

Stories of Hope

— 2014–2015 —



Celebrating human rights partnerships



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Introduction

Dear friends,

For 75 years, UUSC has built meaningful, innovative, and collaborative partnerships to promote human rights. Each year we highlight some of these partnerships with our Stories of Hope.

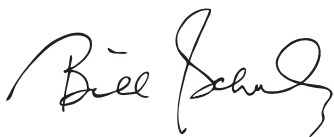
These stories are intended to help you connect with people around the world who are advancing our shared mission. You will find a few follow-up actions at the end of each story to help you deepen your exploration and involvement.

These stories illustrate an important objective we bring to all of our projects and programs — sustainability — which is this year's Guest at Your Table theme. We choose our partners carefully with the many dimensions of this goal in mind. You'll see in these stories how individuals and organizations are working hard to create and support healthy environments, sustainable livelihoods, food security and self-sufficiency, and lasting positive change.

I hope you will be inspired by these efforts and join our global partnership of dedicated people who work, learn, and grow together. I invite you to become a member of UUSC, if you aren't already — or renew your membership. Be part of our community of inspired and passionate human rights activists!

Please support our work by making a donation online at uusc.org/givetoguest or by using the reply form at the back of this booklet. Stay informed about this work by subscribing to our e-mail list at uusc.org/email. Together, we are successfully challenging injustice and advancing human rights. Join us today!

In fellowship,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Schulz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "S" at the end.

Bill Schulz
President and CEO

Visit uusc.org to learn more.



Story 1

Nancy Vilce and Marie Obethe Moise

A year after the earthquake in Haiti, UUSC highlighted the innovative art therapy program offered by the Association for the Promotion of Integral Family Healthcare (APROSIFA) in Port-au-Prince. We shared the story of Patrick Lafontant, a youth who had grown into a leader through his experience with the arts program. Today, under the leadership of Nancy Vilce and Marie Obethe Moise, APROSIFA continues cultivating health and community with renewed energy and direction!

Nancy and Marie have been with APROFISA throughout most of its more than 20-year history. Marie began working there APROSIFA on May 10, 1993, when the clinic first opened. “We love what we do,” she says. “We spend most of our time here. APROSIFA not only helps me but also helps my family and friends.” The clinic serves the neighborhood of Carrefour Feuilles and offers a range of services, from family planning to treatment for malnutrition.

A new APROSIFA initiative is the Art Oasis Café, a community restaurant

that serves nutritious and affordable meals to economically disadvantaged community residents during the weekdays and also caters a brunch for the local nongovernmental organization workers on weekends. Proceeds from the restaurant support the art therapy and other programs of APROFISA. Marie is especially excited about the restaurant because, in her words, “(1) our employees can order great food without leaving the building, (2) the ambiance at the restaurant feels welcoming, and (3) we are the best restaurant in Carrefour Feuilles!”

APROSIFA knows that having the ability to access safe food — even grow it yourself — nourishes the spirit as well as the body. As part of restaurant operations, Nancy and Marie have committed to buying produce from local families taking part in an urban garden project that UUSC has been piloting with the Bright Educators of Delmas, a youth-driven grassroots organization working to increase access to healthy food in Port-au-Prince. This collaboration will help families earn income from their extra produce. Under Nancy and Marie’s direction, APROSIFA is using land behind its clinic to grow organic food for the restaurant, too.

APROSIFA also collaborates with Chefs for Kids, a U.S.-based international coalition of chefs who donate their time to educate about malnutrition and hunger. These chefs visit the Art Oasis Café twice a month and bring with them media attention that builds awareness of this unique program in Port-au-Prince. They even help the Art Oasis Café chefs develop and share recipes. When asked about her favorite meal at the restaurant, Marie said, “Poisson gwo sel [traditional Haitian fish dish], shish-ka-bob, fries and fried plantains, pancakes, tortillas — I guess everything!”

People are coming together each day at the colorful tables of the Art Oasis Café — and the work of human rights is being carried forward as they share food. Please join us as you gather around your own table and symbolically include Nancy and Marie as your guests by sharing their story while you share your own.

Go deeper and take action:

- Host a Guest at Your Table meal — learn more at uusc.org/gather
- Experiment with recipes from Haiti at uusc.org/guestrecipes
- Learn more about APROSIFA by watching a video at uusc.org/aprosifavideo
- Make a donation to UUSC at uusc.org/givetoguest



Story 2

Don Mario Pérez

Don Mario Pérez is a farmer in Marcala, Honduras. Together with his wife, Joselinda Manueles, he grows organic coffee that you may serve at your local coffee hour thanks to a longstanding relationship between Equal Exchange and UUSC. Equal Exchange is a worker-owned, fair-trade food company that UUSC collaborates with — particularly through the UUSC Coffee Project and UUSC’s Good Buy store — to support small farmers like Don Mario throughout the world.

Don Mario is a member of Café Orgánico Marcala (COMSA), a coffee-farm cooperative with more than 850 members and a particularly holistic approach to its work. As Equal Exchange puts it, COMSA’s “philosophy centers on living out and practicing their values in their work, community, and personal life.” Don Mario is passionate about continually learning and talks about “changing the chip” in your brain to open yourself up to new perspectives — “to observe, analyze, think, and invent!” he says. “Experience has taught us that change happens first in your mind and then in your home and on your farm.”

COMSA is a natural match for Equal Exchange, which works toward a more equitable, democratic, and sustainable world through fair trade and supporting cooperative work. As partners of Equal Exchange, COMSA members are compensated fairly for their products, which allows them to better meet their families' basic needs for food, education, and health care — and their long-term security. Plus, consumers are ensured that their coffee is grown sustainably in a way that benefits both workers and the environment. This is at the heart of why UUSC works with Equal Exchange to get coffee — and tea, chocolate, and more — from farmers like Don Mario into the hands of consumers eager for high-quality products that not only taste good but also do good.

Since 2001, UUSC has worked with Equal Exchange through the UUSC Coffee Project to involve more Unitarian Universalists in supporting small farmers by purchasing fair-trade treats in bulk. “Congregations participating through UUSC understand the importance of working with small farmers to change the way that global trade is conducted,” says Susan Sklar, Equal Exchange’s interfaith and community sales manager. “They have supported Equal Exchange’s mission to create alternative trade for over 13 years. Proportionately more UU congregations serve our coffee than any of our other denominational partners.” In 2013 alone, Unitarian Universalists purchased 77,200 pounds of fairly traded products through the UUSC Coffee Project.

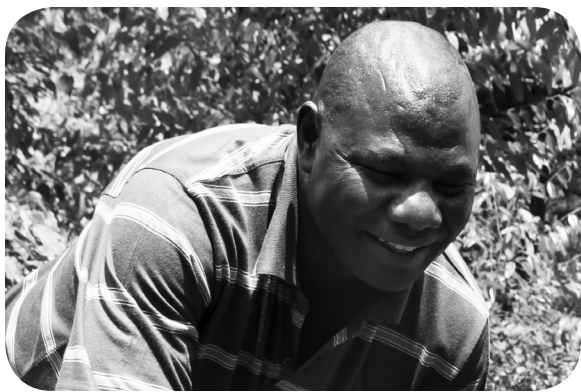
Those Coffee Project purchases benefit Equal Exchange farmer partners like Don Mario — and 20 cents per pound also goes to the UUSC Small Farmers Fund. Through

this fund, UUSC works with partners like Muungano, a grassroots organization on the Kenya-Uganda border that provides livelihood support for youth at risk of forced labor and trafficking. Muungano trains youth in planting organic traditional crops, cooking, and building sustainable businesses, in addition to educating communities about nutrition and the potential risks of genetically modified foods.

There is a key concept that ties all of these programs and organizations together — empowering communities to enact sustainable solutions to the challenges they face. Carly Kadlec, an Equal Exchange coffee buyer, articulated it well after a June 2014 visit with Don Mario: “The members of COMSA know that farmers must believe in themselves and their ability to create solutions to challenges. They are inspiring other farmers to recognize their own strength and potential.”

Go deeper and take action:

- Get involved with the UUSC Coffee Project at [**uusc.org/uusc-coffee-project**](http://uusc.org/uusc-coffee-project)
- Purchase Equal Exchange products through the Good Buy, UUSC’s online store, at [**thegoodbuy.com**](http://thegoodbuy.com)
- Explore UUSC’s Choose Compassionate Consumption initiative at [**uusc.org/ccc**](http://uusc.org/ccc)
- Make a donation to UUSC today at [**uusc.org/givetoguest**](http://uusc.org/givetoguest)



Story 3

Chrisantus Mwandishi

In 2011, we told you about a project in Kenya called Hope in Crops. The story explained how UUSC was working with a village that was trying to save their forest, water sources, and ultimately the climate. Chrisantus Mwandishi, a veteran human rights defender of the Kakamega Rain Forest, was leading the charge — and he is still at it, building on successes of the past three years.

When Chrisantus first began his work, his neighbors were cutting wood from the rain forest at increasingly damaging rates — but it seemed to be their only option to feed their families. Community members would use the wood to make charcoal, which they could then sell in order to buy food. Chrisantus knew that if they wanted to protect the rain forest, they needed to ensure people had the means to feed themselves.

Chrisantus founded the SoilFarm Multi-Culture Group (SFMG), a membership-based, community-led association, to help make that happen. By offering education

about environmentally friendly agricultural techniques and indigenous food crops, SFMG made it possible for community members to sustainably grow enough food to use and sell — while preserving the rain forest and protecting their water supply too. Chrisantus explained: “We have these streams, but they are no longer safe. The water is contaminated because the fertilizer used in the farms finds its way into the streams as water flows downstream.” The permaculture techniques that SFMG uses ensure the health of their water sources.

SFMG has planted hundreds of thousands of trees and brought adequate nutrition and environmental education to thousands of children — and the ripple effects of this partnership are far reaching. SFMG has moved from giving families the tools to avoid starvation to leading cutting-edge research. For example, the Kenyan government heavily invested in maize but recently was forced to find alternatives because of a deadly fungus that is ruining maize crops. As Chrisantus has said, “We’ve had distortions in our weather patterns” — and those distortions caused by climate change are contributing to the spread of the fungus. The local university and the government’s agriculture department reached out to SFMG to learn more about their work with crops native to the area that can withstand evolving weather conditions.

SFMG’s overarching goal is climate adaptation and mitigation, which is becoming increasingly important. Climate change is happening: larger, stronger, and more numerous storms are being recorded; glaciers are shrinking, collapsing, and even disappearing; drinking water sources are being affected. Committed to

environmental justice, UUSC continues to work collaboratively with Chrisantus, SFMG, and others not only to address current problems but to raise a new generation dedicated to protecting the environment and ensuring the rights of people most affected by climate change.

Go deeper and take action:

- Join UUSC, the Unitarian Universalist Association, and other UUs in committing to respond to climate change at **commit2respond.org**
- Learn about the human right to water at **uuscs.org/water**
- Make a donation to UUSC today at **uuscs.org/givetoguest**



Please join UUSC in our work with these partners — make a contribution to support our efforts.

Your donation of \$40 or more earns you and your loved ones annual UUSC membership benefits. In addition, all individual and family unrestricted contributions of \$125 or more are eligible to be matched dollar for dollar by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, N.Y. — doubling the impact of your gift!

Complete the form on the other side of this page and mail it to the following address:

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All donations are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. UUSC's tax ID is 04-6186012. UUSC's CFC number is 11685.

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All donations are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. UUSC's tax ID is 04-6186012.

UUSC is an independent, nonsectarian 501(c)(3) nonprofit member organization. We are a leading voice for human rights and social justice in the United States and around the world. Please support our work — begin or renew your membership today!

As a member of UUSC, you join a community of over 40,000 supporters who share your principles and passion for justice. You also stay up to date on pressing human rights issues through periodic mailings, action alerts, and our semiannual newsletter, *Rights Now*. And most importantly, you join a coalition of others who put their hands to the arc of the universe and help it bend toward justice.

Advancing human rights is the work of many joining hands. Join us — with a gift that earns membership for you and your loved ones this year!

For more information about UUSC, visit uusc.org.



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