



Summer/Fall 2015  
uusc.org

# Rights Now

The newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee



A Central American family seeking refuge

Photo credit: Jeff Pearcy

## Fleeing Violence, Finding No Refuge

By Jessica L. Atcheson

“We have come to this country, with our children, seeking refugee status and we are being treated like delinquents. We are not delinquents nor do we pose any threat to this country.”

These were the words of at least 80 immigrant women being held at the

Karnes detention center in Texas when they declared a hunger and work strike in March to protest the unacceptable conditions they endure. UUSC is actively supporting these women and their children together with the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and

continued on page 2



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***

Summer/Fall 2015

### **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@uusc.org](mailto:rightsnow@uusc.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.

© 2015 All Rights Reserved

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

In this edition of

# ***Rights Now***

## **Cover**

Fleeing Violence, Finding No Refuge

## **Page 5**

Serving Where Need Is Great

Volunteers support asylum seekers at the U.S. border

## **Page 6**

Perseverance in the Face of Disaster

## **Page 9**

Offering a Seat, Then and Now

## **Page 10**

Healing from Crimes against Humanity

Supporting the mental health of Syrian refugees

## **Page 12**

Ready to Build Justice?

## **Page 13**

A Lifetime — and Longer — Committed to Human Rights

## **Page 14**

In Their Own Words:

What We Need Is Water Affordability

## **Page 17**

Behind the Scenes

## **Page 18**

Celebrating Stewardship and 75 Years

## **Page 20**

Stories of Impact: Technology



## A message from UUSC's president

**M**y wife, Beth, and I are fortunate enough to live in a beautiful place in Gloucester, Mass., on a hill overlooking the ocean. We are high enough up that seagulls and cormorants and hawks regularly swoop past us, almost at eye level. In the summer the giggles of children from Good Harbor Beach below make us smile, and all year round the roar of the surf accompanies our sleep. Our home, like yours, I'm hoping, is more than a physical space; it is a symbol of what is secure and familiar and gracious about our lives. Except when it isn't.



So far we have been lucky that the winds that occasionally batter our house at up to 70 mph have not ever done serious damage, but a true nor'easter might well take it down. I worry about fire and termites and, since Cape Ann lies on the third most active fault in the country, well, earthquakes too. I have a hard time imagining being forced out of my home.

But for millions of people around the world, that is the reality they face every day. From natural disasters in Vanuatu or Nepal. War in Syria. Political oppression that forces migration. And that's what this issue of *Rights Now* is all about: how UUSC is there for people coping with some of the worst tragedies in life, the loss of our homes and displacement from our communities.

UUSC can't stop the worst from happening, but with your help we can mitigate its aftereffects, as we have been doing for 75 years since our founders, Waitstill and Martha Sharp, started helping those escaping from the Nazis. Think about that the next time you look around your home and say, "I'm so glad to be here!"

Bill Schulz

continued from cover

Legal Services (RAICES), a partner based in San Antonio, Texas.

### **Seeking safe refuge**

Over the last several years, there has been an unprecedented increase in the numbers of women and children fleeing Central America and getting caught in the U.S. immigration detention system. Why are these families seeking asylum in the United States? “They are fleeing unspeakable violence,” explained Jonathan Ryan, executive director of RAICES, in an April 2015 segment of the radio show *Uprising with Sonali* entitled “How the US Locks Up Immigrant Mothers and Babies So Corporations Can Profit.”

While residents of the Northern Triangle of Central America are no strangers to poverty and violence — which have been endemic to the region since the 1980s — crime rates have risen in recent years due to corrupt law enforcement and unchecked gang

activity. According to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala have the world’s first, fourth, and fifth highest homicide rates, respectively. As a result, families are putting themselves in further danger making their way to the U.S. border in hopes of finding safe refuge. U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported a 50% increase in migration from Central America in 2014 compared to the previous year.

### **Nary a warm welcome**

Do these families find a warm welcome when they arrive at the border? Hardly. In fact, they face quite the opposite. After being apprehended by Border Patrol, families often find themselves in the infamous “ice boxes,” holding cells kept at uncomfortably low temperatures, for indeterminate time periods. Once processed, mothers and their children end up at detention centers like that in Karnes, Texas.



Children's housing at Texas detention center

Photo credit: RAICES



There they experience the following at the hands of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE):

- Jail-like conditions in facilities run by prison contractors
- Poor food and questionable water sources
- Limited medical care while children shows signs of sickness and malnourishment
- Inadequate resources for proper child development
- Little or no access to information and legal assistance

Even once a woman has passed a “credible fear” interview that is required for individuals seeking asylum, she is often subject to a ridiculously high bond that effectively prohibits her release and that of her children. Rather than finding refuge, these women and their families are facing demoralizing treatment that can only re-traumatize someone who has fled life-threatening violence. In

their March statement, the women at Karnes declared, “We deserve to be treated with some dignity and that our rights to the immigration process be respected.”

### **Information, dignity, and alternatives to detention**

One of the hardest things about getting stuck in U.S. immigration detention is the lack of information. It can be incredibly hard for asylum seekers — most of whom don’t speak English and have no idea what their rights are or how the process works — to navigate the system. That’s where UUSC and RAICES come in.

UUSC supports RAICES in making the following possible:

- Connecting detained mothers with pro bono lawyers to help them navigate the asylum process
- Offering culturally competent and trauma-informed case management to detained families



Unaccompanied Central American children

Photo credits RAICES

at several detention centers, including Karnes

- Providing short-term housing options for female asylum seekers being released from the T. Don Hutto Residential Center
- Promoting community-based alternatives to detention, especially for women and their families

Rachel Gore Freed, senior program leader for UUSC's Rights at Risk Program, explains: "There is no legal justification for detaining these women and children. They are not a danger to the community and often have a vast network to support them financially and emotionally while they pursue their cases. Not only are community-based alternatives equally effective in ensuring that participants follow immigration procedures, but they also save taxpayers significant money and are a much more humane solution for vulnerable families seeking refuge in our country."

UUSC and RAICES have also joined together with the UU College of Social Justice to recruit several cadres of skilled legal volunteers to assist in this work (see page 5).

## **Beyond Karnes**

While the on-the-ground support for women and children in detention at Karnes and similar facilities is vital, UUSC recognizes that this is a structural issue and is advocating on a national level for changes in family detention — namely, to end it.

In February, UUSC launched an online petition asking the Obama administration to end the detention of women and children seeking

asylum. "Jail is no place for children," the petition reads. "It is morally unacceptable that hundreds of refugee children and their mothers are currently being imprisoned in detention camps in the southwestern United States." The petition garnered more than 5,000 signatures. A follow-up action alert asked supporters to urge their members of Congress to speak out against family detention — and Capitol Hill is paying attention.

In May, concerted advocacy efforts by UUSC and a whole network of allies started paying off when 136 representatives and 33 senators called on the administration to stop detaining families. Then late July in federal court, Judge Dolly Gee ruled that the Obama administration has to stop housing refugee children in jail-like conditions. The initial *Flores v. Johnson* decision is an important step toward ending family detention.

This issue will not go away anytime soon. Women and children will continue to seek safe refuge within U.S. borders. And UUSC will continue to work with RAICES to ensure that they find some semblance of it.

*As this issue goes to press, developments in family detention policy continue. For the latest updates on UUSC's work advancing immigration justice, visit [uusc.org/immigration](https://uusc.org/immigration).*

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

# Serving Where Need Is Great

## Volunteers support asylum seekers at the U.S. border

By Hannah Hafter

When UUSC asked Jonathan Ryan, executive director of the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Legal Services and Education (RAICES), a UUSC partner, what the center needed to support women and children in immigration detention, he replied immediately: “Volunteers. The need is so high, we can never have enough.” The UU College of Social Justice (UUCSJ) responded to that call with the enthusiastic participation of 20 volunteers with legal and Spanish-speaking skills.

During June and July, these volunteers traveled to San Antonio, Texas, to help ensure that families receive legal advice and representation, which can help prevent deportation back into danger. Volunteers with legal skills supported families through the asylum process and prepared them for bond hearings. Spanish-speaking volunteers provided interpretation for lawyers, conducted intake interviews, and communicated with family members.

Brenda Alvarez, a 22-year-old volunteer from Chicago, Ill., explains her motivation: “Being in a family filled with Guatemalan migrants, I have always

known that the U.S. immigration system was made impossible to navigate. I decided I would do whatever it takes to become an immigrant rights attorney. Volunteering with RAICES is an opportunity to start doing work in the field that I am passionately pursuing.”

Jill Verbeck connects volunteering with her UU principles: “Living in Tucson for many years, I was very active in the struggle to protect and advance the rights of our immigrant and migrant brothers and sisters. Now living in Portland, [Ore.,] my partner and I have recently found community in the Unitarian [Universalist] church, where we recognize the humanity in others by service.”

During their stints, which lasted one to eight weeks, UUCSJ volunteers worked a total of nearly 1,800 hours — the equivalent of a full-time staff person for 10 months!

*Learn more about UUCSJ opportunities at [uucsj.org](http://uucsj.org).*

*Hannah Hafter is the senior associate for service-learning programs for the UU College of Social Justice.*



# Perseverance in the Face of Disaster

## Relief for people with disabilities after Vanuatu cyclone

*By Rachel Gore Freed*

**I**t was a remarkable and disturbing coincidence that Cyclone Pam struck the South Pacific just as the World Disaster Relief Conference in Sendai, Japan, kicked off this past March. Vanuatu — a small chain of islands subject to rising sea levels, increasing temperatures, changing climate patterns, and extreme weather — bore the brunt of the storm. In the wake of the cyclone, UUSC provided vital support to people living with disabilities, who face significant barriers in accessing disaster relief.

While the death toll remained low, approximately 90% of Vanuatu's residents experienced severe damage to their homes, and many were forced out into the open air. Three-quarters of people living in Vanuatu, which is ranked 124 out of 187 countries on the U.N. Human Development Index, live in rural areas and on remote islands. Many lack quality primary education, basic health services, a regular and safe water supply, and reliable transport.

Given the lack of infrastructure and the catastrophic effect of the cyclone on local civil society organizations, UUSC's Rights at Risk Program sprung into action to provide humanitarian assistance. After careful analysis and work with Oxfam Vanuatu staff on the ground, UUSC partnered with the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People (VSDP) to help disabled women and children break down barriers

to assistance and to safeguard their rights during this critical time. In Vanuatu, people with disabilities are often ignored and subject to multiple layers of discrimination; women are vulnerable to sexual and domestic violence, and children do not have access to a conventional education.

VSDP has been working with children and adults with disabilities for over 20 years, offering community-based rehabilitation and early intervention services for children in Port Vila and rural areas. After Cyclone Pam, the loss of the VSDP building severely disrupted their services at a critical time when children and women with disabilities were in the greatest need of support.

UUSC provided VSDP with an emergency grant within weeks of the disaster to ensure that they would remain operational. In the immediate aftermath of the cyclone, VSDP reached 382 people with disabilities, including 172 women and 58 young girls, to assess their needs. VSDP has been serving as an information hub, feeding updates about needs to organizations coordinating nationwide relief efforts. VSDP has remained a powerful voice for disabled citizens to help them access materials like tarps, medicine, and food. They have also resumed early intervention classes in three communities to address the critical education gap for children with disabilities.



VSDP's long-term goals include providing services to improve clients' overall independence and community participation, addressing disaster preparedness policy, and developing stronger referral systems

for educational, health, and other services.

*Rachel Gore Freed is the senior program leader for UUSC's Rights at Risk Program.*

# Supporting Earthquake Survivors in Nepal

In late April, a devastating 7.8-magnitude earthquake in Nepal killed more than 8,600 people, destroyed entire communities, and shattered local school systems. Thanks to more than \$320,000 in generous donations to the UUSC-UUA Nepal Earthquake Relief Fund, UUSC is providing essential relief with on-the-ground partners.

**For updates on UUSC's work with displaced earthquake survivors in Nepal, visit [uusc.org/nepalupdates](http://uusc.org/nepalupdates).**



Temporary classrooms constructed by Chetana, a UUSC partner, with support from the UUSC-UUA Nepal Earthquake Relief Fund.

# A Unique Expression of Caring

To express your affection this coming holiday season, why not make a donation to UUSC in honor of the special people in your life?

There's no better way to say "you are important to me" than by helping advance human rights and social justice around the world.

To make a commemorative gift, visit [uuscs.org/honorgift](http://uuscs.org/honorgift).



## Plan Ahead for Year-End Giving Important 2015 tax information

The stock market is at an all-time high, and you are holding appreciated securities?

Well, here's a win-win solution: make a tax-deductible charitable contribution to UUSC before December 31. A gift of appreciated securities that have been held for longer than one year can be deducted for the full fair market value, thus avoiding capital gains tax.

If you wish to make a gift of appreciated securities, ask your broker to electronically wire shares to UUSC's account: #1428-7292, DTC #0141 at Wells Fargo Advisors. Questions? Contact Maxine Neil, director of UUSC's Institutional Advancement Department, at 617-301-4313 or [mneil@uuscs.org](mailto:mneil@uuscs.org).

# Offering a Seat, Then and Now

## Guest at Your Table tradition highlights refugee work

By Maxine Neil

More than 40 years ago, Warren Salinger launched a great UU tradition: UUSC's Guest at Your Table program. This year, as we celebrate UUSC's 75 years — and bring back the Guest box many of you are familiar with! — the program will connect our history to our present by highlighting our work advocating and supporting refugees and other people who have been forced from their homes and communities.

Guest at Your Table — which will kick off Sunday, November 22 (save the date!) — is an intergenerational program that provides a unique opportunity for families and friends to come together and take action to advance human rights while performing one of the most natural family events: sharing a meal.

This year, you will learn the stories of two individuals rescued from the Nazis by UUSC's founders; you

will meet Iris Grace, a survivor of the Philippines typhoon; and you will learn about a mother and her son who came to the United States seeking asylum, only to be placed in a detention center.

Whether you have a family, are single, or are somewhere in between, commit to being part of this year's Guest program and partnering with people standing up for their human rights in the face of displacement.

Visit [uusc.org/guest](https://uusc.org/guest) to learn how you and your congregation can participate in Guest at Your Table. If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact Elyse Bartlett, assistant for congregational giving programs, at 617-301-4397 or [ebartlett@uusc.org](mailto:ebartlett@uusc.org).

*Maxine Neil is director of UUSC's Institutional Advancement Department.*



A 2014 Guest at Your Table dinner

# Healing from Crimes against Humanity

## Supporting the mental health of Syrian refugees

By Jessica L. Atcheson

This past January, as Syria's refugee crisis continued, UUSC partnered with the Trauma Resource Institute (TRI) to conduct a weeklong train-the-trainers workshop in body-based skills to promote healing from trauma. In Istanbul, Turkey, UUSC and TRI successfully trained 25 providers who will use these skills in their work with Syrian refugees.

### **Why trauma resiliency training?**

Syria's civil war began in early 2011 with crackdowns on antigovernment protests. The resulting — and ongoing — violence and unrest have forced millions of people to leave their homes, their communities, and their livelihoods. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as of July more than 4 million Syrians have registered as refugees, including 1.8 million in Turkey. As Liam Stack wrote in "For Refugees From Syria, a Visit With No Expiration Date," a prescient November 2011 article in the *New York Times*, "No one knows for sure when or if the Syrian refugees will go home, but for many the prospect of returning is at best a long-term ambition."

In continuing efforts to provide refugees with shelter, food, and water, another essential is often given short shrift: mental health. As Rachel Gore Freed, senior program leader for UUSC's Rights at Risk Program, explains, "Syrian refugees will suffer from severe mental anguish for the rest of their lives due to the horrific crimes against humanity they have endured on a daily basis. We need to help refugees

move beyond their harrowing experiences to start to regain their balance and initiate the process of healing. Culturally appropriate mental health support is essential."

TRI's Community Resiliency Model (CRM) helps regulate the nervous system and bring it back into a balanced, healthy state that promotes physical and emotional well-being. CRM skills are accessible to all, regardless of literacy or education level.

### **Positive impact of Turkey training**

Istanbul training participants, who included psychologists and staff from nongovernmental organizations in southeast Turkey, reported positive experiences in their evaluations:

- 100% felt that they were likely or very likely to use the CRM skills they learned again in the future.
- 67% felt that their helping skills were very improved (in addition to 33% who felt they were somewhat improved).



“We can directly train the Syrians and our colleagues from the field and share what we have learned here,” wrote one participant. Several participants planned to teach the skills to Syrian children they work with.

### **Moving forward**

Elaine Miller-Karas, TRI’s executive director and cofounder, observed firsthand how the training in Turkey differed from past trainings: “We learned that creating community within a training group like this — where we’re addressing human-created trauma versus natural disaster — is even more important early on.” TRI and UUSC will apply that knowledge in designing future trainings.

This training is part of an ongoing UUSC-TRI collaboration that has included successful trainings in Haiti, Kenya, and the Philippines. CRM is being adopted with enthusiasm and spreading exponentially, while at the same time being documented with research that illuminates its effects on well-being. TRI is currently working with UUSC to explore the possibility of follow-up trainings in Turkey as the Syrian refugee crisis shows no signs of abating.

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



Trauma Resource Institute workshop attendees in Syria



# Ready to Build Justice?

## Introducing the UUSC Justice-Building Program

By Pamela Sparr

**U**USC is committed to strengthening the capacities of religious professionals, congregations, and individuals to make meaningful social change — whether in their own communities, at the national level, or around the world. UUSC's new Justice-Building Program is designed to do just that.

The program, which is being rolled out in stages, will provide a broad spectrum of volunteer and advocacy opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. It will support clergy in being the bold, progressive moral voice that the world so needs.

### Volunteer opportunities

UUSC is recruiting for two Justice-Building Program volunteer positions based in local congregations:

- Justice-building innovators, who will be trained by UUSC to serve as skilled facilitators of social change and help congregations focus,

strategize, learn, and organize to advance justice. They may work with one or a cluster of congregations and may link with UU Statewide Advocacy Networks, depending on local needs and opportunities. Justice-building innovators will also help UUSC design and test new programs and initiatives to reach various audiences.

- UUSC congregational membership and events liaisons, who will have several responsibilities, including overseeing UUSC congregational programs like Guest at Your Table and Justice Sunday.

*For more information on the Justice-Building Program and to apply for the current volunteer opportunities, visit [uus.org/justicebuilding](http://uus.org/justicebuilding).*

*Pamela Sparr is the associate director for UUSC's Justice-Building Program.*



UUSC and coalition members protest immigration detention at the field office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in San Antonio, Texas.

# A Lifetime — and Longer — Committed to Human Rights

By Maxine Neil

Can there be too many ways to champion human rights and social justice? Not according to Holly Kerr.

A retired part-time professor, Kerr has spent much of her life balancing a career in manufacturing, marketing, and general management with committed efforts to advance social justice. With her late husband, Roy, she established the Kerr Foundation, which provides education and leadership development skills to Hispanic students in the Lake County region of Illinois.

Kerr's passion for social justice started in childhood. A UU since age five, she's currently a member of the North Shore Unitarian Congregation in Deerfield, Ill., where she has supported UUSC for more than 15 years. Kerr is drawn to UUSC's leadership, its innovative approach to program development, and its focus on long-term impact.

In addition to keeping her congregation abreast of UUSC initiatives, Kerr is a member of the Stewardship Circle. Members of UUSC's Stewardship Circle make annual contributions of \$5,000 and provide vital feedback on upcoming initiatives.

On top of that, Kerr joined the Flaming Chalice Circle by including UUSC in her estate plans. She said the decision was simple: she does not have children and finds deep satisfaction in knowing that the things she values



most — human rights — will live on beyond her lifetime. Her advice to others: “We need to commit to a future where human rights and social justice continue to have champions like UUSC.”

*Maxine Neil is director of UUSC's Institutional Advancement Department. To discuss ways you can financially support UUSC, please contact her at 617-301-4313 or [mneil@uusc.org](mailto:mneil@uusc.org).*

# In Their Own Words: What We Need Is Water Affordability

## An interview with Maureen Taylor

*UUSC works with the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization (MWRO), a partner in Detroit, to advance the human right to water and stop the mass water shutoffs that began in 2014. In the interview below, which has been edited for length, Maureen Taylor, MWRO's state chair, speaks below about the growing movement for water affordability.*

**Some people don't understand the struggles that communities are facing with water shutoffs. Some people say that water can't be free. How would you reply?**

No one has suggested that water be free. We have been trying to structure a water affordability plan — we're talking about people paying water bills based on their income. This issue of access to water is a deep and essential

spiritual problem. To suggest that low-income people ought to have water service denied because they can't pay rising water bills — those are voices coming from the dark side.

**You recently convened a groundbreaking International Social Movements Gathering for Affordable Water and Housing — how did it go?**

All in all, it was a huge success! The gathering drew representatives from more than six countries and more than 38 states. I had anticipated that there would be no more than 40 people interested in the plight of low-income Detroiters and this particular issue. So I was pleasantly surprised when we had to close registration at 323 attendees.



People protest water shutoffs at a 2014 rally in Detroit, Mich.





Maureen Taylor

Photo: Jeff Pearcy

We had many special guests, but the heartbeat was Emma Denise Rose, who attended via Skype from her hospital bed in Oakland, California, where she has been ill with cerebral palsy. She spoke to how difficult it is for people with extreme disabilities to get access to clean water and sanitation. We finished with a hearing in Michigan's state capital, where many people suffering these water losses shared their stories.

**What is the biggest challenge MWRO and allies are grappling with right now?**

Probably the biggest issue is this divisive narrative that suggests Detroiters, low-income Detroiters — most of whom are African American — are not interested in anything but free water. This false narrative says we have hidden resources, and it's not that we cannot pay our water bills, it's just that we don't want to pay our water bills. This lie is a constant battle, a constant specter in the face of truth, and might be the most formidable barrier in the movement toward the concept of water as a human right.

**What would you like to see happen moving forward? What's your dream?**

The next big hurdle is to get a water affordability plan instituted in and around Detroit, throughout the state of Michigan. It would put into place an option for low-income families to be able to pay monthly water bills based on their income. It would eliminate the scourge of mass water shutoffs; it would take that off the table.



Connie Murry Gaston speaks at a February hearing in Washington, D.C., about conditions in Detroit and the hardship that water shutoffs are imposing on families.

Water assistance [from the government] means that there is a pot of money and a lifetime limit — once those dollars are expended, that's it, so that people who are unable to qualify or negotiate eligibility criteria can't get help once those dollars are gone. Assistance does not solve the problem, it's not what we need; what we do need is *affordability*.

**What do you find most inspiring in this work? What keeps you going?**

I am in pain when I hear elected officials or corporate entities suggest that low-income people do not have the right to water. What keeps me going is that it ignites the flames in my heart. After about 45 seconds, I am at a red-hot position and ready to do battle with folks who would suggest that you can't have water if you can't pay for it. This is a spiritual fight to me.

**Is there anything else that you would like UUSC supporters to know?**

UUSC supporters and Unitarian Universalist church members have been quite a surprise and a blessing. If there's anything else we would ask of you, it would be to pray for our strength and to stay involved! Sign petitions and speak out. We want government officials to see that we have people across the nation and around the world who feel how we feel. I praise UUSC and UUs for their involvement — thank you for what you've done so far, and please help us go even further.

Visit [uusc.org/water](https://uusc.org/water) for the latest updates and action opportunities. Read a longer version of this interview at [uusc.org/waterinterview](https://uusc.org/waterinterview).

## Water Innovation Fellowship

In honor of its 75th anniversary, UUSC launched the Human Rights Innovation Fellowship to support projects with the potential to effect systemic change in the field of human rights. The inaugural 2015 fellowship focuses on advancing the human right to water.

The yearly fellowship includes a grant of up to \$25,000 awarded to the individual or organization with the most innovative project — whether it's groundbreaking applied research, an emerging method of community outreach, or a new technological product. This year's winning project will align with UUSC's goal of ensuring all people have access to safe, sufficient, and affordable water; this includes expanding opportunities for affected communities to meaningfully participate in water-related decisions and preventing discrimination in water services.

**Read more at [uusc.org/innovation](https://uusc.org/innovation).**



# Behind the Scenes

By Maxine Neil

You may have never seen his face, but behind the scenes supporter Jim Gunning is helping make UUSC the success it is today.

Gunning, a Unitarian Universalist since 1950 and a member of the Ridgewood Unitarian Congregation in New Jersey, has an extensive background in finance, which he has used to assist UUSC in responsibly stewarding its finances. With a master's degree in business from New York University, Gunning spent more than 60 years building a career that included time as an accountant for a large national audit firm and as the chief financial officer for a financial consulting firm.

Gunning helped establish the first finance committee of the UUSC Board of Trustees and has actively pursued an interest in socially responsible investing. A member in the Interfaith Coalition for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), he believes that it's our responsibility to help corporations recognize the need for change and recommend solutions.

Gunning puts his money where his mouth is by providing annual support for UUSC's membership in ICCR. And that's not all: he's also a member of the Stewardship Circle and has included



UUSC in his estate plans to ensure UUSC's work continues when he is no longer around. Gunning says, "I like to know that my values are being carried out on a national and international level — and that happens because I am a member of UUSC."

*Maxine Neil is the director of UUSC's Institutional Advancement Department. For information on how you can support UUSC, please contact her at 617-301-4314 or [mneil@uusuc.org](mailto:mneil@uusuc.org).*

# Celebrating Stewardship and 75 Years

By Maxine Neil

April was an exciting month for UUSC: almost 130 Stewardship Circle members descended on Boston for their annual meeting, and they joined nearly 400 other individuals in celebrating UUSC's rich history at the 75th Anniversary Gala.

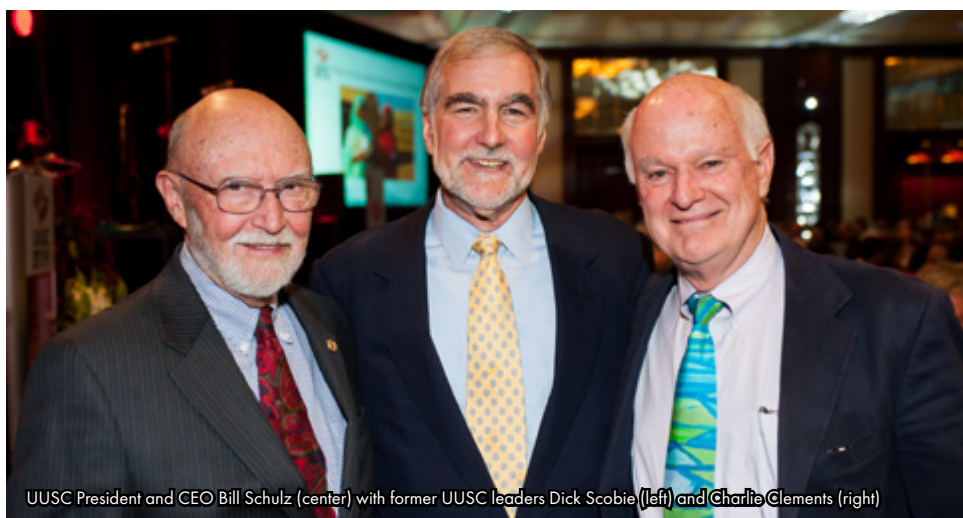
The Stewardship Circle (SC) — which has grown exponentially under the leadership of UUSC President and CEO Bill Schulz — received an update on the capital campaign and gave feedback on several new initiatives. Members also heard from program partners: Rainera Lucero, UUSC's consultant in the Philippines who spoke on typhoon recovery efforts, and Yohannes Birhane of the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, who detailed our work with asylum seekers in U.S. detention (see cover story).

The highlight of the days' events was the 75th Anniversary Gala. Nicholas Kristof, a Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* columnist, gave the keynote address. Four survivors who were rescued by UUSC founders Martha and Waitstill Sharp were present, and attendees viewed a trailer of *Righteous Among Us: Two Who Defied the Nazis*, a film produced by Artemis Joukowsky and Ken Burns that will premiere on PBS in the fall of 2016.

UUSC is grateful to everyone who has partnered with us over the past 75 years, and we look forward to your continued support — here's to the next 75 years of advancing human rights!

Watch select footage of the gala online at [uuscs.org/75gala](http://uuscs.org/75gala).

*Maxine Neil is director of UUSC's Institutional Advancement Department.*



UUSC President and CEO Bill Schulz (center) with former UUSC leaders Dick Scobie (left) and Charlie Clements (right)



Board Chair Lucia Santini Field and Bruce Field



Keynote speaker Nicholas Kristof and UUSC President Bill Schulz



Packed house of gala attendees viewed the movie trailer of *Righteous Among Us*, a documentary film about UUSC's founders.



Rev. Peter Morales, president of the UUA; Lucia Santini Field; and members of the First Parish Concord Choir



Four Holocaust survivors who were rescued by the Sharps:  
(L-R) Peter Brainfeld, Alexander Strasser, Catherine Vakar Chivany, Joseph Strasser

# A Special Invitation

Join us in celebrating 75 years of advancing human rights and social justice by hosting an event at your congregation! To learn how you can participate, contact Maxine Neil at 617-301-4313 or [mneil@uusc.org](mailto:mneil@uusc.org).

# Stories of Impact: Technology

By Jessica L. Atcheson

Throughout 2015, UUSC is sharing stories from throughout its 75-year history; the following focus on innovative uses of technology to advance human rights.

## **Helping people tell their stories using video, 1970s, Mississippi and Massachusetts, United States**

In the mid-1970s, UUSC made the most of developments in video technology to enable people to tell their stories through two projects in the U.S. South and Northeast.

As Ghandi Di Figlia wrote in *Roots and Visions*, “The advent of portable half-inch video cameras and the high promise of community access to the airwaves over cable TV seemed to offer a great opportunity for innovation and local empowerment. The U.S. programs staff reasoned that people become dis-empowered when they rely on others (the mass media, establishment structures, etc.) to define their reality. If, on the other hand, people had the means to explore and define their reality and communicate their knowledge and concerns, they would be better able to control their lives and the conditions in which they live.”

In Boston, UUSC put cameras in the hands of youth to document school integration and promote racial understanding. “The Boston Video Access Center worked out of our basement on Beacon Street,”

remembers Dick Scobie, former UUSC executive director. “They did interviews with people on the street-corner level during the 1974 busing crisis.” In Mississippi, UUSC supported the Mississippi Audio Visual Rural Information Center in rural Rankin County, where residents used video and cable access to discuss local issues and share information. Di Figlia notes the impact: “The project worked to fill serious information gaps, break down a sense of isolation and encourage grassroots organizing for change.”

## **Developing appropriate technology, 2009–10, northern Uganda**

In 2008, over 1.8 million Acholi people in rural northern Uganda had been displaced for up to 20 years as a result of the brutal war between the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Ugandan government. As part of a program that helped over 20,000 people return home, UUSC worked with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology D-Lab to help the Acholi people implement innovative, cost-effective, and relevant technologies to improve their lives.

A key concern of Caritas Pader, UUSC’s on-the-ground partner, was to ease women’s burdens — including fetching water, hand-milling grains, and seeking household fuel — that deprived them of economic



opportunities and kept girls out of school. With that in mind, Amy Smith, D-Lab's founder and codirector, conducted a series of trainings with UUSC in two large transition camps to transform community members' ideas into practical realities.

The result: foundational skills for developing and implementing low-cost and sustainable technologies that could be produced locally, reduce work burdens, and conserve the environment. Participants produced biomass charcoal from agricultural waste and created practical tools like

a thresher, nut sheller, water cart, and mechanized tool sharpener with locally available materials. Jackie Okanga, coordinator of UUSC's work in Uganda, on the impact of the trainings: "Not only has this helped them reduce their workload, it has also been an income-generating activity."

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



Acholi villagers construct a nut sheller.



# Back to School with Style — and Values!

Check out the Good Buy, UUSC's online store, for sustainable school supplies, including pencils made from recycled newspapers and reusable lunch bags!

[thegoodbuy.com](http://thegoodbuy.com)



Each purchase helps fund UUSC's programs around the world!

## ***Rights Now***

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

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