



UUJEC Fall Newsletter 2015

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Tips for Working with Your Congregation on “Escalating Inequality”

You may be eager to do something about the **Escalating Inequality** Congregational Study Action Issue, but how about your congregation? Some congregations will be rarin’ to go, with others you may not even know where to start. So the first thing is to start talking to people, especially the minister and known activists. But many others too, just to find out who’s interested in what. Where’s the energy?

Be willing to stand back from your own passions in order to learn what’s motivating others. Instead, get people to finish the sentence, “Let’s teach ourselves about ...”. *Continued on page 4...*

Johnson County Supervisors Pass an Ordinance for a Higher Minimum Wage

In Iowa, congregationally based community organizers, CBCO, are working to provide affordable housing. This has been done before by other CBCOs, but it's a daunting, many years’ process.

Center for Worker Justice in Iowa City lobbied their Johnson County Supervisors to pass an increase to the minimum wage--from \$7.25 to \$8.25 per hour. The trick was to find the sweet spot, giving some money, but avoid the ire of city councils that could block the higher minimum and the state legislature that could overturn local efforts to increase the minimum wage.

Affordable housing needs to remain on the table, but passing a local higher minimum wage is a quick way to make a difference. In community organizing, a higher minimum wage would be called "actionable"--doing something that we can reasonably expect to get a victory. [Terry Lowman, UUJEC Co-Chair, UU Action Network, Iowa]

Purchase with a Purpose: We All Do Better When We All Do Better

Our biggest shopping season is right around the corner. Whether you plan to buy gifts, food or gift certificates, this season can be stressful for those of us who want our dollars to make a positive economic impact. It’s often difficult to distinguish between companies with sound environmental and workplace practices and those who are contributing to the exploitation of our planet and the race to the bottom in wages and quality of life.

Considering that our collective purchasing power has great potential to create jobs and address economic inequality, let’s make this holiday season count for those doing it right; for organizations and working people making a positive contribution to our world.



The Alliance for American Manufacturing, circulated an organizing toolkit at the Portland GA, filled with resources for congregations and activists. The Consumer Power Guide offers a wealth of information for positive change; simple actions for individual shoppers and group activities for congregations. Fair trade, sustainability and positive economic impact; that’s the recipe for a happy holiday. Find the Guide here: <http://goo.gl/Oid9sM> [Rachel Bennett Steury, Trade & Globalization Task Force]

UUJEC Membership Live out your UU values by becoming a member or renewing your membership with us today. Let your voice join the voice of others who stand for economic justice! <http://uujec.com/join>

Get to Know Your Board: Michael Teasdale



Michael Teasdale is the Chair of the UUJEC General Assembly and Conferences Committee and UUJEC Liaison to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). He is a graduate from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in Philosophy. Michael spent 10 years as a director in the theatre and a journalist often addressing issues of inequality in New York and Paris before working in the corporate world in strategy, change management and training. His last position was Senior Director of Operational Excellence at Baxter Inc. Since retiring, Michael has taught a course on Inequality inspired by Thomas Piketty's Book "Capital" and led a group at his Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (CVUUF) congregation on inequality. He now lives in Thousand Oaks, California with his wife.

Michael joined the UUJEC board this year and is working to engage and motivate his congregation to act in support of economic justice. CVUUF recently had a service dedicated to speakers sharing their experiences with poverty. Some speakers were from the congregation, helping to open up conversations around inequality and how they are addressing it. Michael is working to organize an event on "Economic Justice in Ventura County," partnering with local organizations to hold a 6-hour workshop to help people realize that inequality is in their backyard not just the Mississippi Delta. To talk with Michael about his efforts and discuss your work on economic justice, you can reach him at Michael.Teasdale1@gmail.com

400 People at the 2015 Single-Payer Strategy Conference

Nurses, physicians, labor leaders and other union activists, business people, elected officials, at least one UUJEC member (Judy Deutsch) and other activists assembled in Chicago the last weekend in October to strategize on what to do next to get single-payer health care in our states and in our nation.

After listening to experienced, well-informed and enthusiastic speakers including Representative Jim McDermott, Thomas Conway, vice-president of United Steelworkers, Michael Lighty of the California Nurses Association, Ben Day of Health Care Now, Mark Dudzic of the Labor Campaign for Single Payer, Rand Wilson of SEIU 888, and after attending three of the 15 varied and needed workshops that were offered, participants conferred in small groups about what they should do next.

They decided that building a movement was most important — aligning with other groups who would support single payer, including businesses, people of color and immigrants. And they went home with a DVD of the film "FIX IT: Healthcare at the Tipping Point" which they saw before leaving, and which is possibly the most powerful tool for getting others, including business people, on board. You can get a copy of FIX IT through www.fixithealthcare.com.

[Judy Deutsch, UUJEC Healthcare Task Force]

Living Our Values: The board of the Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship agreed to pay all employees of the congregation a minimum wage of \$15 and strive to abide by the guidelines of the fair compensation suggested by the UUA. This decision came after numerous members of the fellowship had done research and became active in supporting efforts to raise the minimum wage.

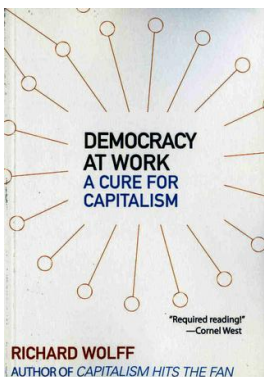
[Michael Teasdale]

TPP Text Revealed

Text of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) was recently released first by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and finally by the Obama Administration. As we suspected the free trade agreement wreaks havoc on our economy and exploits the most vulnerable among us. See the text here: <https://goo.gl/QVNO0e>. The Washington Post has a handy tool to help you navigate here: <https://goo.gl/bCWhW9>. The TPP won't be voted on until 2016 so we have time to mobilize our congregations. Please join our allies across the globe to pressure Congress to stop this train wreck. Visit the Citizens Trade Campaign website to raise your voice: <http://goo.gl/OcQ4DE> [Rachel Bennett Steury]

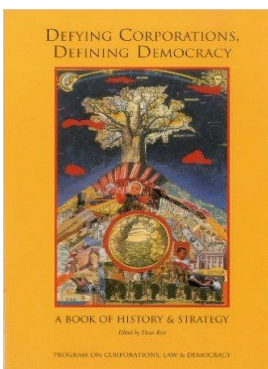
Book Reviews: Have you read a book on economic justice you'd like to review and share with UUJEC membership? Contact info@uujec.com for more information.

“Democracy At Work: A Cure for Capitalism”



If you believe that economic justice is an impossibility under capitalism, read Richard Wolff, *Democracy At Work: A Cure for Capitalism* for a path toward positive systemic change. He analyzes the popularly misconstrued labeling of countries, such as Russia, China and Cuba, as “communist” or “socialist” when, in truth, they are state capitalism. That is, the power to decide where surplus profits from labor go is located in the state instead of in corporations, and not in the workers responsible for the production and surplus. This is a crucial and fog-lifting insight. It also serves as warning that government “New Deals” like raising the minimum wage and providing social security payments, while certainly helpful, are not the same as where decision-making is located. Thus, his “cure for capitalism” is to put the power for decision-making into the hands of the workers.

Of course, this is a major upheaval from what is done now, but there are examples of it working in individual workplaces, like cooperatives, as well as the large and long-term experiment of Mondragon. It gives those of us longing for a fair path forward a blueprint to strive for and companions with whom to collaborate. [Rev. Dr. Lucy Hitchcock, UUJEC Tax Fairness Task Force member]



“Defying Corporations, Defining Democracy”

This little book, a collection of 70 essays, sermons, speeches, and yes, even rants, - was invigorating on first read and has been a valuable reference over the years. It challenges the usual approaches of regulations, demonstrations, and puts the essence of illegitimate corporate power on display for all to see.

Use the “Look Inside” feature on Amazon to sample a few of the gems within. You will be hooked. [Rich Florentino, UUJEC Board]

Tips continued from page 1...

In fact, the UUJEC study guide and other study guides are all about scoping the possibilities. And the deeper you go, the more motivated people will become. They'll have a much better understanding, not just that the system is broken, but how it got that way, what are the underlying obstacles to justice, what really needs to be done over the long haul.

Then look for short term opportunities to get the ball rolling in the right direction. Who are potential allies among other faith groups and advocacy groups? Should you just jump on board with an existing campaign, say for a higher minimum wage, a more progressive tax, restoring democracy, co-ops, expanded public services, or whatever? Or should you collaborate for a new initiative?

So after talking to people, call an exploratory meeting. Present what you've heard to date and lay out some options. Be prepared to listen hard and to seek at least a modicum of consensus on a way forward. If at all possible, get the minister to do a sermon on economic inequality and injustice, with your exploratory meeting as the announced follow up. Or have a guest sermon. You'll find some good sermon ideas on the UUJEC website,

When it comes to an exploratory meeting, the options to be described include quite a number of study guides and programs on the UUJEC website.

One idea would be to ask for volunteers, one or two for each study option, to take a look at the option and report back at a second exploratory meeting. You might call this a scoping phase, just to get a handle on some of the paths forward.

The six part UUJEC curriculum, which I developed, is the most comprehensive and in depth. (<http://uujec.com/uujecCurriculum>).

A simplified 6 session curriculum was developed by Bob Beekman of the Shoreline UU church near Seattle. (<http://uujec.com/Escalating-Inequality-CSAI/Shoreline-UU-Study-Series>).

Terry Lowman's TED talk curriculum is an easy to digest compendium of videos on the current situation which includes issues of race, class, and the environment (<http://uujec.com/tedcurriculum>).

The UUA study guide is four-part series that has a greater emphasis on the social class aspect of inequality (<http://uujec.com/UUAstudyguide>).

A different approach is the all-slide curriculum assembled by Terry Steichen of the Fairfax, Virginia, church (<http://uujec.com/Escalating-Inequality-CSAI/FairFax>).

For a good one-time workshop on inequality, consider the Chandler, Arizona, workshop. It mixes a number of good slides with good text, and was very well received at the 2015 General Assembly (<http://uujec.com/csaiCurriculum/Chandler>).

The Stony Brook UU Humanist sermon is a good example of a sermon that could be as much an outcome of a curriculum as an introduction to it (<http://uujec.com/Escalating-Inequality-CSAI/Stony-Brook-Humanist-Service>).

We hope that this overview will help you get oriented on how to tackle Escalating Inequality. You can always send us questions and suggestions, especially materials that you have developed yourselves, like the ones described above. The more we share with each other, the better. It's OK to borrow from any of our posted materials.

[Dick Burkhardt, UUJEC Co-Chair]