



UUJEC Summer Newsletter 2016

Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community

Karla Chew, Editor. Inquiries to: newsletter@uujec.com

UUJEC Economic Justice Leadership Award



Our first annual Economic Justice and Leadership award program was a great success. Congregations and social justice committees from all corners of the country applied, and shared their progress and struggles working for economic justice in their communities. It was inspiring to hear from groups big and small, and to see through them, what is possible for all of us to achieve.

At our Annual Meeting in Columbus, Co-Chairs Dick Burkhart and Terry Lowman presented First Unitarian Society of Madison (FUS) with the UUJEC Economic Justice Leadership Award. Becky Schigiel, the FUS Madison Social Justice Coordinator, along with Lynda McAfee, founding member of the FUS Equity Ministry Team and Erica Colmenares, former Co-Chair of the Equity Ministry Team accepted the award on behalf of the great work the congregation is doing.

To quote the application, *"With other coalitions, we are leading the Fight for \$15, supporting unions (under terrible assault), and finding new ways to leverage power for all that goes into sustainable working conditions (schedules, transportation, etc.). Since 2013, we have hosted an NPR-facilitated racial justice panel, the Nuns on the Bus, directors of Interfaith Worker Justice; a Young Gifted and Black teach-in; and a "Food, Race, and Justice" event...*

Economic Justice Leadership Award (Cont.)

Whether it's through our religious school classroom projects, collections, or a community picnic-- we are showing up, speaking out, and breaking bread."

Stay tuned for feature stories from all of our applicants. We're creating an "Economic Justice Spotlight" page on our website to highlight their efforts so others can work in collaboration with them and share best practices. Thank you to everyone who applied.

A Farmworker Bill of Rights for the Central Coast of California!



On April 3, the Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (CVUUF) held an all member meeting and voted to endorse a local effort to establish a Farmworker Bill of Rights in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties in California. This is a historical effort to improve working conditions for those people who help bring us the food we put on our tables. CVUUF took this opportunity to strike a blow for the human dignity of, and compassion for, the farm workers in their community.

For the last 200 years farmworker jobs have been filled by newly arrived ethnic groups and waves of migration. Land owners and farm managers sought after this ever-shifting migratory labor force that that was economically desperate, afraid to organize and able to bear the harsh conditions of the fields.

~The price of world peace is economic justice for all~

A Farmworker Bill of Rights (cont.)

AS working conditions improved for most of the labor force, farm workers were left behind by legislators and farm owners who exploited their powerless position and the racism often directed at these ethnicities.

The Farmworker Bill Of Rights aims to correct this injustice. Sponsored by CAUSE (Central Coast Alliance United for A Sustainable Economy), an activist group in Ventura County for low wage workers, this effort targets some of the key areas where current day farmworkers, who are 90% Mexican, are suffering:

Curb Extreme Work: Most farm workers need to work 50 to 60 hours a week to sustain their family in substandard housing and to nourish their children. The Bill of Rights calls for adequate sick time, protecting pregnant women from pesticides with pregnancy leave and requiring real break times.

Crack Down on Wage Theft: Already against the law, wage theft by not paying workers for the number of baskets they fill or requiring them to work while waiting for a paycheck, needs more resources for enforcement. The Bill of Rights asks for more of these county resources, meaningful penalties for wage theft and protecting workers from retaliation when reporting wage theft.

Protect Health and Safety: The farmworker Bill of Rights asks for more funding to educate workers about necessary health and safety precautions for agricultural work where the presence of pesticides is common. It also calls for the provision of adequate safety equipment and holding growers responsible if they apply pesticide when workers are still in the field. Improving the lives of farmworkers will strengthen our economy in Southern California and enhance the quality of life of a large section of the community. UUs have traditionally been at the forefront of efforts to move the world towards a more just and equitable society. CVUUF has furthered that tradition by endorsing an effort that will transform many lives. [Michael Teasdale, Co Chair]

Would you like to join our board, one of our meetings or have a question? Please send inquiries to uujec@uujec.com!

Meet Your Board



During our Annual Board Retreat in Columbus this year, leadership positions and processes were voted on for the 2016-2017 term. Our meeting calendar is set 1) The Executive board meets every first Monday of the month at 5:30 EST. 2) Our full board meets every second Monday of the month at 5:30 EST. (some months the dates might change due to holiday).

Your Executive Board Members are:

UUJEC Co-Chairs Terry Lowman and Michael Teasdale

Treasurer Jane Bannor

Co-Secretaries Carol Allen and Kit Marlowe

Your Board and Committee Chairs are:

Carol Allen (Princeton, NJ)

Bob Alpern (Healdsburg, CA)

Jim Black (Ephraim, WI)

Finance: Jane Bannor (Evanston, IL)

GA Programs & Workshops: Dr. Dick Burkhart (Seattle, WA)

Communications: Karla Chew (Oak Park, IL)

Diane Conrad (Eugene, OR)

Rev. Judith Deutsch (Sudbury, MA)

Rich Florentino (Staten Island, NY)

Rev. Ralph Galen (Lawrence, MA)

Membership: Rev. Dr. Lucy Hitchcock (Sultan, WA)

Fundraising: Woullard Lett (Manchester, NH)

Nominating: Terry Lowman (Ames, IA & Miami, FL)

Virginia MacDonald (Brevard, NC)

Maureen Maliszewski (Durango, CO)

Kit Marlowe (Cape May, NJ)

GA Booth: Carl McCargo (Springfield, MA)

Colin Sykes (Corpus Christi, TX)

Tax Reform: Michael Teasdale (Newbury Park, CA)

Remove the Social Security Maximum

Film Review: "Where to Invade Next"



I find it amazing that American media manages so successfully to avoid coverage of more progressive countries and ideas. Given the absence of progressive things in American media the movie "Where to Invade Next" by Michael Moore truly stands out and deserves notice. Hopefully if the truth becomes more widely known change will follow.

The movie gives clear views of some important matters in several countries. Well-traveled members of our congregations will surely relate.

The following topics are addressed making excellent jumping-off-points for their discussion: happiness, enjoyment, the correlation between stress, relaxation and health, sexuality, unions, education, drugs, human dignity, women's rights, values related to gender, race and prison.

I hope you will see this movie, share it in your congregation and perhaps organize discussions of it. It will probably be a long time until anything comes along that will be as good. It is available from Amazon and is not expensive.

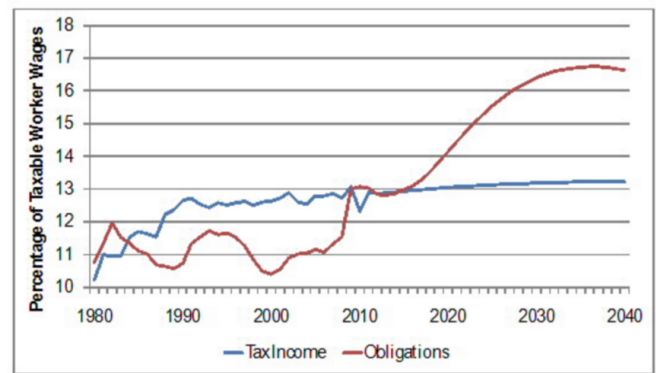
Lou Karas, UUJEC Subscriber, Pennsylvania

For more about the documentary, visit:

<http://wheretoinvadenext.com/>

You probably know that the Social Security Administration collects taxes on just the first \$118,500 / year of payroll. You may have also heard that increasing this cap would make the program sustainable for 21 more years. Some say that increasing the cap will result in rich people receiving more benefits. They would, but the balance favors middle class workers.

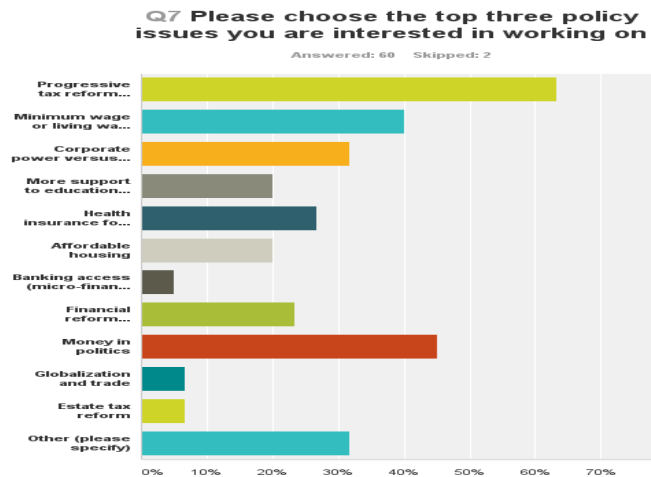
Social Security Tax Income and Obligations
(2010 Trustees' Estimates)



The Social Security Administration bases monthly benefits on lifetime average indexed monthly earnings (AIME) upon which you paid the payroll tax. Let's say that Congress increases the cap to \$1,000,000 / year. By 2050, a millionaire's AIME could approach \$83,333. (Let's ignore inflation for simplicity.) The current formula produces a monthly benefit of \$2,712 at age 66 and \$3,580 at age 70. With a \$1,000,000 cap, the millionaire collects \$13,700 at age 66 and \$18,100 at age 70.

Here is why this huge benefit is okay: Between 25 and 70, this millionaire puts in \$5,580,000 (including the employer share). Between 70 and 92, he or she collects \$5,864,500. Over the same duration, a person who makes \$46,500 / year pays \$260,000 and collects \$562,500. This change creates a stronger Social Security program because millionaires pay more for each dollar of benefits. For background information about this article, please visit our website at <http://www.uujec.com/blog> [Kit Marlowe, Membership Committee]

UUJEC Survey Respondents Indicate Tax Reform as Priority Issue for Social Change. UUJEC Board plans to support Survey Requests



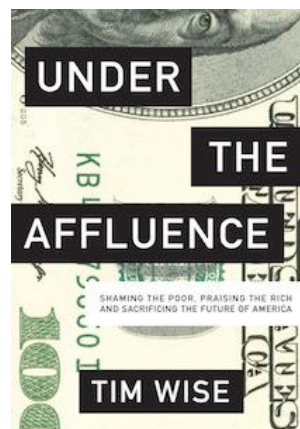
In an April 2016 survey of largely Unitarian Universalists (UU) conducted by Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic community (UUJEC), over 60% of respondents named progressive tax reform as their top priority issue to work on for social justice. This made progressive tax change the most cited area where respondent were interested in working for change. The second most cited issue was Money in Politics as 45% of respondent cited it as one of their priorities.

The survey was conducted by UUJEC in April with over 250 subscribers and a 25% response rate. Over 80% of respondents belonged to a UU congregation.

In responding to questions about UUJEC, respondents appreciated the focus UUJEC had on economic issues, its organization of conferences, the UUJEC web site and newsletter as well as presence at the GA. Respondents also requested UUJEC to organize more local conferences and make more materials available for congregations to use for education and training on economic issues. Organizing more “hands on” activism was a key request.

Respondents mentioned many areas where they are already active. Raising the minimum wage, supporting efforts to reduce money in politics and fighting against homelessness and racism were the most frequently cited. To help these efforts, respondents asked for more communication between congregations, sharing of successes, best practices and leading more action.

In response to these requests, the board of UUJEC developed a plan for the coming year. The highpoint of the plan is a spring 2017 Conference in Washington, DC where participants will learn about tax issues, exchange best practices and be able to meet with lawmakers to discuss progressive solutions. The board also proposed several task forces: one on taxation, one on corporate power and one for further work on the escalating inequality CSAI. Please go to our Web site if you are interested in joining us in Washington and /or working on a task force. The UUJEC board also committed to communicate more frequently with members and set up a web where it will be easier to communicate between congregations. [Michael Teasdale, Co-Chair UUJEC]



Book Review

Tim Wise gets deep into the structural base of racial wealth disparities starting with the 1676 Bacon rebellion which led rulers to exploit race as a way to control the poor, black and white. Africans were monitored by slave patrols of poor whites, giving poor whites a leg up on blacks and keeping them busy so they don't notice who is exploiting them. This is a legacy that continues with modern policing. Segregated neighborhoods barely supporting substandard education leads to fewer higher education choices. Even with an education and a clean criminal record, less educated, ex-felon whites still get better jobs. If African Americans do get a good job, they are exploited by racist traditions from housing segregation to credit, which is substantially more expensive. At every turn—private and public policies have given African Americans a raw deal. Wise weaves a comprehensive, fascinating and compelling story. [Terry Lowman, UUJEC Co-Chair]