

## Ventura Stories Conference Shares Inequities, Offers Hope



Recently, the UUJEC worked in partnership with several local sponsors to host “Ventura Stories: Economic Justice in Ventura County” a workshop to address social injustice and economic inequity in Ventura County, California. Key organizers from the community, and leadership within my congregation, the Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, ensured that the dialogue between the very diverse group of participants, showed the human face of social injustice and inequity where we live. From social workers, teachers and retired people to farmworkers and students, the room was full of diversity and fellowship.

The workshop brought together individuals from various socio-economic levels, ethnicities and ages to share how they experience the economy. Particular emphasis was put on ensuring people from different backgrounds sat together to interact with one another. Participant feedback on the workshop stressed that having dialogue with people they did not already know and among people from different age groups, income levels and races was very meaningful and enlightening.

*Conference Planning Committee*



Advocates from various organizations discussed issues and policies to build awareness and motivate people to get involved in local actions where they could have an impact.

- Professor Jamshid Damooei from California Lutheran University provided an overview entitled [Economic and Social Disparities in Ventura County](#) with information about “The Misery Index” for the county.
- SEIU Staff member Jon Johannsson shared updates on the [Lift Up CA](#) minimum wage initiative.
- Housing Advocate Barbara Macri-Ortiz explained the history and setbacks to [affordable housing](#) for workers in the county.
- Maricela Morales from [CAUSE](#) shared the urgent need for a [Farmworkers Bill of Rights](#) and asked for support and endorsements.
- Claudia Harrison from [First 5](#) told us how important funding for early childhood education is for the future of our county and nation.

Each of our presenters had ways for participants to get and stay involved to improve the lives of those who live and work in Ventura County. If you’re interested in organizing a similar workshop in your community and would like to hear how we planned out our event, please contact me at [michael.teasdale1@gmail.com](mailto:michael.teasdale1@gmail.com).

[Michael Teasdale UUJEC Executive board member and Chair of the Conferences and GA Committee, March 2016]