

Report to the UUA Board

October, 2007



The UUWF board and staff at their August meeting: left to right: Barbara Prairie, Rev. Meg Barnhouse, Linda Lu Burciaga, Ellen Spencer, Luz Bravo-Gleicher, and Catherine Onyemelukwe.

Never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine writing a UUWF President's Report to the UUA Board of Trustees. Certainly not in 1970, when as a 24-year-old mother of a very little girl, I was so warmly welcomed into the UUWF Alliance at First Parish in Arlington, MA. I joined their quilting group (but never really quilted). I just sat and enjoyed listening to these "older" women share stories about their lives. These "older" women, of course, were actually considerably younger than I am today. Occasionally, speakers did more formal presentations. Fast forward about 15 years to a time when I became the guest speaker, presenting "The Making of the Movie, Gone With the Wind" – in full period costume with a black ringlet wig.

Fast forward to 2004 and I am now a member of the restructured UUWF Board as chair of its new Grants Program (that Denny Davidoff can be a very persuasive person, you know). When asked to serve as president, I nearly fell off my chair. But I picked myself up and am proud to be here today, joining a long succession of women who have agreed to serve this great faith of ours.

Speaking of great women, many of you have been privileged to share a friendship with Nancy Van Dyke, my immediate predecessor. Her presence at almost every UUA Board meeting over the past three years is witness to her dedication and devotion to the UUA and the UUWF. I have very big shoes to fill, but am most comforted knowing Nancy continues as my mentor *and* as a member of our National Development Council. A huge thank you goes out from all of us at UUWF to Nancy Van Dyke and retiring board members Arlene Johnson and Rev. Danielle Di Bona.

I hope and trust our presence at this year's GA was known to you through our outstanding programs and workshops. The highlight was our Ministry to Women Award to Dr. Riane Eisler, author of *The Chalice and the Blade* and, most recently, *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics*. Her workshop, and those on Planned Giving (sponsored in partnership with staff from your own Stewardship and Development Department) and on our Grants Programs, were well attended and received with interest and enthusiasm. Our Donor Reception and Leadership Breakfast brought together women and men of varying degrees of knowledge of the good work of the UUWF but, I can assure you, a much improved knowledge of said activities when they walked out the door.

On to the present and future: members of the new UUWF Board are Barbara Prairie, Treasurer (and GA guru); Catherine Onyemelukwe, Vice President/Development and National Development Council Chair; Rev. Meg Barnhouse, Vice President/Communications; and Luz Bravo-Gleicher, Grants Panel Chair. Our first meeting was in mid-August, with a trained professional leading us in a full day of process work followed by a day and a half of the nitty gritty of the work ahead. Here is a sampling of that work:

- We are pleased to welcome Grace Garner as our new UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues at the Washington Office. Grace, a 21 year old, recently graduated from Pitzer College in California. She grew up in Palm Springs, CA, and has attended a UU church since age 8. Very active in YRUU, Grace also sat on the board of the UU Legislative Ministry-CA. I say "our" in referring to Grace because she represents another facet of UUWF's ongoing partnership with the UUA, which began with our \$200,000 donation to found this internship position.
- UUWF is one the first UU organizations (apart from congregations) to formally covenant and sponsor Community Ministry. We have entered into this relationship with Rev. Dorothy May Emerson and Rev. Jade Anjelica with the hope and expectation of a mutually rewarding experience for all. Rev. Meg Barnhouse and I will serve as UUWF liaisons to Dorothy and Jade during the year our covenant with them covers.
- It is with profound joy (tinged with deep sadness) that I announce the Rev. Marjorie Bowens Wheatley Scholarship Program, funded in part by a generous contribution from Marjorie's husband, Clyde, to offset expenses of women seminary students of color. Rev. Danielle Di Bona will chair the program's selection panel, ably assisted by Rev. Rosemary Brae McNatt and Rev. Leslie Takahashi-Morris. The quality most admired by those who knew and loved Marjorie was her mentoring of others preparing for ministry. We all miss Marjorie, but this scholarship will help keep her legacy alive.

This great work could not be possible without the time, energy and financial commitment of so many. I especially wish to thank the Veatch Program of the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock for its continued assistance and faith in our possibilities. Veatch's generous grants to us – \$20,000 in 2006 and \$25,000 this year – have helped make much of what I speak a reality. Most importantly, it makes our Grants Program even more vital and sustaining. Women across America and the world have the Veatch Program to thank for improving their lives.

Lastly, when I think of time, devotion, commitment and a need for "thanks," I would be remiss if I did not mention one more special person. I have complained, at times, that UUs are not real good at acknowledging those who have toiled for years on our behalf. The time has come to say a huge "thank you" to our Executive Administrator, Ellen Spencer, for 30 (yes, I said 30!) years of devoted service to the UUWF. She began her work with us when she wasn't much older than I was when I

was so warmly welcomed by the Arlington UUWF women, and she has stayed with us for three decades. I look forward to working along side her for the duration of my term. To Ellen Spencer, I raise a toast of gratitude. You grew up at the UUWF and UUA offices and we loved witnessing the maturing of this "girl" into an accomplished, competent and caring woman.

So, UUA Board friends, thus ends my first report to you as President of the UUWF. I wish you well in your work for each and everyone of us and for our beloved UU faith. Now, I'm off to weeding the garden! See you in October.

Linda Lu Burciaga
President, UU Women's Federation