CSW Alert!

Speak Out for Social Justice • Louisville 2013

Sunday, June 23, 2013

 ACTIONS for TODAY—
Actions of Immediate Witness

Debate and Vote on Three Proposed Actions of Immediate Witness (AIWs) – Plenary IX – 1:45 p.m.-6:00 p.m.

In the Sunday afternoon GA plenaries, you’ll have the opportunity to debate and vote on the three proposed AIWs. All three may be adopted if each receives the required two-thirds vote. The Rules of Procedure (Rule 13 J) state that up to 20 minutes will be allowed for debate, if needed. No amendment shall be in order unless there have been at least 12 minutes of debate, if needed, on the merits of the proposed Action of Immediate Witness. To move an amendment, come to the amendment table to the right of the stage as soon as the plenary session begins.

The text of the draft AIWs is attached to this CSW Alert, with the unincorporated amendments listed and lettered in order of priority according to the level of support generated in the mini-assemblies around these amendments. These three revised AIWs are:

AIW-1 Amend the Constitution: Corporations are not persons and money is not speech
AIW-2 Condemn the racist mistreatment of young men of color by police
AIW-3 Consider divestment from the fossil fuel industry

While Actions of Immediate Witness carry the authority only of the General Assembly at which they are adopted, AIWs reflect considerable thought, collaboration, and commitment.

FUTURE ACTIONS
Congregational Study/Action Issues
Engage in study and action related to Reproductive Justice.

Engage in actions to implement the Statement of Conscience: Immigration as a Moral Issue and other previously adopted SOCs.

Propose New Congregational Study/Action Issues
By October 1, 2013, submit proposed Congregational Study Action Issues to socialwitness@uua.org.
Vote on proposed Congregational Study/Action Issues as part of the congregational poll by February 1, 2014.
Actions of Immediate Witness
Use adopted AIWs to advocate in your congregations and districts.

The social witness process is our communal process.
Implementation of our adopted statements is everyone’s responsibility.

Proposed Actions of Immediate Witness

Proposed AIW 1:

Support the proposed 28th “WE THE PEOPLE” Amendment to the Constitution:
Corporations are not persons and money is not speech

Amend the Constitution: Corporations are not persons and money is not speech

BECAUSE Unitarian Universalists believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every human person, and in the use of the democratic process in society at large, and because approval of the 2011 AIW opposing Citizens United paved the way for the UUA to take the spiritual lead in the passage of the proposed 28th amendment which states that a constitutional amendment to establish that corporations are not persons and money is not speech;

WHEREAS a series of U.S. Supreme Court rulings have established corporations as persons, equated money with speech, and eliminated limits on amounts that corporations can contribute to political campaigns and political advertising;

WHEREAS these court-created doctrines have flooded the political landscape with unprecedented amounts of money from corporations and other wealthy interests, corrupting our democratic processes and putting our entire democracy at risk, and

WHEREAS Article V of the U.S. Constitution provides for amendments, a process that has occurred 27 times including seven constitutional amendments that have overturned U.S. Supreme Court decisions; and

WHEREAS the “WE THE PEOPLE” 28th Amendment to the Constitution was drafted by Move to Amend, a national coalition of organizations seeking to establish true democracy of, by and for the people and was introduced in Congress as H.J.R.29 on February 14, 2013 by Representatives Rick Nolan (DFL-MN) and Mark Pocan (D-WI); and

WHEREAS Move to Amend is citizens are successfully initiating and supporting needed actions there are pending proposals in Congress and states that need action NOW at city, county and state levels necessary to achieve passage of this amendment;

WHEREAS the UUJEC (Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community), UUA (board of the Unitarian Universalist Association), the UUSC (Unitarian Universalist Service
Committee) and various congregations have already endorsed a constitutional amendment Move to Amend; and

WHEREAS other proposed amendments to the Constitution to overturn Citizens United do not eliminate both corporate personhood and money as speech;

WHEREAS an amendment to the Constitution is needed to overturn Citizens United and eliminate both corporate personhood and money as speech.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2013 General Assembly instructs the Unitarian Universalist Association to make their endorsement formal and public, supporting the efforts of the Move to Amend coalition and the 28th “We the People” Amendment to amend the Constitution; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the 2013 General Assembly further requests member congregations or their social justice committees to pass resolutions of support and endorse Move to Amend at www.movetoamend.org/organizations, and individuals to sign the petition at www.movetoamend.org and, contact their U.S. Representative to co-sponsor HJR29; and a constitutional amendment to establish that corporations are not persons and money is not speech; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2013 General Assembly encourages Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministries nationwide (www.uustatenetworks.org) and other affiliated Unitarian Universalist organizations to join this important cause.

Working together with other groups and other faith traditions, we can make a significant impact to further the progress of a constitutional amendment the proposed comprehensive 28th Amendment to preserve the constitutional rights that our founding fathers intended solely for human persons, restore the effective voice of “We the People” the people and save our democracy.

No Unincorporated Amendments

Proposed AIW 2:

Condemn the racist mistreatment of young men people of color by police

WHEREAS programs such as the “War on Drugs” and practices such as “Stop and Frisk” are actively used by police to harass and oppress communities of color;

WHEREAS Michelle Alexander, at the 2012 UUA General Assembly said, “We use our criminal justice system to label people of color ‘criminals’ and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind… As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights, and arguably less
respect, than a black man living in Alabama at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it’;

WHEREAS this racist harassment has led to a growing list of African-American and Hispanic youth who have been mistreated and incarcerated by because of police action;

WHEREAS thousands of people, Asian, Latin, Black and White, have been involved in mass demonstrations have participated in mass multi-racial and multi-ethnic demonstrations seeking the ending of this racist mistreatment and violence by police;

WHEREAS we, as Unitarian Universalists have principles that provide us a clear mandate to protest such treatment;

- Unitarian Universalist principles affirm the goal of a just community, representing unity in our multi-racial world;
- Unitarian Universalist principles affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person;

WHEREAS the “Stop and Frisk” practice mainly targets young men people of color and treats them in a racist manner that negates their inherent worth and dignity and leads to mass incarceration at tremendous social cost.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2013 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association affirms to uphold our principles and condemn racist practices displayed in what Michelle Alexander described in her book as “the New Jim Crow” and calls upon member congregations to:

- Condemn the practice pattern of mistreatment through programs practices such as “Stop and Frisk,” which mainly targets young men people of color in our society, which negates their inherent worth and dignity and continues the mass practice of institutional racism within our society.

We also call upon our member congregations to:

- Petition local, state, and federal representatives to demand an end to the practice of institutional racism in the form of programs practices like “Stop and Frisk” and
- Actively demonstrate alongside others who are fighting to change the laws that allow police harassment, which results in violence against communities of color.

Unincorporated Amendments
Unincorporated Amendment A: Line 5-6: Delete “and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind.” (I) (CSW Reasoning: Part of quotation)

Unincorporated Amendment B: Lines 28-30: Delete after “mainly targets” and replace with “targets young men of color in our society, thereby negating their inherent worth and dignity
and continuing the mass practice of institutional racism within our society.” (I) (CSW Reasoning: Already replaced with similar language)

Unincorporated Amendment C: After line 35: Insert “Ending Mass Incarceration Charting a New Justice Reinvestment” as a resource. (I) (CSW Reasoning: Resources are not part of an AIW)

Unincorporated Amendment D: Line 1: Insert “(and mass incarceration)” after “mistreatment.” (I) (CSW Reasoning: Not in the title of the original AIW)

Proposed AIW 3:
Consider Divestment from the Fossil Fuel Industry

BECAUSE the Sources of Unitarian Universalism counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science;

BECAUSE Unitarian Universalist congregations covenant, in their Seventh Principle, to respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part, and member congregations have demonstrated their commitment to this principle in various ways including by Green Sanctuary Certification;

BECAUSE the 2006 Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Statement of Conscience calls on Unitarian Universalist Congregations to “[u]se congregational financial resources to positively address the global warming/climate change crisis,” and

BECAUSE the “UUA Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines” (2008) state that investments in companies engaged in negative global impact activities are to be avoided;

WHEREAS we understand our lives are tied up in the consumption of energy;

WHEREAS the fossil fuel industry currently controls fossil fuel reserves that, if burned, will produce more than five times the amount of greenhouse gas emissions required to raise global temperatures beyond 2°C, the level that leaders of 167 countries including the United States have agreed represents a threshold beyond which civilization cannot survive without enormous suffering;

WHEREAS these reserves are built into the share price of these companies, and therefore responsible climate policy— to leave most of the reserves in the ground—would lead to a sharp drop in the market value of Fossil Fuel Company (FFC) shares;

WHEREAS a growing and global movement “350.org” is calling upon universities, pension funds, public entities and religious institutions to divest their investments in 200 fossil fuel
companies; FFCs, and Unitarian Universalists’ participation in this campaign—or refusal to participate—will define us to the public now and for generations to come;

WHEREAS further information and discussion regarding the divestment movement in UUA congregations is available at divestfossilfuels.wordpress.com or by e-mail at divestment@uumilwaukee.org; and

WHEREAS passively profiting from business as usual in carbon-intensive fossil fuel companies given the reality of climate change is an abdication of our responsibility and thus morally wrong.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED profiting from investments in the fossil fuel industry is morally wrong and violates our Principles and Sources;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2013 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls upon delegates to begin a denomination-wide conversation within their congregations about divesting from fossil fuels or exercising shareholder influence. Congregations might discuss the following.

1. Stopping any new direct investments in fossil fuel companies as listed in Carbon Tracker’s reports;
2. Divesting of all direct securities holdings in fossil fuel companies within the next 5 years;
3. Investing in diversified, socially responsible, and climate-friendly securities, and securities in the renewable energy and efficiency sector;
4. Investing in making their own facilities more energy efficient, make widespread use of renewable energy, adopt conservation and efficiency measures;
5. Evaluating the effectiveness of shareholder advocacy; and
6. Retaining the option for owning the minimum number of shares to be an activist shareholder. These shares are to be “influence payments” and not “investments.”

Unincorporated Amendments
Unincorporated Amendment A: Line 38 and line 47: Delete items 1 and 5. (I) (CSW Reasoning: Changes the intent of the AIW.)

Unincorporated Amendment B: Line 23: Delete the number “200” and replace it with the word “all.” (I) (CSW Reasoning: Number is specific to named organization)