



Service Committee

NEWS

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE

WINTER 2003-2004



In Burma, women, children and ethnic communities have borne the brunt of the oppression at the hands of a brutal military junta for over 50 years. UUSC works with human rights organizations along the Thai-Burma border in the struggle to bring peace and democracy to the nation.

For more, turn to page 3.

UUSC election monitors in Guatemala witness defeat of former dictator

Members of the international human rights community breathed a sigh of relief at the Nov. 9 defeat of Guatemalan presidential candidate, Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt. Gen. Ríos Montt, the former military dictator accused of genocide, was sidelined politically by coming in third in the hotly contested race. His third place finish removed him from the runoff elections scheduled held on Dec. 28, 2003.

UUSC President Charlie Clements and Program Associate Allison Kent led a delegation to Guatemala to monitor the November presidential election. Taking part in the monitoring mission were Haig Kartounian, a congressional aide to U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., and UUSC members Lenore Snodey and Peter Landecker of Manhattan Beach, Calif., and Carolyn

Purcell of Mountain View, Calif., as well as photographer Cindy Karp of Miami, Fla.

Although the 36-year Guatemalan civil war ended with the signing of the peace accords in 1996, justice has yet to arrive in Guatemala. An estimated 200,000 people – primarily indigenous – were killed during the long civil war. However, as the peace accords have not been fully implemented, real peace remains elusive. UUSC has worked alongside Guatemalan human rights organizations for peace and justice since 1974.

“Despite all of the difficulties that the organizations have had to face and against all odds, they seem not to have lost hope that the future will bring a better Guatemala for the next generation,” says delegation member Haig Kartounian.

Delegation reaches out to show support

The group monitored the elections in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, a town four hours away from the capital, Guatemala City. UUSC partner organizations are active in Rabinal, where an estimated 25 percent of the population died during the civil war. One partner, the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR), is bringing charges against Gen. Ríos Montt and other former military leaders for genocide and crimes against humanity.

“The Service Committee supports the human rights organizations that exhume the bodies and document the tragedies,” says Dr. Clements.

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During the recent election in Guatemala, election officials signed and stamped every ballot cast by eligible voters to guard against fraudulent votes being dumped into the ballot boxes.

Members of the human rights community will be paying close attention to further developments after conservative Oscar Berger, a former Guatemala City mayor and businessman, won the presidential runoff election on Dec. 28, 2003, with 54 percent of the vote. Berger took office on January 14, 2004. On that same day, former military dictator Ríos Montt lost his immunity as he ended his congressional term after his failed presidential bid.

We can work together to define our country's future



During an election monitoring delegation trip to Guatemala, UUSC President Charlie Clements shows a Rabinal voter where he should get in line to vote.

Dennis, Max, Rudy and Doug . . . we were all classmates. I played football with one of them and ran track with two of them. They all have two things in common: Their names are carved into that black granite slab in Washington, D.C. (the Vietnam Memorial), and they never voted for an American president.

We could die for our country, but we could not vote in its elections. One of the legacies of the Vietnam War is that 18-year-old Americans now have that privilege. It is my hope that in 2004 we can help many of them also view it as a responsibility.

This spring, UUSC will begin to reach out to youth and adults across the country to help them mobilize members of their community for the 2004 election. We will also help local advocates reach out and join coalitions in their communities that are confronting the apathy and cynicism which keep too many people on the electoral sidelines.

Walking many miles for justice

I wish that people could have witnessed what I did in a rural county seat named Rabinal in Guatemala on Nov. 9, 2003.

Imagine if there were only one polling place in your county and that there were no public transportation available to get you there. Would you walk? Would you walk for hours? Would you walk for hours carrying a child slung over your shoulder? That's what thousands of indigenous Guatemalan women did that day.

Then they waited hours in long lines to get to the polling table. Maybe one in five was then told that she was at the wrong table and had to wait in yet another long line. I followed one woman who was rejected at one polling table and saw her go to the place where voter registration was reconciled. That was about 11:00 a.m. and she was at the back of that line. Later in the evening, I recognized her as she voted. The moon had now risen. I told her I had seen her several times that morning, and I wanted to know what motivated her to persevere through so much to vote.

With a quiet dignity she said, "Because today we are defining our country's future."

Women build community

On March 8, 2004, we will celebrate International Women's Day. On this day, we will honor women's achievements, recognizing their contributions to their communities and the challenges they face. Our work in Guatemala – ensuring that women have a voice in determining the future of their country, their community, their neighborhood – is what the spirit of International Women's Day is all about.

Earlier during our trip to Guatemala, we had talked with some leaders in a partner organization of the Service

Committee called Association Pro Mujer (For Women) Villa Nueva. Pro Mujer encourages women to civic participation. They told us, "We used to think as long as men vote, why do we need to? Then we looked at what a mess has resulted and we decided we need women to vote!"

Youth build democracy

In the upcoming U.S. elections, UUSC hopes to harness the power of voters – especially youth – nationwide.

What if the youth in America thought like those Guatemalan women and said, "We used to think as long as *adults* voted, why do we need to? Then we looked at what a mess has resulted and we decided we need *young people* to vote!"

Charlie Clements



Shining a light on a human rights crisis: Fighting for justice in Burma

Grassroots Human Rights Education and Development Committee is one of UUSC's partners in Burma that provides human rights training to people long oppressed by the ruling military junta.



(Photo courtesy of GHREDC)

It has been several months since the violent attacks on Burmese activist Aung San Suu Kyi and her pro-democracy supporters. Activists continue to support a range of different strategies for bringing democracy to Burma, including sanctions by foreign governments. But where these strategies are leading remains uncertain.

UUSC's work in Burma includes support for human rights partners working at the grassroots level, constituent education, public policy advocacy, shareholder advocacy and support of the Alien Tort Claims Act. Our partners enable victims of human rights violations to become rebuilders, capable of confronting and harnessing the forces that shape their lives.

Building a movement

One such partner, Burma Issues (BI), is building a non-violent movement of marginalized people that is capable of carrying out the long-term struggle necessary to bring a true and lasting peace with justice to Burma.

"Before I attended BI training, I had no idea about economic, political and social factors. I believed that armed

struggle was the only way for the Karen people to stop political instability," shares training participant Saw Hsar Htoo. "Eventually, I realized that BI is struggling for peace and justice by using a non-violent approach. I now see that armed struggle is like a big explosion which provides little effectiveness to the grassroots."

Peace remains elusive

For over 50 years, the Burmese people have endured isolation, totalitarian rule and civil war. The brunt of this tyranny has been borne by women, children and oppressed ethnic communities.

According to a recent U.S. State Department report, Burmese security forces continue to kill Burmese citizens and commit rape, forcibly relocate persons, use forced labor, and conscript child soldiers. Three million Burmese currently live as displaced people or refugees, many living in camps along the Thai-Burma border.

In July, President Bush signed the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act, which banned Burmese imports to the United States; froze the U.S. assets of the military junta; and imposed a visa ban

on junta members, relatives and associates. This was an important victory, but much more needs to be done. Suu Kyi, leader of the National League of Democracy, which won 82 percent of the legislative seats in 1990, is still under house arrest.

Political dialogue aimed at making Burma a more open society remains elusive. Activists and members of Congress are becoming increasingly frustrated with the constant, repeated failures of the United Nations process to encourage dialogue in Burma and are calling for new, beefed up U.N. initiatives that include the direct involvement of the U.N. Security Council.

by Mary Lania,
Associate for Programs

END CORPORATE IMPUNITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

The Alien Tort Claims Act (ATCA) is a law that allows foreign victims of serious human rights abuse abroad to sue the perpetrators in U.S. courts. Controversy has arisen over whether ATCA can be used to hold multinational corporations liable for human rights abuses perpetrated by business partners.

Doe v. Unocal is making just such a claim. Utilizing ATCA, *Doe* was filed in federal court on behalf of 11 rural Burmese villagers for Unocal's direct complicity in abuses committed by the Burmese military.

Unocal partnered with the Burmese military to provide security for a natural gas pipeline. In doing so, the military displaced whole villages, forced residents to work against their will, and allegedly raped or murdered some who refused. The case is proceeding through the federal courts.

ATCA is now under attack by multinational corporations, the U.S. business lobby and the Department of Justice, which are seeking to repeal or weaken this act so corporations cannot be sued. UUSC is joining with other human rights organizations, religious groups and labor unions to defend this act as a critical tool in defending human rights around the world.

HELP BRING CHANGE TO THE PEOPLE OF BURMA

- Sign up for our Human Rights Defenders network to receive UUSC action alerts on Burma. Contact Brandi Tague at hrdefenders@uusc.org.
- Urge President Bush to support justice for victims of human rights abuses. Visit our online Legislative Action Center at www.uusc.org.
- As part of Justice Sunday, UUSC is circulating a petition in support of the Alien Tort Claims Act. Visit our Web site to download the petition.

UUSC LAUNCHES ONLINE ELECTION CENTER

In conjunction with our Defending Democracy 2004 initiative, eligible voters can now register to vote quickly online. You also can learn about the candidates' views on important issues.

Visit our election center at www.uusc.org.

Help UUSC defend democracy in 2004

It seems these days that everyone is talking about the presidential election in 2004. And with good reason: Crucial social justice issues, the place of the United States in the world, the future of our civil liberties – all of these and much more will be touched by what happens on Nov. 2, 2004.

What will you do? As an active participant in the democratic processes of this country, you can work toward promoting human rights and citizen participation in this important election.

Your vote counts, more than ever

No matter where you fall on the political spectrum, this one concern unites us all. When the polling stations close, when the ballots are counted, we need to know for sure that

the next president will have been fairly, constitutionally and democratically elected.

In 2000, an unprecedented electoral crisis hit the United States. We awoke the morning after election day unsure who actually received the majority of the Electoral College votes.

Even more unsettling was that only half of those eligible to vote actually did. We have to ask ourselves, if more people voted – maybe if more youth felt involved in the process and went to the polls – would the country have avoided the chaos which ensued?

The Service Committee is committed to making sure that as many people as possible are educated about the issues that matter and participate in the election process.

“The youth that did not

vote in the last four elections could have tipped the balance either way had they participated,” said UUSC President Charlie Clements.

Defending democracy

We are conducting a program to help strengthen active citizen participation in our country's democratic process by concentrating our efforts on the 2004 election. We will address human rights issues at stake during this election at forums to be held monthly across the country, draft issue briefs, and reach out to congregations and community groups to confront voter apathy.

In addition, we will also be sponsoring a Defending Democracy project that will encourage youth and young

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Free Speech project highlights fear of eroding civil liberties

Preliminary results from the pilot phase of UUSC's Free Speech Project show a troubling trend: the growing belief that civil liberties in the United States are being eroded as the U.S. government responds to current events. Many of those interviewed by project participants said they believe that their civil liberties are being threatened by the

government's war on terrorism. They also believe that identity-based discrimination, especially directed at Muslims or Arab Americans, is increasing. And the higher level of government secrecy poses a threat to our democratic processes, many say.

“I was surprised at how hungry interviewees were to talk about their anger, fears and experiences with the USA Patriot Act,” says Linda Harris, a participant from the First UU Society in San Francisco. “There was real passion and a sense of urgency.”

“We were eager to learn more about threats to our first amendment rights and discuss causes and potential solutions,” adds Samuel Perrryman, also from the First UU Society.

Pilot engages many participants

In June and July, groups of UUSC volunteers in San Francisco, Southern California, Maryland and New York participate in the pilot phase of the Free Speech Project. After studying some of the new government measures enacted after Sept. 11, 2001, they interviewed community leaders about the status of civil liberties in the United States. They then sent their data to UUSC.

“We had an impressive number of participants, including several teenagers,” says Ms. Harris. “Most found the interview process very interesting and enjoyable.”

For a free copy of the pilot report and/or to participate in the Free Speech Project, please contact UUSC by calling 800 388-3920 or e-mail jladd@uusc.org.

Members of the First UU Society in San Francisco participated in a pilot of the UUSC Free Speech Project. From left to right, they are: Marc Tognotti, Samuel Perryman, Linda Harris, Amy Kelly and Henry Kroll. (photo courtesy of Linda Harris)



Mix coffee hour with social action

Nearly 500 UU congregations are working with UUSC and Equal Exchange to create a better life for small farmers and their families across the world by participating in the UUSC Coffee Project.

UUSC's partner since 2001, Equal Exchange is a worker-owned fair trade organization that buys directly from farmer cooperatives to ensure that farmers earn a fair price for their products. Equal Exchange now offers baking cocoa in addition to its wide variety of organic coffees, teas and cocoa.

UUSC receives a small percentage of the proceeds of the sales to provide grants to human rights initiatives such as a women's leadership train-

ing program with the Manos Campesinas cooperative in Guatemala. Help UUSC and Equal Exchange promote human rights and fair trade by serving Equal Exchange beverages at your coffee hours, social events and home.

For more information, please visit www.equalexchange.com or contact Kelli Larsen at coffeeproject@uusc.org or 800 388-3920, ext. 227.



Almost half of all UU congregations are now participating in the UUSC Coffee Project.



UUSC supports leadership training of women from the Manos Campesinas cooperative, one of Equal Exchange's trading partners. (photo courtesy of Manos Campesinas)

Programs energize, drive UUSC

A message from the board of trustees

This has been a busy time for everyone at the UU Service Committee. The fall found us working hard with our new president, Charlie Clements, who joined us in late summer. With a great burst of energy, Charlie brought new ideas and direction to UUSC.

In October, the trustees and Charlie worked over three days in intensive and productive meetings. Joined by new board members, we participated in a daylong retreat at Harvard where we reviewed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UUSC history and current initiatives. We learned about other international organizations. We also developed a working covenant and a new committee structure, and organized plans through next June.

In January 2003, a consulting firm completed a capacity assessment of UUSC with the mission to improve our organizational effectiveness. At February's board

meeting, the trustees and management staff organized the tasks and developed implementation steps – immediate, intermediate and long term. I am pleased to report that much of this work has been completed or will be completed in the next few months. As an adjunct, we also have developed protocols for the ongoing monitoring of all UUSC systems.

Programs drive UUSC's work

We hope that you are current with UUSC programs. They are the engine that drives this organization. The human rights and social justice work of our partner organizations continues to be inspirational. As you know, we just recently completed a Just Works workcamp on the Mexico-U.S. border in which participants learned more about immigration and the underlying issues of poverty, jobs and free trade.

UUSC has been working to raise awareness regarding the Free Trade Area of the Americas. We are also moving forward with our Free Speech Project and have joined with the UUA to educate, register and mobilize voters for the upcoming national election in November 2004. And Charlie just led a delegation to Guatemala with a U.S. congressional staff members and UUSC stakeholders to monitor the presidential election in that nation.

Your support of all these efforts is essential. The board of trustees wishes to thank you for your continued support and confidence as we move forward to make the world a better place for all.

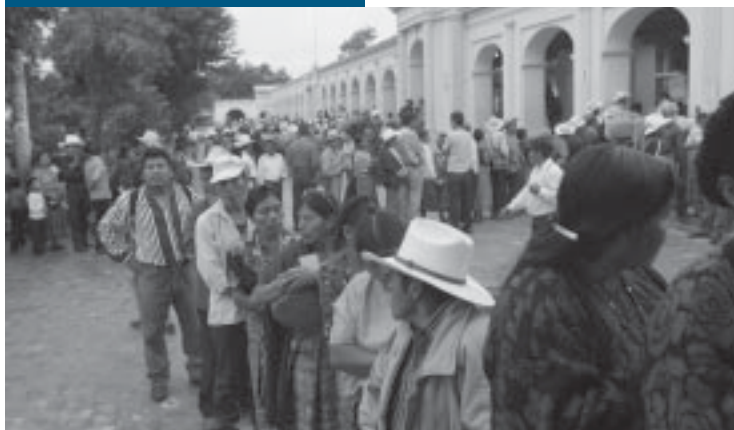
With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Reinhardt Van Dyke".

Reinhardt Van Dyke, Chair
UUSC Board of Trustees

Delegation monitors Guatemalan elections

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Guatemalans waited in long lines for hours to vote in a hotly contested race where a former military dictator was one of the candidates.

“We also support the survivors’ groups formed to hold the perpetrators accountable for these crimes against humanity.”

The delegation met with human rights leaders, including many from UUSC partner organizations that promote citizen participation, indigenous and women’s rights. They also met with members of USAID and the U.N. missions to Guatemala.

Tensions run high

Delegation members were moved by the stories they heard during their visit. “Are you going to offer me exile [asylum] if the general is elected?” asked Juan Manuel, the president of AJR. Juan lost 28 family members during the 1980s, including his wife and four children. As a lay church worker, Juan himself was tar-

geted and forced to flee into the mountains to survive for three years.

UUSC partner organizations and other human rights activists were understandably tense, along with the rest of the country, in the days leading up to the elections, especially given the candidacy of Gen. Ríos Montt. An increase in political violence, targeting of human rights and political opposition leaders, and the remobilization of the ex-civil defense patrollers, or paramilitary, all caused uncertainty and intimidation in the urban and rural population.

Partner organizations were reassured by the presence of monitoring delegations such as the one from UUSC. Juan Manuel told delegation members, “I feel happy today because you’ve come here to observe the elections. I’m grateful that you’ve come from places that perhaps I’ll never know and that you’ve made such an effort to be here.”

Guatemala looks ahead

The results of the elections were a small but reassuring step forward. Despite his loss, Gen. Ríos Montt remains the head of the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG), the political party he founded. Although the FRG won the

majority of municipal offices around the country and has the second highest number of representatives in the new Congress, it did lose 20 seats in the recent elections.

UUSC remains concerned about the high number of former military and intelligence officers from a variety of political parties which won seats in the new Congress. We are also concerned about a potential military bloc which could thwart attempts to strengthen the fragile justice system, implement the peace accords, and prosecute the authors of the genocide and other human rights violations.

“UUSC’s delegation to Guatemala has provided us with a firsthand experience into the impact Americans can have in spreading human rights and democracy in the rest of the world,” says Mr. Kartounian. “It is my hope that their work will promote a sense of renewed enthusiasm among the rest of the peace-loving community in the United States.”

To learn more about Guatemala and the election monitoring delegation, see www.uusc.org for a photo essay and articles.

by Allison Kent,
Associate for Programs

To become involved in supporting human rights in Guatemala, join UUSC’s Guatemala Human Rights Defenders network by contacting Brandi Tague at 800 388-3920 or hrdefenders@uusc.org.

Also, consider becoming a media volunteer to raise the issues of Guatemala and human rights in local communities via the press. Contact Dick Campbell at dcampbell@uusc.org.

‘Dominga’ premieres in Guatemala

Standing room only crowd views story of massacre survivor



Denese Joy Becker, also known as Dominga Sic Ruiz, returned to Guatemala for the premiere of ‘Discovering Dominga,’ a film about her journey to uncover her past as a massacre survivor.

Hundreds of people crowded into La Bodeguita on Nov. 6, 2003, for the Guatemala City premiere of ‘Discovering Dominga.’ They hung over the balconies in a standing room only crowd to watch this film, the incredible story of an indigenous woman who was adopted in the United States and returned years later to confront her true identity as a survivor of the 1982 Rio Negro massacres.

Dominga Sic Ruiz was 9 years old when her parents were both murdered. She found refuge in an orphanage and was eventually adopted by a family in Iowa. There she was transformed into Denese Joy Becker, shedding her culture, her language and many of her memories.

Haunted by snatches of her remembered past, an adult Denese ultimately connected with filmmakers Patricia

Flynn and Mary Jo McConahay and together, they produced this astonishing documentary of Denese’s return to Guatemala in search of her past. UUSC was one of the early supporters of the documentary. More recently, the Service Committee has also supported the production of a Spanish language version of the film which will be used for human rights outreach and education in Guatemala.

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UUSC HONOR CONGREGATIONS 2003

Corrections for UUSC fiscal year 2003: July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003

We are proud to celebrate the following congregations for their outstanding commitment to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's work for human rights. Some congregations recognized below were incorrectly categorized in the list presented in the fall 2003 issue of the *Service Committee News*, and some were inadvertently omitted. Only corrections, and not all Honor Congregations, are listed below.

Spirit of Justice Chalice Society honors those extraordinary congregations with 100 percent UUSC membership.

UU Congregation of Cocoa, Cocoa, Florida

Vision of Justice Banner Society honors congregations in which 50-99 percent of the membership are UUSC members.

ALASKA

Fairbanks

ARIZONA

Prescott

Prescott

UU Fellowship

CALIFORNIA

Auburn

Sunnyvale

Visalia

Whittier

FLORIDA

Port Charlotte

NEW JERSEY

Wayne

OHIO

Athens

Delaware

OREGON

Roseburg

TEXAS

Abilene

New Braunfels

Victoria

WASHINGTON

Friday Harbor

Creating Justice Banner Society honors congregations in which 25-49 percent of the membership are UUSC members.

ARIZONA

Prescott

Granite Peak

UU Church

CALIFORNIA

Bayside

Berkeley

Carmel

Grass Valley

Hemet

Laguna Beach

Los Angeles

Redwood City

Santa Paula

Ventura

COLORADO

Loveland

Connecticut

New Britain

Norwich

FLORIDA

Bradenton

Deland

Lakeland

North Palm Beach

GEORGIA

Dahlonega

Macon

IDAHO

Coeur d'Alene

ILLINOIS

Carbondale

INDIANA

Columbus

IOWA

Clinton

Sioux City

KANSAS

Prairie Village

MAINE

Brunswick

MARYLAND

Cumberland

Great Mills

Hagerstown

MASSACHUSETTS

Athol

Bridgewater

Grafton

Lexington

First Parish in

Lexington

Melrose

Newburyport

Watertown

MICHIGAN

Houghton

MINNESOTA

Fridley

MONTANA

Kalispell

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Chocura

Keene

NEW JERSEY

Orange

Paramus

NEW MEXICO

Los Alamos

NEW YORK

Canandaigua

Central Square

Kingston

Mohegan Lake

Queensbury

NORTH CAROLINA

Franklin

OHIO

Lima

OREGON

Corvallis

PENNSYLVANIA

Collegeville

West Chester

RHODE ISLAND

Providence

Religious Society

of Bell Street Chapel

TENNESSEE

Knoxville

Westside UU Church

Memphis

Peter Cooper

UU Fellowship

VERMONT

Norwich

West Brattleboro

VIRGINIA

Glen Allen

WASHINGTON

Blaine

Olympia

WEST VIRGINIA

Bellaire

WISCONSIN

Eau Claire

Milwaukee

Unitarian Fellowship

Rice Lake

James Luther Adams congregations support UUSC through a line-item gift from their annual budget of at least \$1 per member.

UU Fellowship, Raleigh, North Carolina

Special gift recognition honors congregations that contributed \$2,000 or more to UUSC's struggle for human rights through special ways of giving such as UUSC Sunday, collections during services and other creative methods.

River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, Maryland

For information on how your congregation can be recognized, contact Rachel Binderman at rbinderman@uusc.org.



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Defend democracy

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adults ages 15 to 30 to reach out to other young people and become active, even activist, participants in the election.

No matter what your political stripe, this election will affect your work, your passions and your life. We learned from the last election that the popular slogan, "each vote counts," is not just an ideal but a necessity crucial to the success of an open society. The question is: What will you do? UUSC wants to help you and your community find an answer.

For more information about UUSC's election-related work, call 800 388-3920 or e-mail democracy@uusc.org

by Joe Lydon, Associate for Education and Action

'Dominga'

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"Denese's story can connect many in the United States with the massacre of indigenous people in Guatemala," said UUSC President Charlie Clements. "As an American citizen, she is in a unique position to educate other Americans."

Denese's most recent trip to Guatemala included not only the screening of the film in Guatemala City and her native Rabinal. She also continued her participation in the legal case against former military dictators, General Efraín Ríos Montt and Romeo Lucas García, for genocide and crimes against humanity. A UUSC partner, the Association for Justice and Reconciliation, is spearheading the efforts to bring to justice the former military dictators responsible for perpetrating the massacres.

For more about Guatemala, visit www.uusc.org. Copies of the film 'Discovering Dominga' are available on loan from UUSC. Contact Allison Kent at 800 388-3920 or e-mail akent@uusc.org.

Exploring issues faced along U.S./Mexico border

To live on the border between the United States and Mexico is to be a part of the daily struggle of those who move between the two countries in pursuit of better opportunities. For those who successfully make it across the border into the United States from Mexico, there may be low-wage work or reunification with loved ones already in the United States. For those who are not successful there may be a painful interaction with U.S. government authorities, deportation or death from exposure to desert elements or drowning.

In October, 15 people traveled together and participated in the UUSC "On the Border" workcamp to explore the unique issues that face those that live along the border between the United States and Mexico. From Oct. 15-19, workcampers participated in a learning/service experience that began with a training in Tucson, Ariz., and continued through several border towns in northern Mexico. The workcamp was held in conjunction with BorderLinks, an Arizona-based organization.

"I have felt so much and am very happy for the experience of sharing time with fellow UUs across the country as well as our Catholic friends from Minnesota who joined in," says Kathy Smith of California. "Our lived experiences also brought out the stories, humor and comradeship in all of us."

Firsthand experiences enhance understanding

Participants learned about the history of U.S./Mexico relations on the border, examined the economic realities faced by Mexican families on the border and visited the U.S. Bor-

der Patrol. They also enhanced their firsthand experience by sharing candid conversations with migrants and were assigned homestays with Mexican families in Nogales.

Most workcampers agreed that the homestays put the entire trip into perspective. Building relationships is a key element of social justice work, and homestays facilitated that experience.

"Thank you all so much for organizing this trip with BorderLinks. It was filled with so much that it is hard to describe many of my experiences packed and compressed in such a short timeframe," says Ms. Smith.

Join UUSC by participating in future workcamps or become a Human Rights Defender to experience, learn and then act. For more information, visit www.uusc.org or call 800 388-3920 or e-mail justworks@uusc.org.

by Kim McDonald, Senior Associate for Education and Action and Nguyen Weeks, Associate for Youth



UUSC workcampers mix dirt and straw to make "cob" bricks to build and mold a wall for a day care facility at the Casa de la Misericordia (House of Hope) in Nogales, Mexico, that is scheduled to open in 2004.

From left, they are volunteer Kathy Smith; Kim McDonald, UUSC staff; and volunteer Kelli Meyer.

Leave your values to the next generation

Your commitment to a more just world may be just the example that someone else needs in order to be equally generous.

Many of our members and supporters make charitable gifts by naming the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee as a beneficiary in their wills. The federal government encourages these gifts or bequests by allowing an unlimited estate tax charitable deduction.

When you are a legacy gift donor, UUSC recognizes that, in a sense, you have made our partners and programs a part of your family. We, therefore, recognize our legacy donors with membership in the **Flaming Chalice Circle**.

If you have already made a plan to give to UUSC in your will or estate plan, please notify us by contacting David Riley at 617 868-6600, ext. 205, or by e-mail at driley@uusc.org.

An interview with a social activist: Mary Rose Curtis

Personal witness is essential to a meaningful life

(photo courtesy of Mary Rose Curtis)



Mary Rose Curtis is a member of the River Road Unitarian Church in Bethesda, Md., where she is chair of the Advocacy/Faith in Action Task Force. She is a long-time member of UUSC and a former local representative. She has been working to advance justice through social action for more than 50 years.

When and how did you first become involved in social action?

I was in Syracuse, N.Y., and I got involved with the Quaker Resource Center through a friend. One of their basic beliefs is the philosophy of personal witness in order to lead a meaningful life. That made a big impression on me.

What role does your faith have in your social activism?

I was already involved with the Quakers and a colleague at work gave me some literature about the Unitarian church, which I read. My first reaction was that I didn't think such a thing existed. In Syracuse, I found the May Memorial (UU) Society and social action became a part of my life. At all of the churches where my husband, James Curtis, was minister, I was very involved in social action. He was the minister at River Road for 15 years.

I advocate strongly, backed by my UU principles. My advocacy is tied to my spiritual meaning and growth. When I became a Unitarian, I got involved with what was then the Unitarian Service Committee.

What issue or issues are you most interested in working for social change?

My husband Jim and I worked very hard on civil rights when Jim was the minister in Norfolk, Va., during the 1960s. We had the first integrated coffeehouse in the South. There were two colleges in Norfolk, one black and one white. We encouraged the professors in the black college to come and have talks with the professors from the white college. It was so successful that the FBI assigned an agent to monitor what was going on.

At River Road now, my big issue is advocacy and faith in action. I set up a table every Sunday, and it's a different issue every month. I also write a faith in action column for our church newsletter. Recently, I wrote one about the voting reliability problem caused by the new "touch

screen" voting machines. We also worked very hard on landmines [in the mid-1990s]. We petitioned the president to sign the landmines treaty but of course he didn't do that. We were able to raise enough money to get rid of the landmines in a certain small village in Afghanistan.

I also administer and participate in direct service such as to the farm worker children on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Our Children's Rights Task Force organizes 200 pesticides prevention kits for the children. We also send toys and money for the Reading is Fundamental program, and funding for books so that each child receives a new book in both Spanish and English.

How would you assess today's younger generations in terms of their desire to be activists for progressive social change?

At River Road we have a wonderful religious education program. Young people want very much to work for social justice, but they need support. The important thing is not to order them around in any way. Let them choose what they want to do.

by Dick Campbell,
Senior Associate for Communications

I advocate strongly, backed by my UU principles. My advocacy is tied to my spiritual meaning and growth.

-Mary Rose Curtis

staffNOTES

UUSC welcomes Seanna Berry as the new administrative assistant in the Institutional Advancement Department. In this position, Ms. Berry provides vital support for the Ambassadors Council and planned giving programs. A native of Ohio, she has a background in urban planning and hydrology.

Joe Lydon is UUSC's new associate for education and action. A graduate of Harvard Divinity School, Mr. Lydon has worked at UUSC in several capacities, most recently in the Communications Department. In his new position, he works on Defending Democracy 2004, UUSC's new election 2004 initiative.

Brandi Tague joins UUSC as the administrative assistant for the Program Department. She provides general administrative support for such programs as UUSC's voter education initiative and the Human Rights Defenders. Ms. Tague brings several years of experience in database management and a strong interest in environmental activism.

Join UUSC for Justice Sunday 2004

On March 28, 2004, thousands of Unitarian Universalists nationwide will join together to take action for social justice on Justice Sunday. We invite you and your congregation to join UUSC and the larger UU community to protect and promote human rights in the world.

This year, more than 650 UU congregations are helping to advance justice through their Guest at Your Table program. The learning and sharing we do during Guest at Your Table is critical to advancing social justice. In order to bring about real change, we must not only learn about issues, as we do through the Guest program, we must also take action for change.

“When hundreds of UU congregations focus on an issue together, our chance to end abuse and harvest justice on the local, national and global levels is enormous,” says Charlie Clements, UUSC president.

Justice Sunday gives members and supporters the opportunity to take action for change on one of the social

justice issues raised in this year’s Guest at Your Table resources. This year, UU congregations will receive in-depth information on the egregious human rights violations in Burma, where a military junta uses fear and violence to suppress the democratic will of the people.

For more information on Justice Sunday, contact Rachel Binderman by calling 800 766-5236 or e-mail rbinderman@uusc.org.

We want you to join our activist network!

As a member of the UUSC Human Rights Defenders, you will receive action alerts, urgent bulletins and other tools for taking action to advance social justice in the United States and internationally. With a focus on the program and policy issues of the UU Service Committee, we can help you raise your voice for justice and human rights around the world.

If you are interested in becoming a part of this important advocacy group at UUSC, please e-mail hrdefenders@uusc.org, or call 800 388-3920, ext. 229.

Recognizing our major supporters in a new way

In order to better recognize those who have made remarkable contributions to the Service Committee, both past and present, we have changed the way we recognize major contributions from individuals to the Service Committee.

Individuals who are members of the:

- **Martha and Waitstill Sharp Society** have given \$50,000 or above in any given fiscal year. The Sharps’ heroic efforts during and following World War II set the standard for the Service Committee’s involvement in areas of conflict.
- **Eleanor Clark French Society** have given between \$25,000 and \$49,999 in any given fiscal year. As director of the Unitarian Service Committee’s Monnetier facility, Eleanor Clark French assisted people who had been oppressed by the Nazis.
- **Rev. Carleton Fisher Society** have given between \$10,000 and \$24,999 in any given fiscal year. Rev.

Fisher greatly facilitated cooperation between the Unitarians and the Universalists in relief efforts around WWII.

- **Hans Deutsch Society** have given between \$1,000 and \$9,999 in any given fiscal year. As a cartoonist who had often lampooned Hitler, Hans Deutsch was the original designer of the flaming chalice symbol, which continues to serve as the UUSC logo.

We hope that by pointing to these incredible individuals from UUSC’s history, the Service Committee and its supporters will continue to be inspired to bravely advance the cause of justice throughout the world.

To see our annual report, now available online, visit our Web site, www.uusc.org or call 800 766-5236 to have a copy sent to by mail.

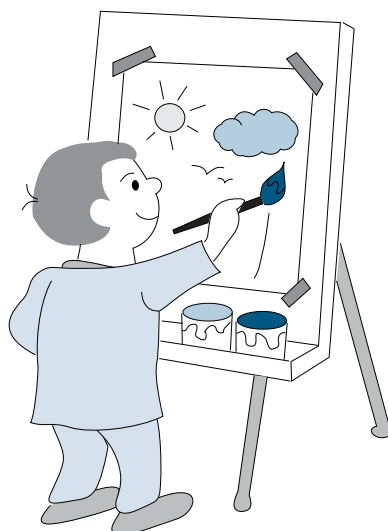
Announcing holiday card contest

UUSC invites you to submit designs

The annual sale of UUSC holiday cards supports our vital human rights work worldwide. We invite you to participate in the UUSC Holiday Card Design Contest 2004 and submit your original holiday card design(s) by April 15, 2004.

Last year, two of the holidays cards were designed by contest winner Carolyn Planakis of the UU Congregation of Marin, Calif. Next year, one of the cards could be designed by you!

UUSC members and supporters of all ages are urged to submit their designs for next year’s UUSC holiday cards. Please visit www.uusc.org to view our submission guidelines, or call 617 868-6600 to request a copy of the guidelines. Mail submissions by April 15, 2004 to: UUSC Holiday Card Contest, 130 Prospect Street, Cambridge, MA 02139-1845, or e-mail volunteerservices@uusc.org.



Special sale for UUSC holiday cards

Take advantage of our holiday card sale to stock up on cards for next year! The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is pleased to announce that 2003 was a record year for our annual holiday cards program. Thank you to all whose work made this possible. Due to consignment returns, there is now a limited quantity of 2003 cards available for purchase. For information or to purchase available 2003 cards at a special price, contact Shari Yeaton at 800 766-5236, ext. 310, or by e-mail at syeaton@uusc.org.

UUSC merchandise

Consider a gift from UUSC for young people who are "coming of age," graduating students, volunteers who donate their time and energy, or people retiring from a congregational committee or board.



POLO SHIRTS

Choose from four attractive colors. These comfortable 100% cotton polo shirts allow you to wear your support for UUSC for all to see. *All sizes and colors: \$25.00 each*

ADULT SIZES:

- Grey:** Large (PGAL) or Extra Large (PGAX)
- Royal Blue:** Large (PRAL) or Extra Large (PRAX)
- Navy Blue:** Large (PNAL) or Extra Large (PHAX)
- Red:** Extra Large (PSAX) *Not available in large.*

Item #	Item Name	Price	Qty	Total
			S&H	\$3.00
			Additional contribution	
			Total	

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Address

City/State/Zip

Amount enclosed \$

Check or money order (payable to UUSC)

Visa MasterCard AmEx

Card # Exp. Date

Signature Date

Send with this form to: **UUSC Merchandise, 130 Prospect Street, Cambridge, MA 02139-1845**



TRAVEL MUG

Enjoy your morning coffee in this attractive new travel mug. The UUSC logo is on one side with the Equal Exchange logo on the other. Natural with red lid and logos, black lettering (EX001). *\$2.00 each.*



UUSC CHALICE JEWELRY

UUSC's flaming chalice motif is celebrated in this line of high-quality, finely crafted jewelry. Colors: Choose gold plate or silver (imitation rhodium plating), which resists tarnishing, is hypoallergenic and never needs polishing.

- Necklace:** Gold (M43G) or Rhodium (M43S) \$30.00
- Bracelet:** Gold (M40G) or Rhodium (M40S) \$20.00
- Earrings:** Gold (M41G) or Rhodium (M41S) \$15.00

SERVICE COMMITTEE NEWS — WINTER 2003-2004

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UUSC 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.

The *Service Committee News* is a publication of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, a membership organization working to advance justice throughout the world. UUSC members receive the *Service Committee News* three times per year. UUSC is supported by individual members, Unitarian Universalist congregations and private foundations that share our commitment to building a better, more just world.

WE WELCOME LETTERS

The *Service Committee News* is grateful to readers for their interest and support. We invite you to share your questions and comments by submitting a letter to the editor.

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Women see the beauty in civic participation

The Association Pro Mujer (for Women) of Villa Nueva, a long-time UUSC partner, works in Guatemala City to promote citizen participation among women. In the hotly contested election the work of partners like Pro Mujer in getting out the vote was especially important. Here, two members of the organization share their thoughts on their own transformations.

“We learned about women’s rights, self-esteem, which is a problem for many. If we don’t push ourselves forward, what will happen to our children? They depend on us. In order to participate in politics, you have to recognize value.”

—Blanca

“We weren’t comfortable talking about politics in the beginning because that was the men’s world. Now, women ask us where they can register to vote. We hope these women we have trained will be examples for others. It’s really beautiful to see women working together to get roads paved or electricity.”

—Vilma



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