

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Associate Member Report to the Unitarian Universalist Association

June 2015

Advancing human rights for 75 years

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), founded in 1940, is a human rights organization powered by grassroots collaboration. Over the course of its rich history, it has grown from rescuing refugees fleeing Nazi oppression in Europe to fostering social justice in more than a dozen countries throughout the world. UUSC's innovative approaches and measurable impact are grounded in the moral belief that all people have inherent power, dignity, and rights.

In partnership with dedicated UUSC members, tireless activists, and inspiring grassroots organizations worldwide, UUSC aims to ensure that fundamental human rights are realities for everyone — no matter race, gender, or class. UUSC works specifically with people and communities who are denied their rights because of who they are — women, people of color, religious minorities, and others — and who are not served by mainstream human rights organizations. Read on for a few highlights of UUSC's work over the past year.

UUSC programs

Environmental Justice

UUSC's Environmental Justice Program continued to advance the human right to water in the United States and globally. It also helped launch Commit2Respond, a collaborative climate justice campaign in partnership with the UUA and other UU organizations.

- UUSC supported a legal case in which Mexico's highest court decided in favor of four women plaintiffs and required the municipality and country to fully implement the human right to water and sanitation.
- UUSC and partners facilitated a fact-finding site visit to Detroit, Mich., by U.N. Special Rapporteurs Catarina de Albuquerque (human right to water) and Leilani Farha (human right to housing) that received international and domestic media coverage and included visiting homes affected by water shutoffs and holding public hearings.
- In response to research and advocacy by UUSC and partner Massachusetts Global Action, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh announced a 30% discount on water rates for low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- UUSC and the Environmental Justice Coalition on Water, a UUSC partner, with assistance from the UC Berkeley School of Law Human Rights program, participated in the first ever consultation on human rights and the environment held by the U.S. government; the consultation was attended by several federal agencies, including the EPA.

- More than 1,400 UUSC supporters sent President Obama a message urging him to veto approval for the Keystone XL pipeline.

Rights at Risk

UUSC's Rights at Risk Program responds quickly to emerging human rights crises and protects a range of rights most at risk due to those catastrophes. This includes advancing the rights of people who are most overlooked or discriminated against in the midst of humanitarian crises such as forced migration, large-scale conflicts, genocide, and natural disasters.

- In the Philippines, UUSC partnered with the Trauma Resource Institute to train nearly 900 people in communities affected by Typhoon Haiyan in how to teach and lead others in trauma resiliency skills. In turn, 5,000 people have benefited from this healing practice.
- UUSC worked with the Pagtambayong Foundation to train agrarian reform communities in the Philippines on organic farming and organic hog and chicken raising; participants have raised 200 chickens and 20 pigs.
- In Haiti, UUSC supported the Papaye Peasant Movement in completing construction of a sixth eco-village as well as the first phase of the school for the children of the eco-villages.
- The Bright Educators of Delmas (GEAD), a UUSC partner, continued the Urban Food Gardens project, training another 140 families in Haiti and exceeding the target of 100 families.
- UUSC celebrated the passage of the Assessing Progress in Haiti Act into law; more than 800 supporters signed a thank-you message for Senators Menendez, Corker, and Nelson and Representatives Lee, Royce, Ros-Lehtinen, and Engel.
- More than 4,500 UUSC supporters petitioned the Obama administration to release asylum-seeking children and their mothers from immigration detention, and UUSC worked with the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services to support these families in detention.

Economic Justice

UUSC's Economic Justice Program advances economic opportunity for women and marginalized communities.

- UUSC sponsored two minimum wage workshops at General Assembly and co-organized an interfaith rally on minimum wage at a nearby hotel. At the same time, 100 supporters took part in UUSC's #WageOutrage campaign by publicly sharing why they felt the current federal minimum wage was a moral outrage; several responses were shared at wageoutrage.tumblr.com.
- Responding to a request by the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United for a national day of on-the-ground actions in support of Darden restaurant workers, UUSC rallied local

UU ministers and UU advocacy networks to visit three Olive Garden restaurants in California and Maryland. Ministers met with managers and distributed leaflets to customers highlighting the need for a higher minimum wage and better working conditions.

- UUSC filed a shareholder resolution at Darden that would require greater transparency and accountability concerning Darden's political spending at local, state, and federal levels.

UU College of Social Justice

A collaboration between UUSC and the UUA, the UU College of Social Justice (UUCSJ) was founded at Justice GA in 2012.

During its third year of existence, the initiative has continued to develop powerful immersion learning programs to help fulfill its mission: to inspire and sustain faith-based action on issues of local, national, and global importance.

- This year, UUCSJ offered journeys for congregations and individuals to Haiti, India, and Mexico, as well as U.S. destinations in Brooklyn, N.Y. (Hurricane Sandy recovery), and Bellingham, Wash. (solidarity with First Nations). Grounded in worship and reflection, these programs were supported by a robust framework of study before, during, and after the experience.
- UUCSJ expanded Activate, its justice training for high school age students! UUCSJ laid the groundwork for summer 2015 programs, which will include a one-day version in Portland, Ore., and full trainings of one to two weeks in Boston, New Orleans, and Tucson.
- UUCSJ adapted its service-learning programs in New York and Arizona to welcome youth groups.
- Offering placements with justice organizations in the United States and with UUA partners in India, UUCSJ continues to strengthen its internship program for college-age young adults. UUCSJ supports interns with stipends and travel grants, provides a framework for weekly reflections, and connects each of them with a reflection partner during their placements.
- UUCSJ developed two new justice training programs! GROW Climate Justice is a five-day intensive for young adults to help them develop the skills and spiritual resources to engage in the issues of climate change over the long haul. Justice in the Food Chain is a three-day training in Chicago, to help workers in the food chain and their allies develop new strategies for fair food policies.

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689 Massachusetts Avenue

Cambridge, MA 02139

617-868-6600 | uusc.org