



UUJEC Summer Newsletter 2017

Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community

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UUJEC 2017 Annual Meeting



The UUJEC held its annual meeting during Saturday's lunch break at June's UUA General Assembly. Several people participated, in spite of a downpour and a partial conflict with debate on the Income Inequality statement of conscience.

The meeting opened with distribution of the UUJEC's annual report (available on-line) and a briefing on the conference on health care reform held in April in Washington, DC. Participants met with representatives for 22 US Senators and lobbied for expansion of Medicaid and continuation of subsidies under the Affordable Care Act. They also delivered letters from constituents, written by congregations unable to attend the conference in person.

UUJEC Administrator Rachel Bennett Steury then distributed a booklet compiling the "Economic Justice Spotlight" articles on twelve notable UU congregations. She was joined in her presentation by Chuck Collins, author of *Born on Third Base* and the speaker at Friday's GA workshop, sponsored by UUJEC.

Representatives from four groups highlighted in the booklet (Schenectady, NY; Warrington, PA; San Antonio, TX and Metro Detroit) were on hand to detail social justice activities their churches are working on.

Taking advantage of the passage of the statement of conscience on Income Inequality only an hour earlier, the session ended by discussing possible follow-up activities and descriptions of what projects their local churches had found most rewarding. There was interest among all in attendance to expand congregations' work in the social justice arena.

[Article by Jane Bannor, UUJEC Treasurer]

Working for Healthcare Justice in Pennsylvania, by Mardys Leeper

I have worked as a parent of a disabled woman, and as the co-leader of the UUPLAN Economic Justice Team.



In Media, PA: Melissa Nedza, Mary Clinton, Mardys, Dolores Magro and Virginia Kirk

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As a parent, I tried to get an appointment with someone in Senator Toomey's office. Despite phone calls and emails, it didn't happen. He seems to be locked away from us. I wanted to tell my story as an example of reasons the Republican bill is so bad. When that failed, I went to Lancaster to hear Senator Casey. Although I didn't get to read my letter, I did get to share my thoughts to Fox 43 Harrisburg after the superb town hall.

As a co-leader of UUPLAN, we have been working with our team to have churches get out letters and go to rallies. I know some people are doing this state-wide. We organized information rallies of key House members on the fence about their AHCA position. Most of those Reps voted against the AHCA in the end.



My co-leader, Virginia Kirk, spoke with her job at both Toomey and Casey's office last week and shared that conversation with our members. I have attended three "Tuesdays with Toomey," including one where Rev. Barber was there and participated in his Die-in.

Other UUPlan members are doing somethings state-wide. Tara Stephenson in Allentown has been active getting people out there and our Director and Administrative Assistant, Anita Mentzer and Kristi Lado get out action alerts alerts to rallies and information on letter writing campaigns.

Another Photo from the Die-In



Read Mardys' letter about her daughter on our blog here: <http://uujec.com/blog>

UUJEC T-shirts and USB Video Curriculum Still Available

If we missed you at General Assembly, there is still time to snag a few of our fundraising items.

Our beloved t-shirts: We have them available in Medium, Large and Extra-Large. One can be yours for a **\$20 donation** to help support our justice work.



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The shirts are a medium blue-green teal, a decades-long signature color for UUJEC members and friends. The front is printed with “the price of peace is economic justice for all” with a dove underneath. The back is printed with “Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community,” providing excellent visibility for your love of UUJEC during that rally or march you’re attending.

Our time-tested video curriculum: The “Escalating Inequality” and “Corruption of Democracy” video curriculum series are still available on USB drive.

Your **\$10 donation** per USB drive will ensure we can continue to provide essential resources.

Each USB drive holds an entire series of videos to assist your congregation in discussions of inequality and democracy. The “Escalating Inequality” Series has over 40 long and short YouTube and TED Talk videos and the “Corruption of Democracy” Series does as well. Having the curriculum on USB allows for easy accessibility and portability to suit your viewing needs.

Please email Rachel at uujec@uujec.com if you would like to acquire any of these items before they’re gone!

UUJEC Challenges the “Statement of Conscience” on Inequality at GA

It has been a long road since the founding of UUJEC in 1989 to the passage in 2017 of a Statement of Conscience (SOC) on the Escalating Inequality Congregation Study Action Issue (CSAI) passed in 2014. This is to

celebrated, yet it could have been so much more. The draft SOC did not even ask the most critical questions, so we recommended that the delegates vote it down, to be rewritten. Though still inadequate, after many amendments were offered in the mini-assembly, it was voted in the next day. One amendment was to rename it the SOC to become “Escalating Economic Inequity”. Then on Sunday a responsive resolution was passed asking the UUA Board and staff to “help coordinate, strategize and advise Congregations on how to address” these issues (lack of follow up has been a big problem in the past). Read the full text at www.uua.org/economic/escalatinginequality/escalating-inequality .

So why the controversy? We distributed a handout listing a few key points. Amazingly, the draft SOC never asked “Why” inequality escalated over the last 30 to 40 years after the spectacular post WWII expansion of the middle class. That is, what were the root causes? What is the historical and global context? Why is much of Europe more equal? Instead, much of the draft was a listing of familiar issues of inequality and corresponding things to do. But the SOC is supposed to be a powerful moral statement, certainly citing a few key issues and actions by way of illustration, not a mini study/action guide. Despite the lengthy lists, it did not include a recommendation to form study/action groups around the “Escalating Inequality” CSAI itself. Nor did the SOC call upon the UUA to take a profound look at the future of Unitarian-Universalism, both a societal and denominational self-examination, in view of the increasing division into haves and have-nots and the massive political failure we are currently experiencing.

The final report of the Commission on Appraisal, just published for this GA, was more thoughtful, but still did not delve far into root causes.

Here’s one amendment that improved the SOC: “The growth of inequity does not happen by accident. It is a direct consequence of the decisions of those people who own and control the nation’s and world’s corporations and

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and their allies in government, who take for themselves the wealth created by the hands and minds of the many and the bounty of our fragile planet.” Yet this is a but a hint at the need for an open-ended investigation of “Why?”. Several activist UU ministers and lay leaders stopped by our booth to concur, while the younger generations responded last year en masse to Bernie’s call for “political revolution”. Even the new UUA president, Susan Gray, took up a suggestion I had made of the need for a UUA initiative (“welcoming program”) to become more intentional about including the “have-nots” of all stripes. Won’t be easy, but challenge our comfort zones we must.

(Article by Dick Burkhart)

Webinars Series; Join Us for Monthly Inspiration

To follow up from our spring conference “Reversing Inequality, Healthcare Justice is a UU Value,” UUJEC is working in partnership with UU’s for Social Justice to continue that important dialogue around healthcare. Our webinar series features discussions and crucial updates by our colleagues from leading advocacy groups.



Our recent webinars featured action calls, toolkits and updates from NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, and FCNL, the Friends Committee on National Legislation. Our upcoming webinars will also keep you informed and connected to others working for healthcare justice. Additionally, UUJEC will host webinars on other aspects of inequality this year like class, unions, taxes and race. The webinar call-in information is sent via email to our subscribers. We use the ZOOM Video Conferencing service that is free to download. A telephone option is also available or those away from their computers. Each webinar is a one-hour or less time commitment. If you are not already receiving emails from UUJEC, please register on our website here: <http://uujec.com/uujecRegistration> or email Rachel at uujec@uujec.com for assistance. We hope you will join our webinar series to learn about the complexities of inequality and how we can collaborate toward a more just world.
[Rachel Bennett Steury, Administrator]

Workshop at General Assembly a Great Turnout

The UUJEC-Sponsored workshop “Resist In Solidarity Against our Top-Heavy Economic System” was very well received. Over 300 people attended to hear UU speaker, author, and activist Chuck Collins share his perspective on escalating inequality. The workshop helped spark discussion around the question of “How do we Strategize Beyond Trump?” And Chuck, in his typical fashion, gave it to us straight.

We would like to thank our friend Chuck Collins for his continued partnership and interest in joining us in the work we do. His contributions throughout the years have helped many UU’s understand the complexities of inequality and we are proud to call him our friend.

To learn more about Chuck or his latest book “Born on Third Base” please visit the Chelsea Green page here:

<http://www.chelseagreen.com/born-on-third-base/>



(Article by Rachel Bennett 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.