry Parker, UUSJ president
jeryparkr@yahoo.com 146 N. Humphrey, Blvd; Oak Park 60302-2541
708-613-5103 (takes messages)
cell 630-235-4498 (takes messages)

UUSJ Economic Justice and Homelessness Task Force Report

Since the last UUSJ newsletter this task force initiated two Action Alerts. The first was a letter to President Obama and our U.S. Senators, asking that they stick to the President's pledge to not extend the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy, such as those earning over \$250,000, during the Fiscal Cliff negotiations. At the request of the Environmental Task Force, we also asked that the renewable energy tax credit be extended, if an agreed package could be arrived at. Most, if not all, of you know the structure of the final agreed to bill. The renewable energy tax credit was included, if you missed that point. Our second Action Alert was to our members of the IL General Assembly, asking them to support the expansion of Medicaid in Illinois under the Affordable Care Act.

As most of you know, per the U.S. Supreme Court decision last June, states can opt to expand or not expand their Medicaid coverage, which was the Affordable Care Act's means of extending health care to most of the uninsured poor. The Medicaid expansion legislation may be voted on during the early January lame duck session.

This task force decided it would develop a new workshop, based around the Move to Amend movement. That workshop has been largely finalized. After finishing touches are completed this month, a flyer will be created and the workshop advertised to our UU churches and others. If you know already that you would like to have that one hour workshop come to your congregation, you may contact us this winter at the email or phone below.

Members of this task force participated in several public witness actions, during November, to support workers, such as those as Hyatt and Wal-mart.

Social Justice Committee Chairs and others social justice leaders in our UU congregations have until January 11 to submit nominations for the next Home and Hope Booster grant, which goes to an organization assisting the homeless which receives financial and/or volunteer support from the nominating UU congregation. This task force will select the nominee to receive the next grant at its January 12 meeting. That meeting, which is open to all interested in this task force's work, will be held at Third Unitarian Church, 301 N. Mayfield, Chicago 60644, between 12:30 and 2 p.m. on that Saturday.

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

UUSJ Environmental Task Force Report

Congregational Reports:

First Unitarian Church of Chicago:

On their way to becoming an effective new green sanctuary, they distributed a survey regarding options for an Action Plan and received almost seventy responses, and from the diverse, enthusiastic replies, they developed a twelve point Final Action Plan. The Final Action Plan also identified which member(s) of the Green Sanctuary Group had the lead or co-lead on each item. On Sunday, November 25, the church voted overwhelmingly to pursue this twelve point Final Action Plan and pursue becoming a green sanctuary. Their application for admission to the Green Sanctuary Program and check for the \$100 application fee was recently sent to the UUA.

Beverly:

On the morning of Nov. 3 Beverly Unitarian Church had another of its periodic collections of household hazardous waste (for transfer to the city's household hazardous waste collection site on Goose Island) and electronics (which are removed by COM2, an electronics recycler). A winter farmers market has been scheduled for March 9, 2013.

Evanston:

One part of the rain garden has been completed, while another portion is still under development. Lynn Lawson used to write an Eco-Tips column for the church's monthly newsletter, but has retired in December, 2012. Alex Sproul and Andrew Fisher will continue with Eco-Tips in the future.

Action Alerts:

During the period between mid-November and early January, what is called the lame-duck session, the focus was on two large issues: (1) which of the Bush tax cuts should be continued, and other tax related issues, and (2) since Congress voted not to go over the "fiscal cliff", what other plan for long-term deficit reduction should be adopted. As noted in their report, the Task Force on Economic Justice and Homeless decided, in conjunction with this task force, to press our Senators to extend the renewable energy tax credits. The Environmental task force also agreed to send additional letters calling for renewing the renewable energy tax credit(s) as part of any tax package that is finally agreed to (when or if one is agreed to).

Educational Insert:

Kerry has been working on an update to the prior issuance on hybrid vehicles. He expects to call it "Electric, Hybrid, Solar: Auto Power Alternatives". He has part of it drafted, expects to finish the rest soon for sharing with the task force regulars, for their review and input. Allan has been too busy to make much progress on the proposed insert on "Today's Recycling Issues", but expects to get it drafted by the next time this task force meets.

Next meeting:

The next meeting of the Environmental Task Force will be on Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013, at 2:15 p.m. Note that we are **NO LONGER MEETING at Unity Temple in Oak Park.** This next meeting will be at the LaSalle Street Metra Station at LaSalle and Congress.

With any questions, contact:

Andrew T. Fisher – Chair
847-492-1832 or fishorqn1580@att.net

UUSJ Peace Task Force Report

The Peace Task Force is scheduled to meet Saturday 1-12-13, 2 PM at Third Unitarian Church, 301 N. Mayfield, Chicago. All CAUUC area church members and friends are invited to attend. To attend by conference call, dial 1-800-704-9804, then enter code 892781 followed by #.

At that meeting the Peace Task Force will plan events for the year. Plans may include a Tax Day action, International Peace Day events, a peace program to be presented at a UUSJ quarterly meeting and other actions and discussions.

For more information contact Gene Horcher Co-chair at:
773-561-5296, e-mail:
horcher@att.net

UUSJ Immigration Justice Task Force Report

In October 2012 the Immigration Justice Task Force sent out an action alert to Illinois state senators, requesting undocumented immigrants be allowed to secure driver's license using a tax ID number rather than a Social Security number.

In November, as the Immigration Justice Task Force of UUSJ we

signed on to a letter to end the monopoly phone system and kickbacks with the objective of getting affordable phone rates for Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainees. Also in November the Task Force signed on to The Detention Watch Networks letter to President Obama asking the President to close down 10 facilities that Detention Watch Network members have identified as among the worst immigrant prisons in the U.S.

In our individual congregations our immigration work continues:

First Unitarian Church in Chicago held a community forum on international relations issues affecting Chicago immigrants.

Countryside has been involved with the vigils relating to a proposed Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) detention center in Joliet. They also co-sponsored a forum at Harper College in October entitled Faith, Justice, Humanity and Immigration.

At North Shore Unitarian Church (NSUC) many members have been involved with citizenship workshops, deferred action for childhood arrival workshops, tutoring, and signatures in support of the all driver's license. The UUA course, Immigration as a Moral Issue, will be offered at NSUC in January. Members of the Task Force also participated in a December Interfaith vigil and procession focusing on shining a light on incarceration for profit (by groups such as CCA). The deadline

for submitting comments to the UUA is February 1.

The Task Force is also encouraging all of our congregations to review the draft statement of conscience: Immigration as a Moral Issue.

Next Meeting:

The next Immigration Justice Task Force meeting will be on February 17, 2013 at Countryside church in Palatine, Il. 2pm until 4pm.

Sue Reenthaler – Chair
815-678-7072 tomatos@mc.net

Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus (UUMUAC) Report

Report from the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus, January 2013, Dr. Finley C. Campbell, Member, and the Executive Committee & Scribe

In this report, we will cover our activities and meetings from September 2012 to December 8, 2012.

1. Our September 15, Executive Meeting Highlights and Action Proposals:

A. I am to submit a workshop proposal to the Central

Midwest District, for their 2013 annual District Meeting in Wisconsin, their last one. It would be a one hour version of the Building Multiracial Unity in Predominantly White Congregations workshop with an introductory session on the nature of neo-racism.

B. We also approved two UUMUAC workshops this fall: at the First Unitarian Church of Chicago at the behest of its interim senior minister on October 27, 2012 and at the UUSJ Annual Meeting on Sunday, Nov. 11, at the Hinsdale Unitarian Church. In addition, we approved a proposal that Ethiopian immigrant and sociology professor, Dr. Taye Woldesmiat, who is now a UUMUAC member, has offered to speak in U.U. congregations about the importance of multi-racial unity in Africa.

C. In light of our opposition to the Doctrine of Discovery Resolution passed at the Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly 2012, due to racist statements in the supporting documents and insufficient time for study and discussion in U.U. congregations, we approved the following future projects: (a) the possibility of assisting the Native American Center on Chicago's north

side, which is reported to be having financial difficulties and to be in danger of closing, (b) the possibility of engaging Native Americans at the Center in a discussion on present day racism, either on Columbus Day 2012 or a day not far from that holiday. I reported on an article in the *Chicago Tribune* describing a group called the American Indian Mafia which was reportedly behind the killing of 75 fellow Native Americans at the Pine Ridge reservation back in the 70's and present day tribal leaders are calling for a federal investigation in to those deaths. I am to do a follow up on this disturbing information in order to eventually give them support to their request.

2. The Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus sponsored a workshop on multiracial Unitarian Universalism on October 27th 2012 with nine people in attendance. The focus was on the role that our workshop on Building Multiracial Unity in Predominantly White Congregations can play in opposing racism in its old and new forms both within and without the walls of our congregations. However because of disagreements over the concept of neo-racism in the UUA, two key people withdrew their support leading to a reduction in participation at the last minute. In the first part of the

workshop, we discussed the various kinds of privileges we have in a racist-capitalist society, based on gender and race, but most of all on class. Many interesting insights were revealed, such as my middle class privileges as a black professional over poorer black folks. Then we examined the various episodes in our own lives where multiracial unity was a key factor. Some examples:

- i. One participant described his surprise when, during the Eugene McCarthy campaign, he stayed with a black family in Milwaukee: the essence of his surprise was that there were black folks who supported a peace candidate over then President Johnson;
- ii. Two people described powerful moments of multiracial unity during the Harold Washington campaign;
- iii. I described the multiracial support I received when I ran for Congress and governor in Indiana.

A criticism of the workshop was that we did not have enough ABC discussions about neo-racism. Three concrete ideas which came out were to think about a campaign against racist unemployment, to support the struggle to clear the names of ex felons' convicted of non-violent crimes, and to continue to work in the immigrant rights movement.

3. Our next workshop was at the Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice meeting on November 11, 2012 in Hinsdale. Since it was a one hour session, we did a streamlined version of the Building Multiracial Unity in Predominantly White Congregations workshop, led by Allan Lindrup. At this session we dropped the privilege discussion and went directly in to the story telling part of the workshop: creating a master narrative, best on episodes of multiracial unity in people's actual lives. Some episodes include opposing a Klan rally, struggling to integrate a barbershop, struggling to bring racial diversity to community issues in upstate New York. The last ten minutes everyone shared their ideas for fostering multiracial unity in their home congregations and in the larger community; e.g., have white and black congregations have folks exchange Sunday's; have children of different races exchange letters; and many others. In all these examples, multiracial Unitarian Universalism offers the best way to oppose racism in all its forms, especially anti-white racism within our denomination.

4. On December 8, 2012, the Executive Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus met to review our past events and to lay out a program of action for 2013. We evaluated our two

workshops, concluding that whether large or small, they are a vital part of our work.

I provided a summary of an interfaith progressive conference held in N.Y.C. from Nov. 8 to 11. Many of the participants were UUs. I learned that the UUA is no longer funding membership growth in small, urban UU congregations. I would like UUMUAC to pressure the UUA to resume funding growth in multiracial, urban UU congregations. We didn't discuss how that pressure might be developed. A later idea is that I could develop a sure-fire growth formula, if one could be developed, this would make our efforts more attractive. The main focus of my participation in the conference was on the problem of anti-white racism in the UUA anti-racist work, symbolized by such language as white identity, white privilege, Eurocentrism, and maintaining separate anti-racist organizations: one for whites and one for non-whites. And in society at large, I pointed out that despite the millions of white brothers and sisters who voted for President Obama, neo-racists still put forth the untruth that he only won because of non-white votes.

Jerry Parker will explore booking space at 3rd U for a combination workshop and open Executive Committee meeting during black history month.

General Assembly 2013 was discussed. Issues include the UUA Board's plan to have the delegates

vote to end the Non-Discrimination clause in the UUA's By-Laws. The possibility of a vote to end Actions of Immediate Witness (AIW) is another concern. If AIW's continue, or even if they do not, we are considering offering a proposal to the UUA to participate in the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington in August. UUMUAC will seek to have a Gathering earlier on the date that the GA opens. I have been authorized to develop a feasibility report on this possibility, especially in locating affordable space for the gathering.

Since Jenny Peek recently resigned from the UUMUAC Executive Committee, we have asked Francoise Johnson, a member of Beverly Unitarian Church, to serve

as her replacement, and she has accepted.

We ended our meeting with these closing words: we may be small, but we ain't all. And I add – for we are the only UU organization which explicitly and intentionally supports and fights for multiracial Unitarian Universalism as the only way to oppose – the poison of racism, which, for 150 years after the Emancipation Proclamation still exists, but in new, more pernicious forms.

For more information, contact Finley C. Campbell, Co-Chair
773-230-3883 or
finleycampbell5222@comcast.net

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
1448 East 52nd Street / PM Box 144
Chicago, IL 60615