



Report from the UU Women's Federation: GA 2008

I write this with UUWF's March board meeting – my second as UUWF president – not too far in the past. At that meeting we adopted a motion supporting the UUA Board of Trustees' decision to keep this year's GA in Fort Lauderdale, despite controversy in some circles regarding security requirements. While we did not wish to add to the pain of those who decided to stay away, we felt that we Unitarian Universalists needed to gather together and have our thousands of voices heard, particularly at this time in our country's history. The board and I look forward to greeting many of you in Fort Lauderdale.

Name change. As most of you know, the UUWF is now primarily a UU women's funding organization. We do our work through two funding programs, which we think of as the two arms we use to reach out and embrace the UU community.

Our Margaret Fuller Grants Program, founded in 1989, funds accessible projects exploring UU religious feminisms and other theological issues of concern to UU women.

Our UUWF Grants Program funds bold, innovative projects that effect positive social change in the lives of women and girls – like the Guatemalan schoolgirls shown at right – and was founded as a direct result of our recent organizational restructuring.



And therein lay a problem: with such a generic name, we often found ourselves referring to the newer program as “the other grants program.” And since the name contained no clue as to its purpose, it could only hamper our efforts to educate the UU community about it.

I am pleased to announce that the “other” is now called UUWF's Equity and Justice Grants Program, a decision made at our March meeting. And here are the projects these two programs funded in 2008:

EQUITY AND JUSTICE GRANTS

Helping Women in Prison & Their Families, a lay-led social justice ministry of The Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, PA, will receive \$4,780 in support of “**Enhancing Communication to Empower Women: Website Redesign for the PROGRAM.**” The grant will help fund improvements to the website of the PROGRAM, which serves women and children involved with the criminal justice system to promote productive, crime-free lives. Website improvements will include features to facilitate volunteer recruitment and on-line financial contributions.

Jericho Road Ministries, Inc., will receive \$4,000 in support of “**The Priscilla Project,**” plus an additional \$2,000 in additional funds as a match to funds raised by new sources. This grant will support a health mentoring program which connects medically at-risk, vulnerable refugee and low-income women with stable volunteer mentors.

MARGARET FULLER GRANTS PROGRAM

Celeste DeRoche, Ph.D. / Rev. Gail Geisenhainer, will receive \$2,000 in support of “**Singing For Our Lives: A History of the Pioneer Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, and Transgendered Unitarian Universalist Ministers.**”

The Church of the Larger Fellowship and Rev. Elizabeth Lerner, will receive \$3,000 in support of “**Ancient Roots: The Feminine Face of Western Religion,**” an on-line adult religious education course.

Our Equity and Justice Grants Program also funded a third project, but the grant recipient subsequently declined to accept the funding owing to a change in their circumstances.

Two groups of dedicated volunteers are responsible for selecting grant recipients. I wish to thank the Equity and Justice Panel (Luz Bravo-Gleicher, chair; Cathy Chang; Rev. Liz McMaster; Mitra Rahnama; and Justice Waidner); and the Margaret Fuller Panel (Rev. Tracy Sprowls Jenks, chair; Rev. Shirley Ranck; and Louise Kurabi) for their hard work and perseverance.

Both panels need or will soon need additional volunteers; if you know UU women with experience in both grant-making and either UU spirituality or social justice please let me know.

Other board business. Also under discussion at recent board meetings was a consideration of UUWF’s leadership role in the UU community. Although now primarily a UU women’s funding organization, we are also the oldest women’s organization in the UU community; other UU organizations frequently seek our support and endorsement of projects and issues of concern to UU women. It is in this role that UUWF has become a co-sponsor of the first International Convocation of UU Women, to be held next February in Houston. With the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and 17 other organizations, we also recently signed an amicus brief supporting access to prescription contraception.

New board member. It is with pleasure that I announce our new Vice President/Communications, Rev. Marti Keller, Assistant Minister of the UU Congregation of Atlanta. Marti brings a wealth of experience from the communications, public relations, and financial development fields to our board. She is also a former chair of our Margaret Fuller Grants Panel. Marti succeeds Rev. Meg Barnhouse, minister of the UU Church of Spartanburg, SC, who was unable to continue on our board due to increased personal and professional commitments; we thank her for her service and look forward to her continuing connection to the Women's Federation.

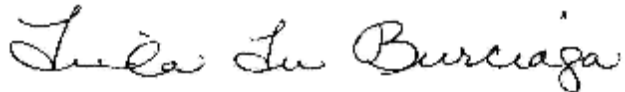
Speaking of Meg's connection, please join us at her UUWF-sponsored performance, "Mango Thoughts in a Meat Loaf Town," at 1:30 on Friday afternoon during GA. Some of you may recall other performances by Meg and her partner Kiya: a standing-room-only celebration of all things delightful, humorous and poignant. Also at GA we will present our annual workshop on our funding programs, at 1:30 on Thursday afternoon, where interested parties learn about present and past grant recipients and the application process. Please also visit our booth in the display area, where more information about UUWF is available.

This week we also bid a fond farewell to Barbara Prairie, our treasurer and General Assembly guru. Barbara is completing four years on the board and will be rotating off to the blessed retirement she truly deserves.

Fundraising is never far from our minds and I would be remiss if I didn't thank our Vice President/Development, Catherine Onyemelukwe, for her hard work. Catherine and our National Development Council did a superb job for us in 2007. Donations have steadily increased and we have set a goal of \$50,000 for our current fiscal year. Please be in touch with me or Catherine if you, too, wish to contribute to your historic women's organization.

Since my last report to the General Assembly, the UUWF lost a dear and precious friend. Just writing this is difficult for me, for on a personal level Nat Gulbrandsen was a most special friend and mentor. I know others of you can say the same, so I will pay tribute to her in her role as former president of the Women's Federation instead. Her insight, commitment, humor, and devotion guided us over many years of service. I truly realize that the UUWF and I, personally, would not be what we are today if it were not for Nat. Much appreciation and love to our dear friend. She is terribly missed.

My very best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Lu Burciaga". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "My very best,".

Linda Lu Burciaga
President, UU Women's Federation