



Service Committee

NEWS

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE

SUMMER/FALL 2002



UUSC sponsored several events at this year's General Assembly in Québec City. Rev. Forrest Church (pictured above) of All Souls Church, New York City, spoke at UUSC's "The American Creed," an event attended by more than 500 people.

See page 4 for more on GA.

Creating hope out of chaos

UUSC partner aids children in India living with conflict

The people of Manipur, stranded between Burma and Bangladesh in Northeast India, have for decades endured relentless armed conflict, threat of HIV/AIDS infection and the hopelessness of drug addiction.

As violent clashes take place in their own communities in this isolated, mountainous region, thousands of children in Manipur are caught up in the struggle. But through an effective combination of grassroots community work and international advocacy efforts, UUSC program partner, the Center for Organization Research and Education (CORE), enriches the lives of many children in the region.

Communities living with fear

Anna Pinto, the secretary and director of gender and children's programs at CORE, says the people of Manipur face many challenges. "Human rights are suspended and have been suspended for several decades," she said.

The indigenous groups of mostly Mongolian descent face ethnic discrimination in the rest of India. In addition, the region is beset by violence as Indian security forces battle with local armed groups. The people also face challenges of poor infrastructure.

CORE, a UUSC program partner since 1994, was established in 1987 to research and gather information about the

region. Over time, they have evolved into an important community resource. "It wasn't sudden, but people started saying, 'Do you think you can find a way to organize some food?'" said Ms. Pinto. Today, they are also internationally known advocates for the rights of women, children and indigenous people.

With several offices in the region, CORE serves the entire community. But according to Ms. Pinto, their work with children is of paramount importance to the community. "Young people, we hope, can survive better. It's easier to invest in people who can be flexible and may have a better chance," she said.

Investing in youth

For the children of Manipur, the threat of terror at the hands of Indian government forces or armed groups is constant. For many, intravenous drug use leads to increasing HIV infection rates. Young girls are forced into becoming sex workers.

CORE has opened its doors to provide a safe haven for both boys and girls, some as young as eight or nine. Children may gather at the CORE offices, where there are activities and skills training. CORE provides counseling, as well as training the youth to be peer educators.

(continued on page 9)

INSIDE

Bylaw vote results
page 5

Aid to Afghanistan
page 6

North Carolina workcamp
page 8

The UUSC Board of Trustees has announced the resignation of Dr. Valora Washington as executive director. See page 3 for statements from the board and Dr. Washington.



Relentless armed conflict threatens the future of children in Manipur in Northeast India.

U.S. Congress seeks new policies toward Cuba



Dr. Mirna Villalón directs Cuba's National HIV/AIDS Prevention Center program to train community workers in providing AIDS prevention education to young girls.

Recent votes in the U.S. Congress reflect a significant shift in thinking about U.S. policy toward Cuba compared with several years ago. In late July, the House passed three policy reform amendments, came close to passing a fourth and rejected an initiative designed to undermine the reform that drew the widest bipartisan support.

Successful votes since 1999 demonstrate growing bipartisan congressional support for new policy directions. These votes addressed the private sales of U.S. food and medicine to Cuba, the ban on travel to Cuba except for trips regulated by tight licensing procedures and use of Treasury Department funds to enforce the overall embargo.

Following the dismantling of the Soviet Union, Cuba experienced a rupture in its economy when subsidies that had anchored the Cuban economy for decades ended in the early 1990s. Significant economic recovery in recent years has not eliminated the serious human impact of these developments nor signaled the future direction of Cuban economic policy.

U.S. isolationist policy impedes women's well-being

Through its grants to local nongovernmental groups in Cuba, UUSC affirms the Cubans' own assessment of problems that could compromise the well-being of Cuban women and their families.

Following a multi-year project aimed at strengthening the gender focus of health care delivery, the Cuban Society of Family Medicine (SOCUMEFA), a UUSC partner organization, joined with Cuba's National HIV/AIDS Prevention Center to assess issues relating to HIV/AIDS. A UUSC-supported project involves the training of young women as peer counselors who can interact with populations at risk in neighborhood settings.

While active in international medical meetings on the pandemic, Cuba must operate against the backdrop of the trade restrictions imposed by the U.S. economic embargo. The first easing of this Cold War era sanctions regime occurred in October 2000, when Congress - backed by months of advocacy by national organizations such as UUSC - passed legislation to permit the sale of U.S. food and medicine to Cuba. Stung by majority support for policy change, a small handful of pro-embargo legislators used behind closed doors maneuvering to restrict such sales to a cash-only basis, thus limiting potential sales.

The passage of this first positive reform or easing of the U.S. embargo in over 40 years reflected shifting sentiment in Congress on the efficacy and wisdom of our government's policy to Cuba, as well as low agriculture commodity prices. American farmers' desire to sell soybeans, rice and other commodities to a market only 90 miles away

remained a pivotal factor in shaping positions of farm state legislators.

Agricultural delegations from states such as Illinois, Missouri, Louisiana and Washington travel to Cuba to explore sales possibilities. They formed part of a growing chorus of Americans appealing for changes in the embargo prohibition on spending U.S. currency in Cuba except under tight U.S. licensing conditions.

Change needed to failed Cold War policy

UUSC supports lifting the entire embargo and normalizing relations with Cuba. The agency sees initiatives by legislators to remove parts of the embargo as concrete steps towards that policy goal.

Elected officials have repeatedly pushed for on-the-record votes as a way to set new policy directions. For example, Rep. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., won a 240-186 majority in a July 2001 vote on an appropriations bill amendment to open travel to Cuba. While the measure was dropped in the conference on the final bill, Flake expressed his intent to reintroduce his initiative in 2002 and win more Republican votes.

In 2000 and 2001 amendments, Rep. Charlie Rangel, D-N.Y., sought to deny funds to the Treasury Department for its enforcement of the overall embargo. Last year, his amendment to the same Treasury Postal appropriations bill lost by a slim margin of 226-201 in the Republican-controlled House.

On July 23, the entire House debated and voted on five amendments relating to Cuba. Legislators advocating policy reform won the first four votes and came three votes closer to winning the

(continued on page 9)

Dr. Washington resigns as executive director

UUSC board cites her accomplishments

The UUSC Board of Trustees has announced the resignation of Dr. Valora Washington as executive director. The board has established a national Search Committee to develop a list of candidates for executive director. In the meantime, UUSC is moving forward diligently with its important human rights program work under the overall direction of an operations team consisting of board members and senior staff.

Statement from the UUSC Board of Trustees, June 21, 2002

The Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee announces today that Dr. Valora Washington has submitted her letter of resignation as executive director effective June 30, 2002.

Dr. Washington served as executive director of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee from February 1, 1999 through June 30, 2002. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is an independent, membership-supported human rights organization established in 1939 to help women, men and children escape Nazi tyranny and oppression in Europe. UUSC advances justice through a three-part strategy that combines support for initiatives in Central and South America, Asia and Africa; education and mobilization of its 25,000 members and supporters; and policy advocacy in the U.S. and abroad. UUSC has worked in over 50 nations since 1939. While most staff is

located in Cambridge, UUSC also maintains a small office in Washington, D.C. As its seventh chief executive officer, Dr. Washington proved a purposeful leader during a time of change and transition within UUSC. She viewed her role as serving and promoting the mission and goals of the organization.

As executive director, Dr. Washington worked with a nineteen-member national board and staff to develop a strategic plan ("Entering the Millennium with Excellence"), which focused and articulated the work of UUSC. She also developed implementation strategies designed to enhance the program and infrastructure of the organization. Under her leadership, UUSC's public policy work abroad (e.g., in Cuba) and in the United States (e.g., in welfare reform) were strengthened. UUSC's response to the September 11 disasters led to both the largest relief contri-

butions in its history as well as a prompt and strategic distribution of those funds.

Dr. Washington personally visited with countless constituents, donors and partners in Cuba, India and Southern Africa, and throughout the United States. Indeed, she was a tireless and inspiring spokesperson for the organization. Further, by establishing an "Ambassadors Council" of important volunteer leaders for the organization, UUSC has been able to reach more deeply into its important reserve of volunteer talent and multiplied the number of leaders who can speak authoritatively on behalf of the organization.

During Dr. Washington's tenure at UUSC, our programmatic work was also enhanced through stronger technology links, such as the introduction of our electronic newsletter, significant Web site upgrades, our first video in a decade and the ability to

secure donations online. Citations of UUSC's work in the media also increased significantly, as did members' financial contributions to front-line programs such as "Guest At Your Table" and congregational giving. Her expertise and network in child and family development helped us create new partnerships. During this time, the board also transitioned to a policy governance model and adopted a major bylaws change proposal for the membership. Dr. Washington played a pivotal role in setting these new directions for future growth.

In sum, Dr. Washington has been an energetic and committed executive director, and a highly visible spokesperson for the organization. The UUSC Board of Trustees wishes her well in her new endeavors.

David Mohler, President

Statement from Valora Washington to the UUSC membership

I am enormously grateful for the love and fellowship that each of you has shown to me during my tenure as executive director of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Our mission is compelling and the work to advance justice is more important now than ever before. Through your gifts and stewardship, individuals have been served, families have been supported, and communities have been assisted. Working on behalf of

this wonderful institution has been a blessing to me. Each one of us nourishes, and is connected to, the interdependent web of all life.

After three and one half years at the helm, we have accomplished many goals together. We shared joy with courageous children in southern Africa seeking their rights to basic education long denied. We encouraged and were encouraged by the hope-filled expectant mothers in Cuba.

We stood with the courageous community leaders in India, supported the struggles of the indigenous peoples of Mexico, and embraced the outstanding leaders we met in the Congo. We offered alternatives to welfare reform, insisting that poverty, not welfare, must end. We responded - quickly and effectively - to the tragic events of September 11. For 63 years UUSC has been a beacon of light in our world. This is the legacy we share.

Thank you for the spirit of life and generosity that has made and continues to make this work possible. As I leave this position as Executive Director, my best wishes for a productive and prosperous organization remain, and I urge you to continually nourish your commitment and passion for our shared journey.

As always, peace,
Valora Washington, Ph.D.

UUSC at General Assembly 2002

Many UUSC members and supporters gathered at the UUA's General Assembly, held in June in Québec City, Canada. The UUSC booth at General Assembly was visited by nearly 3,000 attendees, many of whom stopped to pick up literature, renew their membership or discuss our programs with UUSC staff and board members.

UUSC also hosted several well-attended events, giving members and supporters an opportunity to learn more about and discuss our programs. Members were joined by new supporters who turned out for the UUSC annual meeting, where they were invited to discuss and vote on proposed changes to the UUSC bylaws and articles of organization.



UUSC staff member Bill Docker



Our annual Human Rights Forum, which this year focused on the evolving situation in Afghanistan, featured speakers Latifa and Colin Woodhouse, members of the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock and UUSC. Mrs. Woodhouse is an Afghan native and a former professor there, and Mr. Woodhouse served there in the Peace Corps.

UUSC presents top awards for social action leadership

Three prestigious awards for social action leadership were presented by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee during the annual General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Leslie Weinberg, of Stamford, Conn., a UUSC member and active volunteer for many years, was honored with the prestigious Social Action Leadership Award. The other award recipients are Reannon Peterson, a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison,

who was selected for the Mary-Ella Holst Youth Activist Award, and Rev. Mark Christian, minister of the First Unitarian Church of Oklahoma City, Okla., who received the Vision of Justice Sermon Award.

Social Action Leadership

Ms. Weinberg is a veteran activist for social change at the local, state and national levels. During the past year, she has worked to promote social action in her congregation, the Unitarian Universalist

Society of Stamford, where she has organized forums and workshops on social justice issues in support of the Service Committee's program and policy priorities.

Among her significant achievements, she published in her hometown newspaper op-eds and letters to the editor calling for changes in the federal welfare laws to help smooth the transition from welfare to work. She also responded to UUSC action alerts and arranged a meeting with her Congress member in his Stamford office to discuss with him her proposals for welfare reform.

Mary-Ella Holst Youth Activist

Reannon Peterson was cited for her leadership in organizing and coordinating the participation of University of Wisconsin students at the Service Committee's Alternative Spring Break workcamp with the Luiseño Indians in San Diego County, Calif. After the workcamp, she and other students from Wisconsin made presentations in their

Unitarian Universalist congregations and campus groups about their positive experiences at the workcamp.

For Ms. Peterson, it was her second workcamp experience in the past three years. In 2000, she participated in the spring break workcamp at the Pine Ridge Native American Reservation in South Dakota.

Vision of Justice

Rev. Christian was cited for a sermon, "For the Sake of Justice," which he gave in March as part of his church's observance of UUSC Sunday.

Rev. Christian has been minister of the Oklahoma City church since March 2001. Previously, he was the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Las Cruces, N.M., for four years.

The Vision of Justice Sermon Award was established in 1992 to honor a sermon given by a minister or ministerial student which most clearly expresses UU principles as they are put into practice through the Service Committee's human rights and social justice programs.



Leslie Weinberg (l) winner of UUSC's 2002 Social Action Leadership Award, pictured here with Lee Sullivan, president of the UU Society of Stamford, Conn.

Members approve amended and restated bylaws

Dear Members and Friends of UUSC,

This is the third in a series of letters to you concerning UUSC's governance practices. It is written with the hope that, as we share more information with you, you will want to contribute to the decision-making process which will guide the course of UUSC in the months and years ahead. We are committed to creating a closer partnership between members and trustees.

Our first letter outlined some of the ways in which the growth of the Service Committee, coupled with changing times, created a need for more effective governance procedures, and we invited your comments. The second letter described the deficiencies in our then-current bylaws and alerted voting members to prepare to vote on a revised set of bylaws in June 2002. This third letter will bring you up-to-date on the results of the vote, and it invites your participation in two new phases of the governance process.

Our sincere thanks go out to each of you who took the time to vote by proxy on the proposed amended and restated bylaws and on the amendment to the articles of organization. We extend special thanks to those who sent us your questions, comments and concerns about the two proposals, and additional thanks go to those who met and debated the proposals at the UUSC Annual Meeting in Québec City.

Election results

While overall voter interest can be described as modest in terms of numbers voting, it was also heartfelt and occasionally passionate.

The final vote count shows that, of a total of 16,696 eligible voters, 2,545 members voted on one or both proposals. Adoption of the new bylaws was approved by approximately 95 percent (2,430 votes) of those voting, with four percent (77) opposed and one percent (38) abstaining. The results were almost the same for the proposed amendment to the articles of organization (2,433-79-33), an amendment that empowers the Board to amend the bylaws while protecting members' right to amend wherever consistent with Massachusetts corporate laws.

Those voting by proxy-ballot approved both proposals by a margin of approximately 96 percent, while those who heard the pro-and-con debate at the Annual Meeting approved the new bylaws by 61 percent and the amendment to the articles by 71 percent. The latter figure was significant because it signaled the board to begin the petitioning process described below.

Your role in improving the new bylaws

In the weeks leading to the vote, a few of our members spotted some flaws in the proposed bylaws and submitted excellent suggestions for correcting them. We were delighted to receive these recommendations and are hoping to receive even more. If you are someone who cares about governance, reads with a critical eye and loves precision, please take another look at our new bylaws and tell us of any changes you would like to have made. You will find the bylaws posted on our Web site, www.uusc.org, or we will also be happy to mail you a

copy. In October, the board will begin to review all recommendations with an eye toward acting upon them early next year.

Your role in the petitioning process

As was noted in the packet of information mailed to voting members in May, Massachusetts corporate law requires that, in order for articles of organization to be amended, two-thirds of all of the members of a corporation must vote for the proposed amendment. But because this law places an unrealistic burden upon large, nonprofit organizations such as ours, the law also provides a safety valve by which an organization may apply to the secretary of the commonwealth for permission to grant the amendment even though less than two-thirds of all of its members voted their approval.

Because the amendment to our articles received a strong vote of approval (95 percent), the board intends to petition for a granting of the amendment. But because five percent of the voters strongly disapproved of the amendment, we are inviting them to make their opinions known to the secretary of the commonwealth through personal letters which will be attached to the petition. Letters may be sent to the UUSC Board of Trustees, attn: Barbara Cheatham, 130 Prospect Street, Cambridge, MA 02139. (No duplications or petitions, please.) Those that arrive by Oct. 15 will be forwarded to the secretary.

Warm regards to all,

UUSC Board of Trustees

UUSC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Responding to humanitarian needs in Afghanistan



UUSC support of RAWA will be used to provide emergency food to refugees in the makeshift camp called Maslakh in Herat province in northwestern Afghanistan.

UUSC has selected several organizations to receive humanitarian relief funding to benefit the women and children of Afghanistan.

In response to an outpouring of generosity from our members and supporters, UUSC has selected several organizations to receive humanitarian relief funding to benefit the women and children of Afghanistan.

One organization that received support from UUSC is Humanitarian Assistance for Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA). UUSC support was used for emergency relief for 500 families in Kabul, Afghanistan, where thousands of families were on the brink of starvation. Recently, Habiba Sarabi, HAWCA's vice president and an organizer of HAWCA's literacy programs for women and girls, was named minister of Afghan women's affairs.

"These organizations reflect UUSC's dedication to supporting women and children in their efforts to rebuild civil society in the face of conflict," said Denise Moorehead, UUSC's deputy director for programs.

UUSC was concerned about the ongoing violations of human rights in Afghanistan even before the tragic events of Sept. 11 highlighted the crisis there. We are continuing to collect funds for relief and support to strengthen HAWCA and other women's organizations.

Additional organizations assisting Afghan women and children that have received support from UUSC:

The **Afghan Women's Network** is a network of Afghan women's organizations that provides training to build the capacity of Afghan women and women's non-governmental organizations.

Afghan Women's Welfare Department (AWWD) provides training to women in programs such as income generation and revolving loan funds. UUSC is funding their literacy and health training program for street beggar girls from the Nasir Bagh Refugee Camp.

Afghan Women's Education Center (AWEC) enables women to better use commu-

nity resources and improve their self-reliance. UUSC supports AWEC's leadership training, skills development and computer training program.

Women to Women International (WWI) was founded in 1993 with early support from the All Souls UU Church in Washington, D.C. UUSC funding will be used to establish a chapter office in Afghanistan to provide humanitarian assistance, leadership development and economic opportunities to Afghan women.

The Children's Fund's Afghanistan Refugee Relief Project gives relief supplies including blankets, simple foodstuffs and basic medicines to refugees in overcrowded camps on the Pakistan/Afghanistan border.

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) involves Afghan women in social and political activities aimed at establishing women's human rights.

Help us make history

- \$60 Matching membership
- \$25 Membership
- \$10 Student/Senior membership

Unrestricted donations to UUSC over \$60 are matched by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, in Manhasset, New York

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When children were fleeing from Nazi invaders, the Service Committee was there.

When civil rights activists needed our support, UUSC was there.

Now, when the women of Afghanistan need our help rebuilding their country, UUSC is there.

And through it all, you've been with us.

UUSC has a long history of defending human rights, helping threatened populations find safety and building a more civil, just world. That history has been made possible by the dedicated generosity and informed advocacy of our membership. Won't you help us make history?



**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
SERVICE COMMITTEE**

UUSC partner challenges human rights abuse in indigenous communities

by Allison D. Kent, Associate for Programs



Emilia Juárez Juárez, left, and José Alejandro Sandoval Torres are shown, during a recent visit to UUSC's Washington D.C. office.

The reality for indigenous women in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, explains Emilia Juárez Juárez, is that “in family and social life the woman doesn't make the decisions” but that “when there are problems in the communities, it is the women that often use their intelligence and capacity to control the situation in order to

avoid more violence and to look for dialogue and peace.”

Emilia Juárez Juárez is a Mixteca woman who works to promote indigenous women's rights at the Ñu'u Ji Kandii Human Rights Center, a UUSC partner since 2001. Ñu'u Ji Kandii, means “Land of the Sun” in Mixteca, the predominant indigenous language of the region. The organization focuses its work on documentation and legal defense in the case of violations of human rights, and legal defense for conflicts between communities. It addresses the human rights effects of migration.

Defending indigenous rights

The Ñu'u Ji Kandii Human Rights Center is based in the city of Tlaxiaco in Oaxaca. Oaxaca is the most diverse of the 32 states that make up Mexico, due to both biodiversity and ethnic diversity. It has 17 recognized indigenous groups among the more than three million inhabitants. Well over 400 of Oaxaca's 570 municipalities

are governed by traditional indigenous community structures, making the region both politically and culturally complex.

Authorities in the region regularly allow all types of violence to fester. In fact, impunity for violators of human rights is common in Oaxaca, as it is in other regions in Mexico. This impunity often leads to an escalation of violence as it did on May 31, 2002 when 26 residents of Santiago Xochiltepec were massacred over a long-standing dispute over land.

The center is also active on many indigenous rights issues on both the state and national level. These rights are embodied in the San Andres Accords reached between the Mexican government and the Zapatista National Liberation Army from Chiapas in 1996. To this day, the accords have never been implemented as promised.

Environmental rights are also an issue for the indigenous communities in Oaxaca. They face the corporate encroachment on their lands, as well as excessive illegal logging of their forests.

Human rights effects of migration

“Some 80 percent of the complaints which the center receives relate to migration, both to other states in Mexico as well as to the United States,” states Denise Moorehead, deputy director for programs. “That is why this year, with the support of UUSC, the center is beginning a new project to examine further the effects of migration on the human rights situation in this region.”

The high level of migration has drained many communi-

ties of the most productive members. According to José Alejandro Sandoval Torres, the director of the center, “The three main effects of the overwhelming migration are the disintegration of the social fabric of the communities, women's rights issues and domestic violence.”

With many men migrating to look for work, some women are left for years to raise their families alone. Without her husband, a woman may find herself stripped of her rights to the family's land, leaving her without a means to provide food for her children. The center provides these indigenous women with the help they need to challenge these unfair practices.

Collaboration and innovation

The Ñu'u Ji Kandii Human Rights Center, despite its small size and limited focus area, is able to magnify the effect of its work many times by its strategic work in coalition with other human rights organizations working on the state, national and international levels: the Oaxacan Network for Human Rights, a coalition of the human rights organizations based in the state of Oaxaca, and the National Network of Civil Organizations for Human Rights, All Rights for All, a coalition of over 50 member organizations from all over Mexico.

Workcamp volunteers explore social justice concerns of North Carolina farm workers

by Eileen Harrington, Associate for Education and Action



Workcamp volunteers show support for migrant farm workers by picketing outside a supermarket in Greenville, N.C. From left, they are Ariel Aaronson-Eves of Haworth, N.J., Eric Ogles of Stone Mountain, Ga., and Anna Busby of Cincinnati, Ohio.

For news and updates on our workcamp program, visit our Web site, www.uusc.org.

Twenty three volunteers from around the country participated in a new Unitarian Universalist Service Committee workcamp in North Carolina, examining the living and working conditions of migrant farm workers

Participants in the “Justice in the Fields” workcamp explored a variety of issues ranging from legal challenges to health concerns of farm workers to their struggle to earn a living wage. In the evenings, volunteers visited farm workers at their camps, where they shared meals, stories and smiles. The workcamp was hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greenville, N.C.

Communities helping communities

“The workcamp put faces and names on farm workers and clear images on how they live and the problems they face,” said Al Benford, a workcamp volunteer from Manchester, Conn. “I will certainly incorporate my awareness from this experience in all that I do.”

Volunteer Mimi Gingold of Cincinnati, Ohio, said she appreciated “the openness, the candor, the trust extended to us by the farm workers. They are strangers in our strange land, distanced with time and space from their families and friends, exhausted after 12-hour days of back-breaking, sweaty field work. And as we left, they sent us off with the phrase, ‘Esta es su casa.’ This is your home.”

Supporting farm workers’ rights

In addition to camp visits, volunteers learned about labor unionization and toured the

North Carolina-based Mt. Olive Pickle Co. One of the organizations involved in planning the workcamp, Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), is working to unionize farm workers, and believes corporate involvement is necessary. The Mt. Olive Pickle Co. has refused to bargain with the farm workers, stating that unionizing is between the farm workers and the farmers. The volunteers showed their support of farm workers by picketing and handing out leaflets at a local grocery store, encouraging shoppers to boycott Mt. Olive and to support farm worker rights.

The North Carolina workcamp is an extension of UUSC’s work with farm worker communities. For the past three years, volunteers have participated in community rehabilitation projects and examined the living and working conditions of farm worker communities in the Yakima Valley of central Washington state.

In organizing the North Carolina workcamp, UUSC worked with several organizations in North Carolina, including: National Farm Worker Ministry, FLOC, Student Action with Farmworkers, Greene County Health Care Clinic, and Legal Services of North Carolina. Other area churches also provided support, specifically the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Durham, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh, Unitarian Coastal Fellowship of Morehead City, and Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of New Bern.

This past spring, college students from around the country participated in an Alternative Spring Break workcamp with the Luiseño Indians on the La Jolla Reservation in San Diego County, Calif. In addition to tutoring Native American youngsters, the volunteers did some work sprucing up the community.

Volunteers included college students from the University of Wisconsin and Colby College in Maine. “One week is a short time to make a difference in the course of a child’s life,” said Ava Murphy, a student from Wisconsin. “I only hope I made a fraction of the difference that they made on me!”



Anna Pinto is the secretary and director of gender and children's programs at the Center for Organization Research and Education, a UUSC partner based in India.

Ajang, 15, is a student near the village where he grew up. Through conversations with other students, he learned more about the political situation in Manipur. Eventually, he ran away with several of his friends. They went through six months of strict training, getting very little sleep. He has no hope for a future, but he is determined to fight for his people, who he sees as oppressed by the Indian government.

India partner works with children to document human rights violations

(continued from page 1)

CORE provides training for children regarding their rights. Armed with this information, the children document rights violations in their own communities. This information, gathered over the course of 10 years, was compiled for a report that was submitted to the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Living with constant violence

CORE estimates that thousands of children, both boys and girls, in Northeast India have had some involvement with the armed groups, either receiving some kind of training in arms and political ideology, or seeing actual combat. While some armed groups have been known to actively recruit youth, other young people do voluntarily join the armed groups, often running away from home to do so.

Many conflicts actually take place in populated areas. According to Ms. Pinto, CORE has become a place where the children of Manipur feel some stability in otherwise violent and unpredictable surroundings. "They're less stressed," says Ms. Pinto.

"They are more willing to talk to adults, they have confidence in the world and their ability to deal with it."

Coming to the table

Ms. Pinto stressed that within the community, CORE responds to the needs that are expressed by the community, rather than imposing solutions. But when it comes to international advocacy on issues such as child or indigenous rights, they are forceful. "We don't go anywhere unless we're invited, at least on the ground," she says. "But at the United Nations, we batter the door down."

For the staff at CORE, their international advocacy work is in some ways more important than their grassroots work because it is even more effective. "We can't change it on the ground by working on the ground," said Ms. Pinto. "It's important that we be at the table when the negotiations are going on."

At the forefront of the child rights movement, CORE organized a national conference in India on children and armed conflict in January 2002. The conference brought

together more than 40 non-governmental organizations. Key among the issues was the reportedly brutal treatment of suspected child soldiers by Indian security forces.

Ms. Pinto encouraged UUSC members and supporters to continue to pressure U.S. lawmakers to support the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the accompanying optional protocol, which bans the use of children under age 18 as combatants. In June, the United States Senate voted to ratify the optional protocol. Today, 191 nations have ratified the CRC. Only two - the United States and Somalia - have not.

The ratification and implementation by nations of the optional protocol is only one important step, but in Manipur there is more to be done. With no end in sight to the conflict, organizations like CORE can help communities cope with a seemingly insurmountable combination of issues. "There is no question about the conflict being over," says Ms. Pinto. "There is no post-conflict."

U.S. Congress seeks new policies on Cuba

(continued from page 2)

Rangel amendment. The House voted affirmatively on lifting the travel ban, permitting financing of food and medicine sales to Cuba and ending restrictions on funds sent to Cuban nationals.

When pro-status-quo legislators sought to turn one amendment into a vote for or against the Cuban government's alleged involve-

ment in terrorism, they were met with a stinging 182-247 defeat. These votes gave momentum to Senate action on similar Cuba policy reform issues in the fall.

While policy change has been slower than desired, these most recent votes - building on successful pro-reform votes since 1999 - reflect a clear shift toward

abandoning a failed policy and seeking consensus on different approaches. The Cuban people can only benefit from efforts to forge new U.S. policies that respond to 21st century realities and facilitate communication between the governments and peoples of the two nations.



Regional Coordinators Kate Beasley (l) and Stephen Murphy (r) accepted awards on behalf of volunteers Mitchell Lyman and Luis Merlo.

UUSC honors outstanding volunteers

UUSC recently honored several volunteers for their exceptional commitment. UUSC volunteers inform their congregations about our work while promoting membership in the Service Committee.

Four UUSC supporters were selected outstanding local representatives for 2001-2002. They are Jack Stiefel of the UU Fellowship of Vero Beach, Fla.; Jeff Chernin of the First Unitarian Church of Cleveland, Ohio; Mitchell Lyman of the Eno River UU Fellowship of Durham, N.C.; and Luis Merlo of the Central Unitarian Church of Paramus, N.J.

“Congregational representatives are among our most valued volunteers,” said Duncan Tanner, UUSC’s senior director for institutional advancement. “They are the Service Committee in the hundreds of UU congregations that support our work for justice.”

In addition, we honored two regional coordinators, Barb Duncan of Toledo, Ohio, and Todd Jones of Bellingham, Wash., as well as national coordinator Margi McCue of Portland, Ore., who are stepping down from their positions.

UUSC cosponsors conference on fight against infectious diseases

UUSC cosponsored a one-day conference in May that brought together about 200 health and human rights professionals to discuss and develop strategies for combating three deadly diseases. The conference, “Realizing the Vision: The Global Fund to Fights AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria,” was organized by the United Nations Association of Greater Boston.



Members of this UU youth group participated in the Burma Banner Project by making posters urging U.S. company Unocal to stop supporting Burma’s military junta.

Created as an independent, public-private partnership, the Global Fund attracts, manages and disburses resources to fight these diseases that disproportionately affect the world’s poorest and most oppressed populations.

Members join international banner project

UUSC has joined with the Unocal Corporate Accountability Campaign to end human rights abuses in Burma. We invited our members and supporters to be a part of the

campaign by participating in the Burma Banner Project. Among the participating groups were Unitarian Universalist youth groups from across the country that visited UUSC this spring.

With their creative banners, the participants sent strong messages to Unocal urging the company to stop supporting Burma’s military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Campaign organizers raised the banners in solidarity at Unocal’s headquarters in El Segundo, Calif., on May 20, where Unocal, a U.S. oil and gas company, officials met to discuss future business pursuits in the country.

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Unitarian Universalist Service Committee 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.

PLEASE WRITE TO US

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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Thousands touched by UUSC/UUA Sept. 11 Fund



A total of \$1.1 million in humanitarian relief aid has been disbursed by UUSC to organizations serving poor or neglected communities affected by the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States.

To date, a total of 24 agencies in New York City and Washington, D.C., have received funds contributed to the UUA/UUSC Sept. 11 Humanitarian Relief Fund. UUSC pledged that 100 percent would be distributed to grassroots organizations serving victims of the disaster.

This outpouring of generosity enabled us to support organizations in their relief and follow-up efforts. Many of these organizations serve individuals or groups that are often overlooked by the government or other large nonprofits in times of disaster.

For a full list and complete details of the organizations receiving humanitarian relief funding from UUSC, visit www.uusc.org

Xiomara, a single mother of a seven-year-old daughter, was employed by Central Parking Systems, located less than two blocks away from the World Trade Center. She turned to Project Renewal for support after she lost her job following the Sept. 11 attacks. With support from UUSC, Project Renewal was offering employment services to displaced workers. Xiomara subsequently landed a newly created position as assistant job developer with the new World Trade Center Re-employment Project.



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