

# TOGETHER, WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

U U S C 2 0 0 0 - 2 0 0 1 • H I G H L I G H T S O F T H E Y E A R



*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*

MARGARET MEAD



## AGENTS FOR CHANGE



*UUSC workcamp participants and members of the church they helped rebuild celebrate the completion of the construction.*

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is driven by its members' commitment to foster human rights and social justice in the United States and internationally. Our members, board of directors and staff rally around the shared understanding that we can change the world. Indeed, six decades as an international social change agent have provided us with the experience and expertise to do just this. And our Unitarian Universalist tradition gives us the ethical ground-

ing to ensure that those most directly affected by the social change we seek, inform our strategies and activities as equal partners. Our will to promote and protect justice in tangible, measurable ways was effectively realized this year. This was the first year of UUSC's far-reaching 10-year plan to become a more powerful voice for human rights. Our members, partners and other constituents have frequently praised both the volume and quality of the work accomplished in this first year.

We began new projects, expanded some existing programs and achieved historic victories in the public policy arena.

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## A VISION TO THRIVE BY

One of the most significant developments this year has been the continued evolution in our program area from a country-specific focus to a more highly integrated issue-oriented, thematic focus. This is a trend being echoed by many similar organizations. On January 1, 2000, former domestic and international program staff members joined together to create a dynamic new team.

The staff carefully assessed current program partners to ensure that their objectives and activities were consistent with UUSC's human rights focus. In addition, new partnerships have been developed in the women's rights and children's programs, with more than 38 program partners and initiatives supported by UUSC since January 1, 2000. Following are just a few examples of the accomplishments that have resulted from this synergy.

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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*Valora Washington*

This year, the first in our 10-year strategic planning process, has been pivotal in UUSC's evolution. As you will see from the activities described in this report, our board

of directors, members and staff have begun to transform the organization into a more agile, dynamic force for social justice.

This report also demonstrates a second important perspective on UUSC's activities, namely the emphasis on partnerships – equal, engaged relationships – as an important vehicle for accomplishing our goals.

As a small organization with limited resources, UUSC has learned that by working with others we can dramatically increase our impact. We collaborate with grassroots and community organizations, colleague agencies, Unitarian Universalist congregations and other denominational organizations – and our members – to advance justice.

The record on these pages then is not just of a single organization's efforts. It reflects as well the activi-

ty of a myriad of collaborators working to ensure that the human rights of people around the world are respected and protected. By leveraging our resources in this way, we further increase our ability to empower women; support the struggles of oppressed racial, ethnic and indigenous groups; and defend the rights of children.

I extend a special thanks to each of our members and supporters for your continued belief in and commitment to the mission of the Service Committee. We are proud to be part of this 61-year-old living legacy. In that time, we have changed and grown many times so that we could become stronger, remain relevant and meet current needs. Our current transformation is in that rich and dynamic tradition – as we try to be more responsive to you and to the world around us.

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## A DECADE OF HOPE

### OUR VISION AND GOALS FOR 2000-2010

There are far too many times in our world when the disempowered are relegated to the margins of society and silenced. It is for this reason that UUSC is committed to becoming a more respected voice, moral force and key player for social justice and human rights.

#### OUR VISION

To achieve our vision for UUSC in 2010, we will:

- Build on our program strengths in advancing justice.
- Develop significant depth in a few key program areas known by our constituents and policy leaders for their "best practices."
- Better integrate national and international issues.

#### OUR GOALS

- To create a larger, more active constituency for human rights by growing as a membership organization.
- To increase support to grassroots partners and train and organize larger numbers of U.S. citizens to work for social justice by increasing our fiscal strength.
- To respond to external and internal challenges and responsibilities with flexibility and creativity through effective and efficient governance and management.

## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

UUSC sponsored “From Surviving to Thriving: A National Conference about Welfare Reform” in September 2000. Rep. Lynn Woolsey, D-Calif., gave the keynote address. This critical summit brought together 47 grassroots and national organizations from key states to think about the results of welfare reform and to strategize directions for change.

In this way, UUSC is playing a key leadership and facilitative role in national efforts to change public policy in ways that strengthen U.S. families. The conference was an outgrowth of UUSC’s Welfare and Human Rights Monitoring Project, which began documenting the effects of welfare reform in 1996.

Following the conference, UUSC published *America’s Forgotten Families, Voices of Welfare Reform*. The findings are based upon personal interviews with more than 2,500 current and former welfare recipients and service providers. An analysis of the data collected by our partner in New Jersey, California, Massachusetts and Washington found that welfare rolls are declining but poverty is not declining proportionally.

Distributed to each member of Congress, the report recommends several refinements to welfare law. The report makes clear that voters will be able to influence the congressional debate over the reauthorization of welfare reform in 2002.

In October, UUSC sponsored the international “Gender and Health



*At a conference which examined the effects of welfare reform, UUSC brought advocates from more than 40 organizations together with policy-makers in September 2000 to discuss ways to help low-income families move out of poverty.*

Conference” with our partner, the Cuban Society of Family Health (SOCUMEFA). We provided technical, financial and communications support, which, due to restrictions caused by the U.S. embargo, made this assistance vital.

Physicians, public health professionals and health policy specialists attended from across Latin America and the Caribbean as well as from Western Europe and Canada. UUSC Executive Director Valora Washington gave the keynote address.

Following a staff visit to Cuba in April 2000, the U.S. Treasury Department granted UUSC two additional licenses to support partners in Cuba. One of these projects is with the AIDS Center’s Women to Women Project in Havana. The other is in Villa Clara province and is a project of SOCUMEFA’s Santa Clara branch. Our partner work is key in our efforts to change U.S. policy toward Cuba.

UUSC also continued its long-standing relationship with

Guatemalan partners by helping women’s groups distribute and view *The Women of Guatemala*. The video describes the inspiring work being done by women in post-conflict Guatemala.

## DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

UUSC sponsored a daylong professional development opportunity for children’s advocates in Massachusetts in May 2001. Dr. Lawrence Aber of Columbia University shared his new national study on child poverty and led participants in a discussion of how to create new strategies to reduce persistent child poverty. Deborah Stein from the National Association of Child Advocates, moderated the event.

UUSC also organized the 2001 Teen Voices program in Lawrence, Mass. Staff are working together with activists in Lawrence to provide opportunities for urban teens to develop leadership and advocacy skills. This is a pilot project that

we expect to replicate in other parts of the country.

## SUPPORTING THE STRUGGLES OF OPPRESSED GROUPS

In June 2000, UUSC organized a very successful consultation on environmental justice issues with leading experts and university professors. We looked at how UUSC can make an impact in the field, including forming a link between experts, academics and activists. UUSC's close connection with oppressed racial, ethnic and indigenous groups on the ground both nationally and internationally means we are well positioned to undertake such a networking role.

Then, during spring 2001, UUSC began preparations to participate in the United Nations World Conference Against Racism to be held in Durban, South Africa, this summer. We will support partners' attendance and will organize a UU presence at the conference. As we work to strengthen UUSC's support of oppressed racial, ethnic and indigenous groups in the coming year, this international forum will give us new tools with which to pressure our own and other governments to respect the human rights of all of their citizens.

## CHANGE THROUGH ADVOCACY & ACTION

### INNOVATION & TRANSFORMATION

During year one of our strategic plan implementation, more than 350 participants took part in the

Just Works program. Workcampers helped rebuild burned African-American churches in Tennessee, Georgia and Arkansas. Young adults learned advocacy skills from Native American leaders in South Dakota at the 2000 Alternative Spring Break Workcamp.

Last summer's first-ever General Assembly Youth Workcamp was held in Nashville, Tennessee. It brought Unitarian Universalist youth and young adults together with the local group EarthMatters on a recycling/renewable energy project in East Nashville. As part of the summer 2001 GA workcamp, youth will focus on developing skills to better advocate for prison reform.

During summer 2000, UUSC youth workcampers repeated their previous year's collaboration with community leaders in Yakima and Mattawa, Washington, to address the myriad problems faced by migrant farm worker families. In partnership with the Mattawa Head Start Program and the Esperanza project, the participants built children's playground equipment, repaired the public potable water facility and created a community mural.

An equally important aim of the young adult-led workcamp was to document the living conditions of migrant farm worker families and share this information with local advocates and state policy-makers.

In keeping with UUSC's goal of providing experiential learning opportunities, Just Works expanded its program to work in

conjunction with existing Unitarian Universalist camps and conference centers. UUSC staff and workcamp alumni conducted a weeklong organizer training during the Unirondack Camp and Conference Center's (in central upstate New York) teenage session.

Exploring the issues around environmental justice, participants eventually organized a community response to a "hot" local issue. The youth learned about the proposed creation of a dump next to a veterans' burial ground. The group had the opportunity to participate in supporting demonstrations against the dump at the local town meeting that week.

### AN AGILE RESPONSE

In addition to workcamps, UUSC engaged our members, Unitarian



*UUSC supports partners working to protect the rights of indigenous people, like this young mother and her children who are struggling to remain on their land now desired by ranchers in Mexico.*

Universalist congregations, and others concerned about human rights in advocacy on domestic and international policy. We also organized members to respond to major natural disasters, which threatened human rights in various parts of the world.

We were able to do this by enlarging the membership in our UUSC-HOT listserv and sending out over 25 urgent action announcements between spring 2000 and spring 2001. This was coupled with twice monthly electronic action alerts to over 2,500 members and activists across the United States and almost weekly alert postings on the UUSC Web site.

Also activating our year-old disaster relief policy, UUSC quickly set up relief funds in response to devastating earthquakes in El Salvador and India.

During winter 2000, UUSC asked its network of children's rights advocates to comment on the proposed rule governing the allocation of High Performance Bonus funds appropriated under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (aid for welfare-to-work families).

While a complicated issue, the



*UUSC's work with partners in Cuba instructs our public policy advocacy. We were one of a handful of nongovernmental organizations involved in the fall 2000 passage of groundbreaking legislation aimed at ending the U.S. food and medicine embargo against Cuba.*

outcome could mean better services to families trying to move out of poverty. Each advocate was asked to send a pre-addressed postcard to the Department of Health and Human Services suggesting policy refinements.

The postcard campaign was later cited in the congressional record by HHS for effectively raising select issues such as the need to expand food stamps and child care.

Furthermore, UUSC has provided staff and media relations support for UUSC members and Unitarian Universalist congregations in Southern California that are supporting efforts by area farm workers for a United Farm Workers contract. UUSC members from the

Southern California Unit showed their solidarity with the farm workers with a food and fund drive at the end of February. On March 1, the Southern California Unit members went nationwide with a boycott of Pictsweet label fresh and frozen food products in order to press Pictsweet management to negotiate with the mushroom farm employees for a contract with the United Farm Workers.

#### **CHANGING PUBLIC POLICY**

Our Washington, D.C.-based policy advocacy focused on a few key public policy priorities during the past year. This sharpened focus helped us to achieve some significant social change victories. Staff focused on ending the food and medicine embargo against Cuba,



*UUSC produced a number of new materials describing its programs, including a new video available free of charge to members and others by calling 800-766-5236.*

stemming sex trafficking, and looking at ways to reform welfare reform.

UUSC was one of only a handful of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the fall 2000 passage of groundbreaking legislation aimed at ending the U.S. embargo against Cuba. UUSC Washington staff participated in strategy sessions with congressional leaders throughout the year. The legislation eases the trade embargo for the first time in four decades.

With leadership from the Washington, D.C., staff, UUSC was also part of a small ad hoc group of NGOs that called for strong women's rights protections as they effectively advocated for the first ever legislation on trafficking in humans.

As part of our program focus to stem sex trafficking, UUSC helped build awareness of a growing rights violation unfamiliar to most

in Congress and urged specific rights language through joint letters to bipartisan legislation co-sponsors.

In another example of innovative practice, UUSC worked with the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility and Walden Asset

Management to co-file shareholder resolutions with corporations such as the Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, and Home Depot. For the latter, we were a primary filer of a resolution that called for expanded disclosure on workplace diversity.

By co-filing shareholder resolutions in this way, we ensure that issues like fair pricing of drugs and workplace diversity are addressed at corporate annual meetings of stockholders.

Press coverage of UUSC activities and events also ensures that human rights issues are publicly addressed. Our press coverage more than doubled in the past year. Our policy messages resonated off of the pages of the *Boston Globe*, the *Boston Herald*, the *Washington Post*, *USA Today* and a host of other newspapers, specialty publications and electronic media

across the United States.

## SERVING MEMBERS BETTER

Responding to member requests, UUSC changed its fiscal year from April 1 through March 31 to July 1 through June 30 – and with a bylaw change from the membership ended the practice of tying the membership year to the fiscal year.

This means that UUSC is instituting a rolling membership system. Beginning in July 2001, members will receive reminders of when they need to renew their annual membership, exactly one year after the date that they last renewed.

UUSC also achieved a breakthrough in electronic communications this year, launching a twice-monthly e-mail bulletin to constituents in January 2001. The bulletin increases the amount and timeliness of program information available to members.

A number of other new materials, including the first new UUSC video in a decade, were developed to better inform members about UUSC programs and policies.

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## SUSTAINING JUSTICE

As an independent organization, UUSC looks to its individual members and to congregations and foundations for most of the support needed to develop and sustain its innovative human rights programs.

Members of the UUSC Board, the Endowment Campaign Committee and the Volunteer Network provided essential leadership in UUSC's fund-raising efforts last year.

Thanks so much to all of you who have supported our work for justice through your generous contributions as we begin our 10-year journey to make UUSC an even more effective human rights organization.

In particular, UUSC is grateful to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock in New York, which contributed \$700,000 through its matching gift program for unrestricted contributions from individuals of \$60 or more. The congregation also provided a challenge grant to UUSC during the final phase of our Endowment Campaign. In addition, the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock made a \$100,000 project grant to UUSC.

Led by our Endowment Committee and Institutional Advancement staff, we more than doubled our original fund-raising projections for our Endowing the Struggle for Justice campaign. With the announcement of a \$1

million gift intention made in the final leg of the campaign we raised a total of \$7 million, which we announced at the Annual Meeting in June 2000.

UUSC celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Guest at Your Table program in 2000, and 81 congregations joined the program for the first time. To date, UU congregations across the United States have contributed more than \$345,000 this fiscal year to the education and advocacy program.

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## AN ALLIANCE OF HOPE

Each of us has an important role to play in protecting and promoting human rights. At UUSC we are reaching out in new ways to build a network of people and organizations that will work with us to change the world.

During the past year, more than 85 congregations supported UUSC's work with a corporate commitment; another 421 were recognized for their efforts to increase UUSC membership by their congregation members. We undertook joint communications and/or program projects with the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, the UUA Youth Office, the Southern California unit and Promise Washington's Children.

Our executive director and other staff represented UUSC in a number of national and international

forums this year. Engagements ran the gamut from the keynote address at the World Forum on Early Care and Education in Athens, Greece in April 2001 (including over 500 delegates from 80 nations) to a national briefing on welfare reform in Washington, D.C. in May 2001.

Through strong alliances and a supportive, growing membership, we will continue as a force for social justice in the United States and the world.

This work is being reinforced also through invisible improvements that we are making at UUSC. We are expanding our use of technology, improving administrative functions, and strengthening the way we govern and manage the Service Committee because we recognize that these comprise the framework that makes our human rights work possible.

*Help us advance justice whenever and wherever the need exists. Together, we can change the world.*

## JOIN US

- Become a member or renew your membership.
- Take part in Guest at Your Table, UUSC Sunday, or send your other gift of support.
- Join our human rights network of social justice advocates or volunteer at a workcamp.
- Sign up for our twice monthly e-mail bulletins of human rights information and action alerts.

## UUSC's MISSION STATEMENT

*Grounded in Unitarian Universalist principles that affirm the worth, dignity and human rights of every person, and the interdependence of all life, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is a voluntary, nonsectarian organization working to advance justice throughout the world.*



## Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

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For more information about UUSC, visit our Web site at [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org) and sign up for twice monthly e-mail updates on social justice issues from around the world.