

UUSJ Newsletter – Winter 2018

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

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Chair's Corner:

My journey to becoming a Unitarian Universalist started at a very young age when I questioned my mom's Christian belief. Given our poor economic condition, it did not make sense to me to continue believing that God would make things better if we just have faith. I soon stopped questioning her because she would look so hurt, but I still felt the same. I went as far as going to church with her and dancing to the music at the church. I did this because I loved music and wanted to be with her.

During my teenage years, I no longer talked about God but did what most teenagers do: day dreaming about what I was going to be when I grew up, going to school, going to parties and having fun with friends. The big change during this time was having a child; so, then I had to get serious. I worked and attended Jones Commercial High School at night. I started job hunting after finishing secretarial school which was the first time I was confronted with overt racism.

I was a young Black woman from a poor Black community and now trying to find a job in virtually white companies. I thought since I had done so well in my classes and had received a certificate as a secretary, I would have no problems acquiring

a position. I don't think I thought much about being Black until I was told "I would not feel comfortable here because there were no people of my kind."

If I had thought seriously about it, I don't think I would have gone to a secretarial school. But because I had not experienced overt racial bias and wanted to be a secretary, I thought I could do it. So, I went through all the preparations: the classes that included how to speak and dress as a secretary. I eventually got a position as a production typist. I was doing production work like production work done in a factory, but I didn't think of it that way.

The next UUSJ Board Meeting, which will also include a retreat, will be on Saturday, March 24 at 10:00 AM at the Unitarian Church of Evanston, 1300 Ridge Avenue.

Soon afterward I got married, had other children, and began my life as an activist involving schools, dealing with educational issues. During this time, I met many unionists and progressive people but most of my activism was around schools. During this time, I was involved with PUSH until Jesse Jackson would not come to our demonstrations because we

could not assure a certain number of people. My children and I would attend the marches and demonstrations when Dr. King came to Chicago. My anger began to get out of control because of the police brutality. I decided it was best to channel that anger by joining the Socialist Worker Party.

There was a lot of gang activities on the West side of Chicago, so my husband and I moved to Maywood. This was a very good community for raising children and things went well until the 80's when drugs were brought into the community. After being an activist for many years, I became disillusioned after the Gulf war and begin to pull back from the party, and after a few years I dropped out.

My community was my family and my love of dancing until many family members began to die off and the sense of community began to wane. Then I began to realize my need for a community.

My search brought me to Unitarian Universalism and through that the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Church and eventually Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice.

Now here are three things I hope to accomplish as your chair: (1) getting heavily involved in the Poor People Campaign, (2) being mindful of our principles in all our relationships and (3) ensuring our business is conducted by the democratic process.

At the UUSJ 2017 Annual Meeting, held at the UU Community Church in Park Forest, our organization voted to endorse and encourage activism in the new Poor

People's Campaign, lead nationally by Rev. William Barber. Two new individuals joined the UUSJ Board for 2018: Eileen Klees, of the Beverly Unitarian Church, as our new Treasurer, and Rev. Karen Mooney, as Ministerial Liaison. We heard a report from Evan Freund on steps to organize a UUSJ Interfaith Criminal Justice Task Force. We hope that new task force can materialize and qualify, under the UUSJ By-Laws, for recognition at the UUSJ Winter Quarter Board Meeting.

Marie Cobbs

UUSJ Economic Justice and Homelessness Task Force Report

This task force last met on October 14 at Third Unitarian Church. While we will have in-person task force meetings in the future, we are trying something different for our next meeting, on January 20. Our January 20 meeting will be exclusively a conference call, starting at 12:30 p.m. and last roughly an hour. During the week before the conference call I will be sending the regular and occasional task force members both the proposed agenda, supplements, plus the call-in number and conference call ID number. Others who would like to participate should contact this writer at either 773-595-4921 or uusj@sbcglobal.net to receive that information.

Since our last column we had one Action Alert, directed to Governor Rauner, asking him to request a waiver for calendar year 2018 of the federal time limit that restricts SNAP (aka food stamps) eligibility for non-disabled adults without minor children to 3 out of 36 months unless they are working at least 20 hours a week. We were pleased that the Governor, after many months of indecision on this matter prior to our input, did, following our input, request the waiver for 2018. We agreed to have another Action Alert in support of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) if it did not get funded in an end-of-the year budget deal, which most analysts were projecting. It did get funded shortly before Christmas, but only for the first half of FY 2018 (Oct-March), so we may still need to have an Action Alert in support of CHIP next spring.

The task force set Friday, January, 5, 2018, as the deadline for the next Home and Hope Booster nominations. The Home and Hope Booster grants provide financial support to organizations helping the homeless who are receiving financial and/or volunteer support from one of our Chicago area UU congregations, which can then nominate the organization, explain the good work it does for the homeless, and how their UU congregation has been assisting the organization. Electronic requests for nominations went out the first week of November, to those individuals in our Chicago Area UU congregations who are either likely to submit a nomination or be able to pass the request to the appropriate individual in their

congregation. If you are someone who might like to submit a future Home and Hope Booster grant nomination, send a note to that effect to uusj@sbcglobal.net.

We discussed what we would like for our next Economic Justice resource sheet. We decided we would like to create one that shares brief descriptions and the websites of lead organizations working for economic justice through: activism; research/analysis; plus those focusing on health care, education, and taxation issues.

Jane Bannor shared that the UU Just Economic Community (UUJEC) is focusing a lot of its energy on health care. The UUJEC web site has webcasts on a variety of economic justice issues. Chuck Collins, who is a leader in the fight for economic justice, will be speaking at the Unitarian Church of Evanston in the spring of 2018. Details will be released when all the details are worked out.

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

UUSJ Environmental Task Force Report

Congregational Reports:

Beverly Unitarian Church – The hazardous waste collection held on October 7 had many customers. However, the high cost of a certified electronics recycler means lower net income. Winters farmers market is shifted to a new location. They are planning an updated energy audit.

First Unitarian Church of Chicago – Held household hazardous waste collection on Dec. 2. They are discussing the book: *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Ever to Reduce Global Warming*.

Unitarian Church of Evanston – It is continuing to compost at all church lunches, recycle paper and cans, and collect and dispose of household hazardous waste through TerraCycle.

Legislative Advocacy:

Since the Fall UUSJ Newsletter, we've issued two **action alerts**: (1) on Oct. 11 to Governor Rauner opposing Dynergy coal power plants and Illinois plans to weaken clean air standards, and (2) on Nov. 13 to Secretary of Transportation, Elaine L. Chao urging preservation of daily CO2 limits.

Next meeting:

On Saturday, Jan. 20, 2018, 2:30 at BeeZee, 424 S. Wabash, Chicago
Andrew T. Fisher – Chair
847-492-1832 or
fishorgn1580@gmail.com

The Peace Task Force

The UUSJ Peace Task Force held our last meeting at Third Unitarian Church on October 14. We made final plans for hosting the UUSJ Quarterly Meeting on December 3 at the UU Community Church in Park Forest, IL and we discussed new task force initiatives.

Members of the task force were eager to get involved in the upcoming 2018 elections, and also to encourage Senator Tammy

Duckworth to stand more solidly behind efforts for peace in the Middle East and on the Korean Peninsula. We were also heartened by the recent awarding of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize to the grassroots group International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which introduced and lobbied for a treaty to end nuclear weapons.

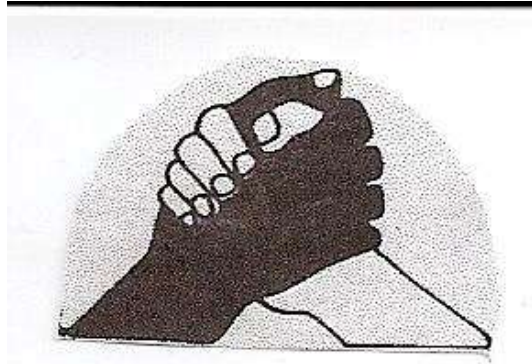
Members also reported on activities within their congregations. Many congregations continue to work on local social justice and anti-violence issues. In Evanston, church members are holding an Amnesty International Letter-Writing campaign in January. Stationery, sample letters and fact sheets will be available so congregants can write letters of support to the governments holding prisoners of conscience. To find out more about this project, either visit the Amnesty web-site at AmnestyUSA.org or talk to Jane Bannor.

At the Quarterly Meeting in Park Forest, we heard from author and “oral historian” Rosalie Riegle who has written two books on US peace activists. She presented thumbnail sketches of some of the 175 activists she'd interviewed, and she told us what personality traits seem to motivate these folks and make them successful. Her talk seemed well-received. Ms. Riegle said she'd be available to speak to individual UU congregations, if we'd like to have her.

Trying something new, the next meeting of the peace task force will take place completely by phone conference. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for Sat, February 17 at 5pm, and anyone

who wants to join the call should phone in to 1-800-704-9804, code 892781#.

Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Caucus (UUMUAC) Report



“The Unity of the Light and Dark Skinned People of the World.”

by Rev. Finley C. Campbell,
spokesperson
finleycampbell5222@comcast.net

Greetings to members and friends of Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice – Chicago Area.

First of all, let's give a brief overview of our activities since our summer report. From September 2017 to January 2018, we held our monthly meetings where we laid out plans for the 2017 - 2018 church year. This included the following: our annual Afghan Women's Fund Christmas Bazaar (December 2017), A Conference In Detroit (April 21, 2018) dealing with building a

multiracial movement against neo-racist unemployment to be linked to the Poor People's Campaign, endorsing and participating in the Poor People's Campaign, especially the rally held on the west side in October, applying for a workshop and an exhibition booth at the General Assembly 2018 in Kansas City Missouri, our celebration of the 155th anniversary of the abolitionist victory at the Battle of Gettysburg. In light of these activities and the expenses which they would occur, in November we offered the idea of financially supporting us as an alternative for those Unitarian Universalist members who were not going to support the Black Lives of UU Organizing Collective \$5.1 million campaign.

At the CAUUC conference on Inspiring Social Justice Collaboration, MAC members, thanks to workings of God, were able to have a workshop around the question of criminal justice and to lay the basis for a new UUSJ criminal justice task force. To explain: when the old UUSJ prisons and restorative justice task force was dissolved some years ago, UUMUAC had picked up the torch. But I felt it was time for a new task force, based upon work being done at First Unitarian Church by MAC member, Evan Freund. Additionally, I was invited to take part in the closing panel discussion where I shared the information concerning the criminal justice work, which we had discussed at the criminal justice gathering during the lunch break,, as a supplement to Rev. Karen Mooney's multiracial approach in the UU Prison Ministry of Illinois.

I ended my remarks with the observation that it was unnecessary to have people of color in one's congregation or even to have an alliance with a people of color church in order for our white or predominately white congregations to fight back against the new racism.

Our last major event took place in December, with our Afghan Women's Fund Xmas Bazaar project, featuring UUMUAC member Sister Fahima Gaheez, director. We had three sites for the bazaar: the University Church of Hyde Park, First Unitarian Church of Chicago, and the First Unitarian Church of Hobart Indiana. We raised over \$5000 for the Afghan Women's Fund and had a wonderful activity at the Hobart church, where Sister Fahima gave the Sunday service sermon. Due to mismanagement on my part, we were unable to have our Afghan discussion on Saturday eve, but nonetheless we

did manage to reach out to scores of people about the situation in Afghanistan in an informal manner, including to the president of the Cook County Board of Commissioners Sister Tony Preckwinkle who bought an expensive rug.

To conclude; On January 5, 2018 we had an exciting executive committee meeting, which all the Exec. Comm. members were able to attend.. The main focus of the meeting was on preparing for the April 21 conference in Detroit Michigan, by having a complete feasibility study report ready by January 27, 2018

. Our next executive meeting will be on February 2, 3 – 5 pm at the Country Kitchen Rest Restaurant on 87th St. just west of Cottage Grove. Call 773 752 4019 for more information

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