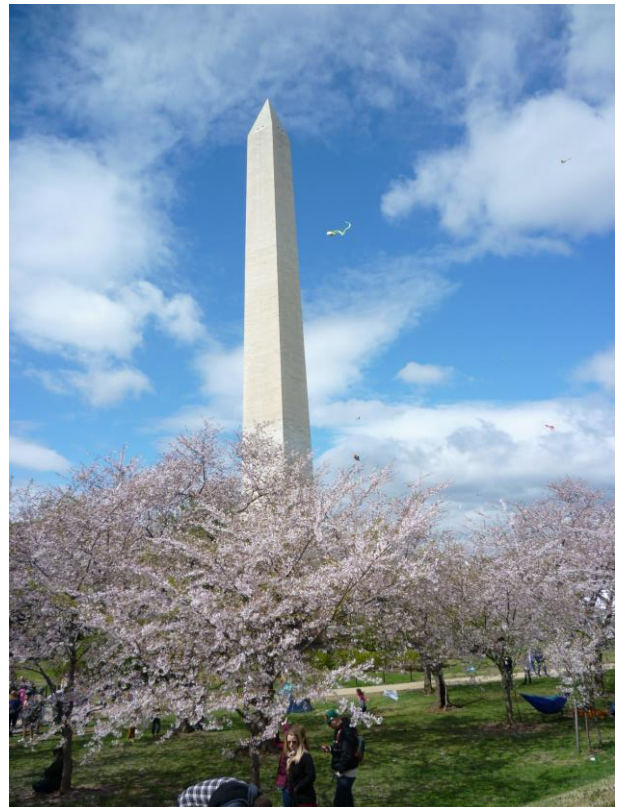


# Cherry Blossoms, Comfort Zones and Health Care for All

By Rev. Lucy Hitchcock, UUJEC Board Member

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 typewriter 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."

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.

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*Lucy Hitchcock and Jane Bannor at Reversing Inequality Conference.*