



# UUJEC Spring Newsletter 2017

## Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community

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

### **“Reversing Inequality Conference: Healthcare Justice is a UU Value” Unites UU's from Sixteen States.**

The Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community (UUJEC) and the Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (UUSJ) hosted a three-day conference for UUs to learn and share best practices for healthcare justice and advocacy in Washington DC. Our partnership enabled UU's to get involved with the latest campaigns against inequality, and visit lawmakers to influence positive change. UU's from sixteen states traveled to DC to gather in solidarity and defense of disenfranchised and marginalized members of our national community. We challenged lawmakers on the pernicious impacts healthcare repeal would have for America's most vulnerable populations.



Dynamic speakers joined us to share the latest policy initiatives and grassroots efforts, including Chuck Collins, Sister Simone Campbell, Bishop Douglas Miles and Reverend Graylan Hagler. The attack on healthcare accessibility by the Trump administration is an economic issue AND a health issue, and, if carried out, would weaken our communities, especially those already marginalized by discrimination in education, housing, and employment. We learned from National Nurses United, Americans for Tax Fairness, the United Steelworkers, NETWORK and FCNL how important the voice of the faith community is to have in this conversation, as

Congress considers a policy decision with devastating consequences, financially and morally.



*UUSJ's Pablo DeJesus, Rep. Bera  
and UUJEC's Rachel Bennett Steury*

Rep. Ami Bera, the lone UU in Congress, shared his perspective with us, as a UU, a doctor and a Member of Congress. He ran an exercise to demonstrate the relationship between healthcare affordability and resource allocation in our economy. Rep. Pramila Jayapal offered her insight on healthcare activism and the road ahead. She underscored the societal impacts of having a large population of underinsured and uninsured Americans.



*Rep. Jayapal with Participants  
at the Capitol Visitors Center*

UU's spent Wednesday in the halls of Congress, meeting with elected officials as the Trump Administration worked to repeal and replace the ACA.

Continued on Page 3, column 2

## Cherry Blossoms, Comfort Zones and Health Care for All



April 1, 2017. Dragons, parrots, fish, stars and stripes cavorted about the Washington Monument.

People of all ages and colors, string in hand. An orchard of blooming cherry trees in Foggy Bottom, pink petals fluttering upward in the breezes like the kites. Easily a million strollers on The Mall - joyful meanderers, school break classes, families buying Thai, Mexican and Filipino lunches from food trucks. Celebration not protest. Smiles, sunshine, the beauty of stately marble architecture interspersed by the intricately-designed metalwork of the African American History Museum, the giant typewrite eraser and leaning, elevated chairs of the Sculpture Garden. A moment of pride in our nation's Capital.

April 2, 2017. 9:30 am worship at All Souls. Again, smiles of the greeters, of families, of pew mates. The lovely sanctuary filling, even the balconies. The bluegrass band came in with bass fiddle, banjo and guitar, vocals serenading the service with Tim O'Brien's *Hard Pressed* and Queen and David Bowie's *Under Pressure*. The sermon, *Staying Unglued*, by Rev. Rob Keithan, Social Justice Ministry, hit home and helped me see a fault line. Those of us, me, with white privilege, are used to being able to reside in or escape to our comfort zones. Oppressed peoples do not have that true luxury. If we are to contribute, to make real change, we/I must be willing to leave our comfort zones, learn to abide in discomfort, unknowing, risk to life, limb, pre-conceptions to join in the fields of struggle for real justice among those who know far more than I of what injustice feels like and what revolution requires. Yes, I've worked for systemic change for decades, but how much am I willing to "stay unglued"?

April 3-5, 2017. The conference: *Reversing Inequality – Healthcare Justice is a UU Value*. UUJEC has been working to reverse economic inequality for almost 30 years. With the unexpected election results, we decided to focus on an up-in-the-air issue we feel we can affect. At first it was just, "lets save Obama's ACA." But, with the failure of the long-touted AHCA because it will hurt more children, seniors, fertile women, working men, states, rural towns than it will help, we are going all out to bring single-payer-health care for all back into public view and, at least, incremental passage.

UU Rev. Abhi Janamanchi, Catholic Sister Simone Campbell, Baptist Bishop Douglas Miles grounded us in our faithful response. UU mentor, Chuck Collins, guided us via his life experience to reverse wealth inequality. Super-dynamic workshop leaders gave practical advice from the perspectives of tax fairness, nurses, and legislation direction regarding Medicaid expansion. On Day Two we were blessed by the insights of our own and only UU Congressman, Rep. Ami Bera (CA-7<sup>th</sup>) on *Healthcare in this Congress* and progressive Congresswoman Rep. Pramila Jayapal (WA - 7<sup>th</sup>) who is a sponsor of HB- 676 for Single Payer Healthcare. Day Two prepared us to lobby our own Senators.

Day Three we went to The Hill in small groups to meet with legislative aides. Thanks be to UUs for Social Justice for enabling our interviews. Three of us from Washington State were delighted with meetings with aides for Senators Maria Cantwell (who stopped in too) and Patty Murray. We came away informed on state possibilities (eg. Basic Health Care, already implemented in NY and MN, which adds people to coverage up to 200% of poverty level; Medicaid only goes to 133% of poverty level). We plugged single-payer but our Senators aren't there yet. We asked them to collaborate with Sen. Sanders on a Senate bill. I left the conference with the words of Lucas Allen, a DC lobbyist of NETWORK, still ringing in my ears, "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."

Continued on next page

April 8, 2017. I attended a rally at Bothell, WA city hall attended by 75. The most applause on any issue addressed was for *Single-Payer Health Care For All*. Our work continues back home.  
(Article by Lucy Hitchcock, Board Member)

### **Strategizing Beyond Trump**

#### **Chuck Collins and Richard Wolff**

UUJEC is sponsoring a workshop at this year's General Assembly in New Orleans called "Resist in Solidarity Against our Top-Heavy Economic System" on Friday, June 23 at 3:15 pm, Hall B2-1 & B2-2. This will feature noted UU speaker, author, and activist Chuck Collins, plus leading critic of capitalism Professor Richard Wolff.

Chuck's latest book is **Born on Third Base: A One Percenter Makes the Case for Tackling Inequality, Bringing Wealth Home, and Committing to the Common Good**. He directs the "Program on Inequality and the Common Good" at the *Institute for Policy Studies*. Check out [www.inequality.org](http://www.inequality.org) and sign up for his weekly blog.



**Chuck Collin**

Richard has a noted weekly radio and video program called **Economic Update** at [www.democracyatwork.info](http://www.democracyatwork.info) where he lambasts the follies of capitalism in an entertaining way, inviting viewers to open their minds to more effective and just alternatives. Or try his book of incisive and pungent reflections **Capitalism's Crisis Deepens: Essays on the Global Economic Meltdown**.



Professor Richard Wolff

The workshop will say, let's not just play defensive. How do we *Strategize Beyond Trump*? With globalization itself confronting transformative limits and power struggles, will the crisis break toward collapse, tyranny, or rejuvenation? What's our long-term game plan for a more equitable and sustainable social, economic, and political order?

Again: UUJEC is sponsoring a workshop at this year's General Assembly in New Orleans called "Resist in Solidarity Against our Top-Heavy Economic System" on Friday, June 23 at 3:15 pm, Hall B2-1 & B2-2. This will feature noted UU speaker, author, and activist Chuck Collins, plus leading critic of capitalism Professor Richard Wolff.

(Article by Dick Burkhardt, Board Member)

### **Continued from Page 1**

Those who were unable to attend, shared their feelings on the healthcare debate by writing letters to their Senators, which were hand delivered by participants of this conference. Congregations and individuals from eighteen states helped to amplify the voices of UU's by participating in letter writing campaigns back home, generating more than 400 letters.

#### **Congregations include:**

**CA:** Conejo Valley UUF, **DE:** UU Fellowship of Newark, UU Southern Delaware, UU Central Delaware, **FL:** UU Congregation of Lake County, UU Congregation of Lakeland, **IA:** First UC of Des Moines, **IL:** UC Evanston, **IN:** UUC Bloomington, **KY:** UUC Bowling Green, **MD:** Cedar Lane UUC, **ME:** UU Church of Ellsworth, **MI:** Birmingham Unitarian Church, **NH:** UU Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes, **NJ:** UUC of South Jersey Shore, **NY:** UUF of Poughkeepsie, **OH:** First UUC of Cincinnati, **TX:** Westside UUC, Emerson UU Church of Houston, **VA:** Mt. Vernon UC, UUC Fairfax, UUC Arlington, Mt. Vernon UC, **WA:** Community UUC, **WI:** UU Fellowship of Door County, and the Church of the Larger Fellowship.





Lee Brooker meeting with Senator Portman



Letter delivery to Senator Gillibrand's office

### What our participants said:

*"Great speakers. Motivated participants. Well organized and comfortable settings." "Wonderful! I learned a lot and actually doing real lobbying gave me a sense of purpose and made it feel worthwhile."*

*"Great- even though I was quite knowledgeable about the topic, I was inspired and energized."*

For UUJEC and UUSJ there's too much at stake for us to remain on the sidelines. Silence perpetuates and exacerbates unneeded inequalities in our society, the brunt of which are born by underemployed and struggling households, but whose ill effects touch every American. Our partnership and advocacy will continue as we find it necessary to be that strong, collective voice in inequality discussions at the national level.

Thank you to UUJEC/UUSJ staff and volunteers who helped make this conference possible and our participants, for their energy, their know-how and their commitment to social justice.

Thank you to the **UU Funding Panel**, **UU Fellowship of Door County, Wisconsin** (UUFDC) and our **Faithify** donors for their generosity. #ReversingInequality would not have been possible otherwise.

You can review our agenda highlights, speaker's bios and conference photos on our site. Our "Resource Guide for Activism at Home" was developed to assist UU's with outreach ideas for their congregations. You can also find it on our webpage. <http://uujec.com/ReversingInequality>

Article by Rachel Bennet Steury

**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.