



## UUJEC Winter Newsletter 2019

### Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community

Karla Chew, Editor, Inquiries to: [Newsletter@uujec.com](mailto:Newsletter@uujec.com)

#### A Top 70% Marginal Tax Rate is not Radical

Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez has proposed a top marginal tax rate of 70%. The top marginal tax rate is currently 36.7%. Mitch McConnell retorted saying such a *radical* proposal will never be accepted. The proposal is not radical. If one looks at historical top marginal tax rates the current 36.7% is radically unfair, not the proposed 70%. To assail any misconception, under a progressive tax system like the United States has, no one would pay seventy percent of their income in taxes if the top marginal tax rate was 70%. They would only pay a tax of 70% for income over ten million dollars. That is, if a person had a taxable income of ten million and one dollars they would pay 70% on the one dollar. This person would NOT pay 70% on the ten million dollars. When a person's earnings enter a higher tax bracket that person does not pay the higher tax rate on all of their income, only on that income which is in the higher tax bracket, which in this example is the one dollar.

The seventy percent top marginal is not radical if one looks at history. From 1931 through 1986 the top marginal tax rate ranged from a high in 1944 of 94% and a low of 50% in 1986. During these 42 years the top marginal tax rate was much higher than the current 36.7%. History tells us what effect a high top marginal tax rate has on the economy. From 1951 through 1963 when the top marginal tax

rate varied between 91% and 92% the GDP grew on average 3.61% a year.

(see <http://www.multpl.com/us-real-gdp-growth-rate/table/by-year>). Real GDP is, by definition, a measure of the income per person adjusted for inflation.

(see <https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/what-is-gdp-why-its-important-to-economists-investors/>). So a 70% top marginal tax rate would not in itself hurt the economy.

Furthermore, during the 1950's and early 1960's, the federal government had the funds to build the interstate system and the foundations of the space program because of high top marginal tax rates, and, during this period of high taxes and spending, the economy grew. So Mitch McConnell's claim that a 70% top marginal tax supported by history as is easily seen by examining 1951 through 1963, when there was a very high top marginal tax rate and the economy grew.

And notice, beginning in 1962 the top marginal tax rate began to drop with the promise that "rising tides raise all boats", that is as the rich get richer so does everyone else, followed by "supply side economics" in the 1980's with the promise that by reducing the taxes on the wealthy the wealth would trickle down to the average citizen. Given the wealth and income disparity of today these promises did not materialize.

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(see [http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/taxfacts/content/PDF/toprate\\_historical.pdf](http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/taxfacts/content/PDF/toprate_historical.pdf)).

So let's applaud the just proposal of raising the marginal tax rate on the wealthy and celebrate the opportunity to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure, reduce the yawning wealth inequality, institute universal healthcare, and create green jobs to save our imperiled environment before it is too late.

See Resources at UUJEC.com for more info on the Green New Deal.

(submitted by Lucy Hitchcock and Jim Black)

### Get to Know Your Board:



**Kit Marlowe** recently retired from his position as a [safety manager](#) for an [environmental engineering company](#) and moved from Northern NJ to [Cape May, NJ](#). It's a beautiful beachfront town, but poverty runs rampant about nine months a year.

He came to the UU Faith in 1981. In his current church, the [UU Congregation of the South Jersey Shore](#), he serves on the Finance Committee. He is Capital Projects Chair

for [Cape Hope Cares](#), a local homeless aide group. He is also president of the [Democratic Club](#) in Lower Township, NJ.

**Book Reviews:** Have you read a book on economic justice you'd like to review and share with UUJEC membership? Contact [UUJEC.com](#) for more information.

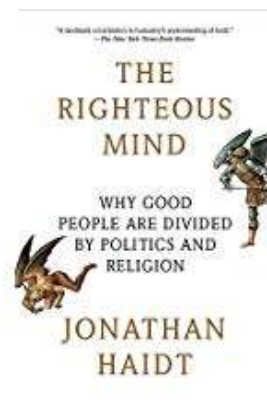
## Is Tribalism the Explanation for our Political Polarization?

A Review by Dick Burkhardt of

### "The Righteous Mind:

*Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*" By Jonathan Haidt

This is an insightful book about how evolutionary "multi-level selection" has given rise to "moral intuitions" that strengthen groups of people. That is, survival of the fittest groups, not the fittest individuals. The six moral intuitions are *Care, Liberty, Fairness, Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity*. Yet these moral sentiments of right and wrong also divide us, with liberals emphasizing the first three and conservatives the last three.



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## Scholarships for 20 Teens at TUC



THIRD UNITARIAN CHURCH

301 N. Mayfield, Chicago, IL 60644  
Austin Scholarship Committee

[www.thirdunitarianchurch.org](http://www.thirdunitarianchurch.org)  
[tucAustinScholarship@gmail.com](mailto:tucAustinScholarship@gmail.com)

Will this understanding enable us to dampen the huge political and religious conflicts in the US? Haidt thinks so, yet he is a social psychologist and never digs into the economic and historical trends that are driving the political gridlock and animosity. Like the escalating economic inequality of the last 40 years, which has left much of the US working class (= those lacking a college degree) in the dust, struggling in anger or despair, ripe for scapegoating and demagoguery.

Underlying this phenomenon of “the rich getting richer, the poor getting poorer” comes from the explosive but unsustainable growth of modern civilization, driven by fossil fuels that are being rapidly depleted, already encountering a backlash from Gaia herself in the form of climate change. In fact this is typical as kingdoms, empires, or civilizations reach their peaks, with elite factions seeking to overcome limits to growth or expansion by bearing down ever harder on both people and natural resources to produce more wealth.

In other words, civic civility won't get us very far unless we all step back and focus on the hard task of putting the common good ahead of self-interest and of the identity politics of our traditional groups. Haidt's analysis shows exactly why this won't be easy, because our Gaia identity is very weak compared to our class, ethnic, religious, and political identities.

(Submitted by Dick Burkhart)

Third Unitarian Church of Chicago has been giving awards for students to attend college for 45 years. The church is in one of the poorest areas in Chicago. When the program started only one or two awards were given to one or two students. As time went on, more awards were given with more value. Last spring the church awarded 16 scholarships for \$1,000 each.

Fundraising (pancake breakfasts, Martin Luther King Luncheon, Women's History Luncheon) goes on during each year. This is a small congregation, so they, also, count on donations from some of the larger churches in the area. (Hinsdale UU, Unity Temple UU Church, Winnetka Church of Christ) and large individual donations. Then in the spring the awards are given based on how much is in the account.

The awards are given in two payments of \$500. One \$500 payment when their fall college schedules are received and the second when they send their first semester grades and their second semester schedules.

(Submitted by Karla Chew)

## Combating Racism in Word and Deed: Spoken Word Poetry at Unitarian Church of Evanston

In early February the Peace and Justice Committee of the Evanston Unitarian Church and local members of UUs for a Just Economic Community (UUJEC) sponsored a presentation of spoken word poetry by Christopher Sims, poetry slam veteran and adjunct professor at Rock Valley College. Christopher, who also serves as staff administrator for UUJEC, recited some of his poems at a program titled “Combating Racism in Word and Deed”.



Christopher has presented his poems at venues throughout the Midwest and had them published in both UU and issue-oriented publications. As he writes in one of his poems:

We need poetry  
that puts on black berets,  
black dashikis, black pants, and black  
boots  
Poetry that rises and raises its fist  
to run after the oppressor . . .

Christopher, a UU activist and community minister, also described some of the activities currently underway by UUJEC. The group has developed traditional and video curricula on Income Inequality and Money in Politics for use by UU congregations, and it hosts monthly webinars on such topics as universal health care and revisions to the federal income tax. The Evanston church has used parts of the UUJEC curricula in designing their programming.

The audience was also interested to hear from Christopher, who has filled UU pulpits in many different parts of the country, about the social justice activities going on in other churches. They were especially interested in his perspective as a black UU and active member of Black Lives UU (BLUU).

(Submitted by Jane Bannor)

**What we do:** UUJEC strives to create a world of justice, equity, and compassion where the inherent worth and dignity of every person is recognized and affirmed as set forth in our Unitarian Universalist Principles.