

Beacon Press

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To: UUA Board of Trustees
From: Helene Atwan, Director
Re: Beacon Press Board Report



Last year Beacon was proud to launch a renovated website, including a shopping cart. This fall, we are launching a brand new media initiative, with the support of the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program: A Beacon Press blog, known as **Beacon Broadside**. Check it out at beaconpress.typepad.com.

Meanwhile, the fall season is well underway, with admirable results thus far:

Eboo Patel's *Acts of Faith* has been drawing acclaim left and right. Among other things, *Good Morning America* has taped an interview with the author, the book was mentioned in *Newsweek's* July cover story on Islam, and a review in *The Boston Globe* calls *Acts of Faith* "visionary...It is the tale of a man's increasing understanding that traditions of mercy, compassion, and social justice are embedded in every faith, and accessing them is the key to creating a pluralism that enhances faith rather than threatens it." The book is already in its third printing.

Another of our recent books on religious experience in the United States is ***Plain Secrets***, by **Joe Mackall**, who impressed us all with his intimate and insightful account of the Amish way of life practiced by his neighbors. *The Boston Globe* lauded this book as well: "Mackall folds in a succinct and engaging history of the Anabaptist religious tradition and the polity of the Amish church. This added context greatly enhances the more personal stories," and the *Los Angeles Times* wrote that Mackall's prose is "as graceful as it is unsentimental."

Mary Oliver continues to read to packed audiences across the country. ***Our World***, which joins text by Oliver with photographs by **Molly Malone Cook**, her partner of forty years who died in 2005, has just been released. Oliver's next volume of poems, ***Red Bird***, will be published in April, and we're proud to announce the recent acquisition of a collection of new poems by Oliver to follow that one. The Pulitzer Prize-winning poet was recently heralded by *The Boston Globe* as one of the seven wonders of Massachusetts (the only human on the list).

Katherine Newman and **Victor Tan Chen's** just-released book ***The Missing Class*** is off to a commendable start. This examination of the situation of millions of people in the U.S. living in the gray area between "poor" and "middle class" features a foreword by John Edwards, who writes, "*The Missing Class* is a call to action to change America. Like other books that transformed our nation, it will inspire us to work for an America that doesn't ignore those in need...an America where the family you were born into or the color of your skin never controls your destiny."



In my last report, we had just released **Meredith Hall's** *Without a Map*, and it was already earning praise. By now the book has proven itself to be a huge success, having even spent two weeks on the *New York Times Book Review's* Nonfiction (extended) Bestseller List. Most recently, a review in the *Washington Post* raved: "Each chapter of *Without a Map* is polished and elegantly written...the structure is shapely and the book yields poignant insights."

A few of our exciting and newly acquired titles include:

Alan Collinge's groundbreaking *Student Loan Scam* will analyze the predatory nature of the student loan industry, including its history and the impact on the citizenry, and will offer solutions for the current crisis. Collinge is an activist for student loan justice and founder of StudentLoanJustice.org, a grassroots organization and Political Action Committee.

Photojournalist and activist **David Bacon** is the award winning author of over a hundred articles and two books about labor and immigration. His new book will be an urgent examination of local, national, and international forces that cause immigration.

Legal journalist **Frederick S. Lane** will use a mix of legal history and political analysis to expose, in layman's terms, the Religious Right's high court offensive, in *The Court and the Cross*. As Americans watch for major Supreme Court rulings on controversial issues such as abortion, prayer in school, and end of life decisions, this timely book will detail the Right's unrelenting efforts to destroy the wall separating church and state and, ultimately, to do nothing less than declare the United States a Christian nation.

Helen Benedict's *The Lonely Soldier: Women at War in Iraq* will be an in-depth and eye-opening book about women in the military, based on interviews with over thirty female veterans of the Iraq war. The author found that these veterans were extremely isolated and also experienced a high level of sexual assault and harassment from male soldiers and recruiters. Given that over 160,000 women have served in the Middle East since 2003, the war is clearly changing the role of female soldiers for the future, giving a real urgency to these issues. Benedict is a professor of Journalism at Columbia University.

Finally, the UUA's own **John Buehrens** is teaming up with **Rebecca Parker** to provide an accessible but deeply reasoned discussion of the intellectual and theological basis for progressive religion in *A House for Hope*.

