



# Rights Now

Winter/Spring 2014

[uusc.org](http://uusc.org)

The newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee



## Starting to Live Again

Healing trauma after disaster

By Jessica L. Atcheson

Healing from trauma is a vital component of true recovery from natural and man-made disasters. Yet, mental health services are often overlooked in the aftermath. Since 2009, UUSC has been collaborating

with the Trauma Resource Institute (TRI) to make sure that survivors on the margins of society — from Haiti to the Philippines — get the support they need to heal themselves and their communities.

continued on page 3



The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee advances human rights and social justice around the world, partnering with those who confront unjust power structures and mobilizing to challenge oppressive policies.

## ***Rights Now***

Winter/Spring 2014

### **Editor**

Jessica L. Atcheson

### **Design and Production**

Reid Haithcock

UUSC bargaining unit employees are represented by Human Rights Workers Local 2661, **UNITE HERE!**

### **We Welcome Letters**

*Rights Now* 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: [rightsnow@uusoc.org](mailto:rightsnow@uusoc.org)

*Rights Now* Editor, UUSC  
689 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

UUSC is supported by individual members, Unitarian Universalist congregations, and foundations that share our commitment to building a more just world.

© 2014 All Rights Reserved

### **Get *Rights Now* online**

Would you prefer to receive *Rights Now* by e-mail instead of in your mailbox? Sign up today by sending an e-mail to [uusoc@uusoc.org](mailto:uusoc@uusoc.org).

[uusoc.org](http://uusoc.org)  
[info@uusoc.org](mailto:info@uusoc.org)  
617-868-6600  
617-868-7102/fax

In this edition of

# ***Rights Now***

## **Cover**

Starting to Live Again  
Healing trauma after disaster

## **Page 1**

Let Justice Flow

## **Page 8**

How Can a Study Guide Help to Build a Movement for Justice?

## **Page 10**

Movement for the Minimum Wage  
Gaining Momentum

## **Page 13**

A Lifetime — and Longer — of Support

## **Page 14**

Getting Graded on the Human Right to Water  
U.N. Universal Periodic Review approaches

## **Page 16**

Planting the Seeds of Justice  
Explore food sovereignty during Justice Sunday

## **Page 19**

In Their Own Words: Detained Torture  
Survivors Speak



## A message from UUSC's president

**W**e Unitarian Universalists talk a lot about the “interdependent web of which we are a part,” our connection with all other living beings and the earth itself. Sometimes that can feel like a very abstract concept; I like to think that UUSC makes it concrete, brings the words to life.

We do that, for example, in our work on water, the “nectar” of life without which no creature would last more than a few days. We do it by facilitating connections between our partners around the world, introducing trauma resiliency training and recycled container gardens, for example — both so successful in Haiti — to activists in Africa and the Philippines. And we do it by making it possible for Unitarian Universalists to engage with the global community through the UU College of Social Justice, crossing boundaries both physical and mental and building movements for social change that will advance justice wherever it is missing. All this and more is detailed in these pages.

It's not easy to embrace the interdependent web or to live as a global citizen; we are always being pulled back into our singular identities of gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc. Indeed, there's nothing inherently wrong with that as long as those particularities don't obscure our commitment to the common good. UUSC makes it just a little easier to live with broad horizons and to love those who are different from ourselves. It makes it a little easier, in other words, to live out our faith and to preserve that shimmering web in all its glistening glory.



Bill Schulz

# Get Ready for Spring with the UUSC Store!

Treat yourself or someone you know to ethically sourced goods from [shop.uusc.org](http://shop.uusc.org).

## Make spring cleaning green cleaning

Full Circle home products — towels, sponges, and more — are easy on the earth. And ditch the harsh laundry chemicals by using Earth's Berries.



## Ready to garden?

Not without Badger Balm! Try the gardener's gift set for a variety of natural moisturizing options.

## Stock up for the beach



Grab some Planet Flops, sustainable natural rubber flip flops. And don't forget Badger's natural sunscreen and bug spray.



These great items and more available online at [shop.uusc.org](http://shop.uusc.org).  
All proceeds support UUSC's vital human rights work!

## The hidden toll of disaster

After Haiti's 2010 earthquake, Wendy Flick, manager of UUSC's Haiti Program, remembers meeting people completely numb and unresponsive. "One of the things that we very frequently see after disasters is a gap in mental health services," Flick explains. "If people are paralyzed by the trauma of what they've experienced, there's often nowhere for them to go — and, as a result, they're often not getting other aid and are being blocked from full recovery."

Flick met a young girl who had fled to the Central Plateau from Port-au-Prince and who was so traumatized that she couldn't feed herself. "If she

hadn't gotten assistance, she literally would have died of trauma. The people with invisible wounds weren't getting services."

## Building resiliency

To fill this gap, UUSC brought in TRI to introduce skills for healing trauma. TRI's Community Resiliency Model (CRM) enables a wide range of people — not just clinicians — to use these skills and to lead others in using them. Plus, because the skills are centered on the body, the model is accessible to people regardless of literacy or education level.

Through skills like "tracking," "resourcing," and "grounding," CRM





returns the body's nervous system to balance. A woman named Philomène told UUSC at the end of a Haiti training session, "After the earthquake my life just stopped, and today I am feeling that I started to live again."

Elaine Miller-Karas, TRI's executive director and cofounder, describes CRM's effects: "In the face of great suffering, tragedy, and horror, the human spirit can be awakened back to resiliency and health and wellness by simply paying attention to the wisdom of the body."

## From model to movement

In Haiti, UUSC and TRI offered a series of train-the-trainers workshops that gave 62 Haitian social workers, teachers, farmers, and other community leaders the tools to train others in these valuable trauma-treatment skills. These

workshops, grounded in UUSC's eye-to-eye partnership approach, were a powerful collaborative experience with survivors.

Miller-Karas underscores this: "People respond in the same way and feel the sensations of well-being and resilience in the same way, but how they look at it through their own culture is very individual. . . . They helped us conceptualize our model better and better and better." Part of the training process is working with participants to adapt the model and ensure its effectiveness for various groups.

One of the agricultural workers that they trained went on to train 1,500 others. He was delivering limited supplies of livestock in the hills of the Central Plateau, and many people would end up empty-handed. Miller-Karas told the story: "He would use the skills with them, and instead of them being angry, they would go



away with smiles on their faces. . . . We learned from the individuals in Haiti that there are new ways to use the skills that I had never even imagined.”

## Haiti, Kenya, and beyond

UUSC and TRI used lessons learned in Haiti to develop a CRM trainers program for UUSC partners in Africa. This past summer, Ellen Elgart and Nancy Sokolow, TRI senior faculty members, were in Nairobi with Flick to teach a multicultural group of 15 people from four different countries speaking four different languages.

Despite the challenges this posed, the 10-day intensive training was an unmitigated success. As Elgart put it, “They received the model very, very, very enthusiastically!” Sokolow shared the story of one participant, a doctor from a neighboring country, who brought the skills back to her hospital.

The doctor’s coworkers are already reminding each other — and the doctor — to use the skills when hard situations come up.

Elgart explained, “The feedback she was getting from coworkers about using the skills came as a result of her having already trained them in some of those skills. . . . It comes full circle — the students become the teachers, then their students become their teachers.”

Drawing on the success of CRM trainings in Haiti and Africa, UUSC is now working with TRI to bring these trauma resiliency skills to the Philippines in the devastating wake of Typhoon Haiyan.

## Self-sufficiency and sovereignty

CRM puts power squarely into the hands of trauma survivors. “People



then don't have to be dependent on an outside entity for their own healing," Sokolow explains. This is right in line with UUSC's aim to empower survivors — and not just in the short term. Flick says of CRM: "It's extremely effective and useful immediately after the trauma of the disaster — but it's also something that continues to bear fruit as people encounter the traumas of everyday life."

These trauma resiliency skills have ripple effects far beyond the individual. Elgart traces the connection "from body to resiliency to compassion to hopefully more peace and more justice." As UUSC is seeing

play out in Haiti, people who have the skills to heal themselves from trauma are more likely to connect, to endure the struggles they face, and to effect real change in their communities. This bodes well for all invested in the vision of a world where all people can realize their human rights.

*Jessica L. Atcheson is UUSC's writer and editor.*

## Power in Our Own Bodies — and Our Own Food

During the trauma resiliency training in Nairobi, UUSC's Wendy Flick had the opportunity to introduce participants to another model that UUSC has been working on in Haiti: bolstering food sovereignty through recycled container gardens.

This method, as pioneered by the Papaye Peasant Movement, a UUSC partner in Haiti, has enabled families in the countryside and in Port-au-Prince to feed themselves and earn money by selling excess produce.

The participants in Africa were eager to explore this model, adapt it as necessary, and introduce it in their own communities.

For more on UUSC's work on food sovereignty in Haiti, visit **[uusc.org/garden](https://uusc.org/garden)**.



# Be a Keeper of the Flame

Thanks to caring people like you, UUSC continues to make important strides for justice throughout the world. Take the next step in your commitment to human rights by joining Keepers of the Flame, a special group of UUSC's most dedicated members who make automatic monthly contributions.

Keepers of the Flame provide UUSC with an ongoing, reliable source of support, enabling swift response when human rights are suddenly in crisis. Join today at **[uus.org/monthly-donations](https://uus.org/monthly-donations)**.

## Coming in March: UUSC's Online Auction

Mark your calendars for UUSC's annual online auction: March 14–April 1. Get ready to bid for justice on beautiful artwork painted by Haitian youth, autographed items from the Boston Red Sox (2013 World Series champions), and more! Help us make this year's auction an even bigger success than last year — visit **[uus.org/auction](https://uus.org/auction)** on March 14.



# How Can a Study Guide Help to Build a Movement for Justice?

By Kathleen McTigue

The UU College of Social Justice (UUCSJ) is offering a new tool for justice education: the *UUCSJ Study Guide for Cross-Cultural Engagement*. In partnership with the Fahs Collaborative of Meadville Lombard Theological School, UUCSJ created the study guide to prepare people for their service-learning journeys — and to find new ways to work for justice after they return home.

Designed as an online resource, the *UUCSJ Study Guide* uses short readings, videos, writing exercises, and reflections to focus on various dimensions of economic, racial, and gender injustice. It highlights the

particular “lenses” through which people view the world, based on race, class, culture, and nationality. This understanding in turn opens participants up to new insights from people whose location in relation to all these things might be very different from their own. And it cultivates better allies and activists.

During their journeys, UUCSJ participants revisit these justice themes in the real-life contexts of Haiti, India, Mexico, or in cities within the United States. Daily group reflection and worship during their journey help them incorporate what they’re learning. When the travelers



return home, the framework of the *UUCSJ Study Guide* helps them process their experience and investigate ways they can translate all that they've learned into justice work in their own communities.

The *UUCSJ Study Guide* is also designed to magnify the impact of UUCSJ programs beyond those who are able to travel with UUCSJ. All participants are asked to create for themselves a learning circle of people who will, in a sense, make the journey along with them even while staying at home. This group can be any size, from a few family members to a large congregational study group. These people engage the study materials and reflections; hold the travelers in care and remembrance during worship services while they're away; and, when the trip concludes, become partners in helping choose new channels for justice work.

Designed as a powerful new tool for Unitarian Universalists across the country, the *UUCSJ Study Guide* is being field tested, evaluated, and improved. It is already at work helping participants gain new insight about the root causes of injustice and discover new ways to respond as global citizens and as people of faith.

*To explore the UUCSJ Study Guide for Cross-Cultural Engagement and watch a video introduction, visit [uucsj.org/study-guide](https://uucsj.org/study-guide).*

*Kathleen McTigue is the director of the UU College of Social Justice.*



# Movement for the Minimum Wage Gaining Momentum

By Jessica L. Atcheson

There is something gravely wrong when one of the wealthiest nations in the world refuses to ensure living wages for its workers. Millions of full-time workers in the United States only receive \$15,080 a year for their hard work — that's \$3,000 below the poverty level for a family of three. That's because federal minimum wage is still only \$7.25 per hour. UUSC is working tirelessly with partners and allies throughout the country to change that. And the movement is gaining momentum!

As national media coverage of the minimum wage — and the need to raise it — increases, UUSC has been mobilizing activists around the Fair Minimum Wage Act (FMWA), which would raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 by 2015. More than 14,200 people have added their names to a statement by Bill Schulz, UUSC president and CEO, and Peter Morales, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). UUSC delivered their signatures to the U.S. Capitol in November with a clear message: every person has inherent worth and dignity, and raising the minimum wage is vital in ensuring that dignity.

UUSC is collaborating closely with the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United to make sure that new legislation also honors the hard work of tipped employees in the restaurant industry. Those workers haven't seen a minimum wage increase — from a paltry \$2.13 an hour — since 1991. Provisions in the FMWA to increase that wage to 70 percent of the federal minimum wage are essential.

In addition to federal advocacy, UUSC and its dedicated activists are part of state-level grassroots efforts to lift the economic floor for all workers. As part of the Raise Up Massachusetts Coalition, UUSC joined with the UUA, UU Mass Action, unions, interfaith groups, and community organizations to get two vital initiatives — to raise the minimum wage and to ensure paid sick time — on the Massachusetts 2014 state ballot. The success of that campaign, which gathered 282,000 signatures, pressured the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that would raise the minimum wage to \$11 an hour by 2016 and tie future increases to the cost of living.

Kara Smith, UUSC's associate for grassroots mobilization, reflects on the growing movement she is witnessing firsthand: "This is a historic event in grassroots organizing. We have proven the power of working together, reaching out, building coalitions, and standing in solidarity with working families. UUs who were involved should be proud of what they helped accomplish in this first step. Onward and upward! We are ready to keep on toward success and use this experience as a model of what any state or city can do by people working together." May the momentum continue!

*Learn more about UUSC's work on this issue through the Choose Compassionate Consumption initiative at [uus.org/cc](http://uus.org/cc).*

*Jessica L. Atcheson is UUSC's writer and editor.*



# Take Action to Raise the Minimum Wage



Organize your congregation or community group this spring: e-mail **[mobilization@uusc.org](mailto:mobilization@uusc.org)**



Call your senators and ask them to support the Fair Minimum Wage Act: get their numbers from the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121



Sign the minimum wage statement from UUSC President and CEO Bill Schulz and UUA President Peter Morales: **[uusc.org/minwage](http://uusc.org/minwage)**



Spread the word on social media: use the hashtag **#RaisetheWage**

# In Their Own Words: Minimum Wage, Moral Imperative

“When I was 15, I worked as a waitress in an ice cream parlor and made \$2.13/hr plus tips. That was 35 years ago! I’m shocked and appalled to learn that waitstaff are still making the same wage. At the time, the tips I received never really made up the difference to the minimum wage. I’m sure that is the case today. It is time to raise the minimum wage to a livable level.”

—Janet Greene, Va.

“The most effective stimulus of the economy is to put money in the pockets of people who will immediately spend 100 percent of it.”

—James Eachus, Lynnwood, Wash., Bothell United Methodist Church (Bothell, Wash.)

“No one should have to work one or two jobs, only to find they have to choose between medical care, food, or heat. All work has dignity and deserves to be compensated in a manner that allows a person and their family to meet basic needs.”

—Stephanie Corrette-Bennett, Penn., First UU Church of Youngstown (Ohio)

“As a business owner, I know how expensive payroll can be — it is a great challenge. But if we don’t pay people enough to live, we don’t have a sustainable society. And an unsustainable society is bad for everyone and everything, including businesses.”

—Joseph Rando, Sharon, Mass., Unitarian Church of Sharon

“This is not an abstract issue for me. It directly impacts the lives of loved ones who work hard but live not only hand to mouth but always on the verge of homelessness and hunger.”

—Patrick Murfin, Crystal Lake, Ill., Tree of Life UU Congregation (McHenry, Ill.)

“I can tell you from personal experience, it is impossible to have a life on minimum wage. It’s not enough for even one person to live on and make a house payment, car payment, utilities, phone, food, etc., much less a family. . . . It is not fair and it is not right that [in] a country like ours with so many resources and wealth that anyone should be homeless or go to bed at night hungry.”

—Karen Cheek, Indianapolis, Ind., Unity Church of Indianapolis

# A Lifetime — and Longer — of Support

## Keeping the struggle alive

By Maxine Neil

The ongoing struggle for human rights requires dedication and support. UUSC has found both embodied in Robert Hanson and Lyda Dicus of Walnut Creek, Calif.

Loyal annual supporters of UUSC for more than 20 years, Hanson and Dicus decided several years ago to extend their support by becoming members of UUSC's Flaming Chalice Circle. Supporters in the Flaming Chalice Circle include UUSC in their estate plans; Hanson and Dicus have done so through a charitable gift annuity (CGA). They've even gone a step further by establishing a second gift annuity that provides them lifetime income.

A CGA was the perfect option for the couple and their active lives. Both are involved in activities at Mt. Diablo UU Congregation, where they are members, and Hanson leads the congregation's Peace Committee. Hanson also serves on the board of Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center and as treasurer of the Democratic World Federalists. Hanson worked as a professor of recreation administration at San Diego State University, and now in retirement he owns and runs California Camp Realty. Dicus worked with a company that manages camps and conference centers before retiring 15 years ago.

Hanson has told UUSC he measures organizations based on their leadership and has been impressed with UUSC's presidents, including



Dick Scobie, Charlie Clements, and now Bill Schulz. He is confident that, with Schulz's vision, UUSC will be good stewards of his support and continue to address the justice issues that he and Dicus care about.

Dicus and Hanson have been married for 27 years, and they have a blended family that includes seven adult children and eight grandchildren. That lends special weight to their commitment; their legacy will advance human rights and social justice even when they are no longer around.

*Maxine Neil is director of UUSC's Institutional Advancement Department. If you would like to join the Flaming Chalice Circle, please contact her at 617-301-4313 or [mneil@uus.org](mailto:mneil@uus.org) to learn about membership options.*

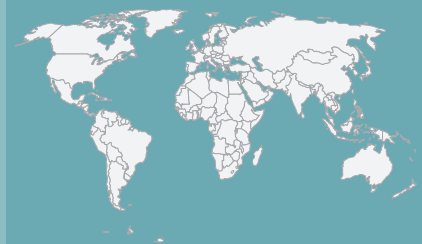
# Getting Graded on the Human Right to Water

## U.N. Universal Periodic Review approaches

By Jessica L. Atcheson

The United States has a report card coming up in spring of 2015: the U.N. Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Created in 2006 by the United Nations as part of the Human Rights Council, the UPR assesses the human rights records of all countries that are members of the United Nations. Last time the United States got graded in 2010, the human right to water didn't make it into the report. This time around should be another story — one that shows victories and still much work to do.

## How the UPR works



U.N. member countries

193

Countries reviewed per year

42

### STEPS

- Country provides report on their human rights progress
- UPR Working Group meets to review and discuss
- Independent experts provide reports
- Other member countries ask questions, register comments, and make recommendations
- Outcome report and recommendations written and adopted
- Country is responsible for implementing recommendations

### AIM

"Promote and protect human rights in the darkest corners of the world."

—Ban Ki-moon, U.N. Secretary-General

For more information on the UPR, visit [ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr](http://ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr).



## Progress on the human right to water

Considering a 2011 report on the human right to water in the United States from Catarina de Albuquerque, U.N. special rapporteur, the issue is likely to be on the table for the 2015 UPR.

Albuquerque's report found that, while the United States has widespread access to water and sanitation, discrimination leaves too many people on the margins of U.S. society without such access. Communities of color, homeless people, and low-income folks are still struggling, even in this country, for access to water that is affordable and safe — for drinking, washing, cooking, etc.

At the same time, historic progress is slowly being made on this issue. Thanks to work by UUSC

and a broad coalition of partners, California passed a landmark law in 2012 recognizing the human right to water and instructing agencies to take that into consideration when developing policy.

The extra scrutiny from the United Nations on U.S. obligations related to the human right to water can help the momentum continue. UPR findings have the potential to empower grassroots activists to push for changes that will ensure the human right to water for *all* people — no matter their skin color or bank account — in the United States.

*To follow UUSC's work on the human right to water — and take action — visit [uusdc.org/water](http://uusdc.org/water).*

*Jessica L. Atcheson is UUSC's writer and editor.*



Catarina de Albuquerque with Winnemem Wintu Chief and Spiritual Leader Caleen Sisk-Franco  
Photo: Rev Anne Hoffmann, UULMCA

# Planting the Seeds of Justice

Explore food sovereignty during Justice Sunday

By Lauralyn Smith

Growing your own food — and having the resources and opportunity to do so — is a powerful act. This year's Justice Sunday, an annual UUSC congregational program, will raise awareness and understanding of food sovereignty and food security. With the theme of "Justice Is Planting a Seed," the program will highlight sustainable gardening models developed with human rights partners in Haiti and will offer several opportunities for learning and action.

Justice Sunday is more than a one-day affair; it is designed as a cycle of reflection, understanding, and action. The program provides materials for deeper learning, integration into congregational life, and action on food justice. Resources include the following:

- The annual Get-Together, a panel discussion that participants can join live online or on the phone, that will focus this year on *Land Grabbers*, by Fred Pearce
- A sample worship service developed by Rev. Katherine Jesch
- Updates from UUSC Haiti Program Manager Wendy Flick on global partners
- Activities to take action in your community on this vital issue

The suggested date for the worship service is Sunday, April 6, 2014, but UUSC encourages congregations to schedule as best fits individual liturgical calendars.



# Justice is **PLA**

[uus.org/ju](http://uus.org/ju)

This year's Justice Sunday theme is relevant for green sanctuaries, ethical eating, Earth Day, and two key UU principles: respect for the interdependent web of existence and justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. That's why UUSC is collaborating with the UU Ministry for the Earth to help congregations explore food sovereignty and take action to end food insecurity.

Join us to learn how the Papaye Peasant Movement (MPP), a UUSC partner in Haiti's Central Plateau, offers wisdom we should all observe. Discover how rural life can be modern and cutting edge. Try your hand at an effective method for obtaining healthy food and sustainable livelihoods.

MPP's work on sustainable agriculture, developed over many years, was awarded the Food Sovereignty Prize for 2013 in New York City on October 15, 2013. Chavannes Jean-Baptiste, MPP founder and leader, is quoted in a press release about the award on

[foodsovereigntyprize.org](http://foodsovereigntyprize.org): "The Food Sovereignty Prize symbolizes the fight for safe and healthy food for all peoples of the earth. It's a fight that must be waged both locally and globally, and requires deep solidarity among all organizations fighting for food sovereignty."

Through Justice Sunday, UUSC will help you and your congregation embark on intergenerational projects to support this struggle: create a demonstration garden, increase awareness in your local community, and raise funds for supplies and training to support the expansion of MPP's methods in urban Haiti.

Visit [uusuc.org/justicesunday](http://uusuc.org/justicesunday) for more information and to get started today!

*Lauralyn Smith is UUSC's senior associate for member development.*



NTING A SEED  
sticesunday



# UUSC Receives Highest Rating from Charity Navigator

UUSC is pleased to have earned the highest possible rating — four out of four stars — from Charity Navigator, America’s largest independent evaluator of nonprofit organizations. This four-star “exceptional” rating indicates sound fiscal management and a commitment to accountability and transparency. The rating reflects UUSC’s consistent execution of its mission in a fiscally responsible way.



# UUSC Unveils New Website

UUSC’s newly designed website makes it easier for you to take action, get the latest updates, and more. Check it out today at [uusc.org](http://uusc.org)!





# In Their Own Words: Detained Torture Survivors Speak

By Jessica L. Atcheson

Bringing struggle into the light and joining together to make change are the beginnings of a movement. Last year, UUSC brought together two of its partners, the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) and the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC), to collaborate on a project to support torture survivors and ensure they are not re-traumatized by the U.S. immigration system. In October 2013, with support from and in partnership with UUSC, CVT and TASSC released a landmark report, *Tortured & Detained: Survivor Stories of U.S. Immigration Detention*.

This report highlights the voices of people who were detained in the U.S. immigration system after requesting asylum in the wake of persecution and torture. After experiencing trauma in their home countries and seeking safety in the United States, these survivors were subject to dehumanizing conditions: shackles, frigidly cold cells, little food, no information about their situations or when they could expect to be released. The report estimates that approximately 6,000 torture survivors were detained between October 2010 and February 2013 by U.S. Customs and Border Protection as well as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, both of which are part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

So much for the concept of safe haven. As the report explains, these conditions and treatment are bad enough for any person, but for a torture

survivor they can lead to dangerous levels of stress: “Indefinite detention can cause severe, chronic emotional distress: hopelessness, debilitation, uncertainty, and powerlessness.” This can have lasting effects — both psychological and physical — on survivors and inhibit their ability to recover from the trauma they’ve experienced.

Among the report’s recommendations to Congress, DHS, and the Department of Justice:

- Adequate funding of legal assistance and orientation for asylum seekers
- Elimination of mandatory detention for asylum seekers
- Increased funding for community-based alternatives to detention
- Basic minimum standards of care in detention facilities
- Government-funded counseling for survivors of torture and other immigrants in detention

UUSC has been working with TASSC and CVT to get this report into legislators’ hands and advocate for strong protections for asylum seekers in immigration reform.

*Read about survivors’ experiences in their own words on the following pages. Then check out the full report at [uusc.org/asylumreport](http://uusc.org/asylumreport).*

*Jessica L. Atcheson is UUSC’s writer and editor.*

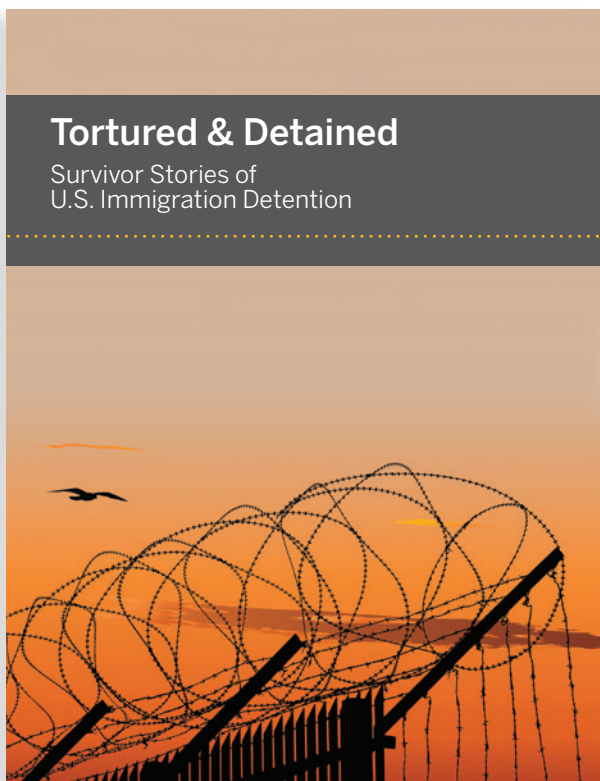
# Voices from Tortured & Detained: Survivor Stories of U.S. Immigration Detention

“I’m not a criminal. I didn’t expect to be held like a criminal.”

—Habtamu, detained after fleeing Eritrea

“I was tired, thirsty, hungry, and in bad health conditions, including cuts on my legs that were infected. I was put in a cell for 24 hours, given a little piece of bread and some water. The floor was cement. I was begging for help. . . . I was on the frontline for the United States. I left my family, my life, for safety. . . . When I was released [23 months later] I only had the clothes I was wearing when I was arrested. They were dirty and had been in my backpack for two years.

—Fahran, detained after fleeing Afghanistan, where he was targeted for his work as a translator for U.S. Army



“I was so bored. All I could do was wonder about what was going to happen or when. I was so scared they were going to deport me. I was so lonely. I didn’t have any money to buy a phone card or make a call to my family. I missed them so much. I wanted to talk but I couldn’t. No one could come to visit me.”

—Meron, detained after fleeing Ethiopia, where she faced political persecution

“Being in that place was mental torture. . . . Deporting a refugee is sending someone to die. You make a mistake and your sentence is death.”

—Cedric, detained after fleeing Cameroon

“When we arrived at the border, the immigration said ‘welcome,’ then they cuffed me on my wrists, waist and legs and put me in a small room. It was very crowded. . . . There was no chair, nothing. I slept on the floor for three days. I was only wearing a t-shirt and some pants. It was very, very cold. The toilet was in the same room and you could see the camera watching you as you used it. The first day they gave us no food or water. No one explained anything. We were just on that cold, cold floor. Nothing happened for three days.”

—Rediet, detained after fleeing Ethiopia, where she was imprisoned twice for pro-democracy activities

“I didn’t see the sun for 2 years. ‘Outside’ was a room with walls but no roof. You stay in one room the whole time, 24 hours a day. You eat there, sleep there, use the bathroom there.”

—Juan, detained after fleeing Brazil

“I didn’t understand what was going on, where we were going, how long we would be there. I didn’t even know the time; I could only tell if it was day or night.”

—Helina, detained after fleeing Ethiopia for political reasons

**Read the full report and recommendations at  
[uusc.org/asylumreport](https://uusc.org/asylumreport).**

# COMING OF AGE GIFTS!

USC chalice jewelry makes a stylish, affordable gift for youth coming of age in your congregation.

Visit **shop.usc.org** for these tokens to accompany them into the next phase of their lives.

## shop.usc.org



## *Rights Now*

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
689 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139-3302

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Providence, RI  
Permit No. 1367