

Guest at Your Table 2019-20

Sample Worship Service



WOMEN LEADERS, STRONG COMMUNITIES

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When it comes to human rights, women are often talked about as being important beneficiaries of services. They are less often talked about as leading those initiatives themselves. Given the additional barriers that women face worldwide, including gender-based violence, UUSC is proud that a third of our grassroots partner organizations provide specific services for women. We are even prouder that half of our partner organizations are *led* by women. During this year's Guest at Your Table program, please join us to learn more about women leaders from UUSC partner organizations who are taking on some of today's greatest human rights challenges.

Suggested Hymns and Responsive Readings

from *Singing the Journey*

Hymns:

- #1028 Fire of Commitment
- #1016 Profetiza, Pueblo Mio
- #1051 We Are
- #1074 Turn the World Around

from *Singing the Living Tradition*

Hymns:

- #349 We Gather Together
- #109 As We Come Marching, Marching
- #323 Break Not the Circle

Responsive Readings:

- #568 Connections Are Made Slowly
- #648 Beginners
- #666 The Legacy of Caring

Recommended Readings

V'ahavta by Aurora Levins Morales: <http://www.auroralevinsmorales.com/blog/vahavta>

Snowflakes: A Guide by the Rev. Theresa I. Soto from [Spilling the Light: Meditations on Hope and Resilience](#)

How do we spring back into shape?
After a long week. An election season that drags.
A broken heart that's still not healed. Raw,
but beating. No duct tape will cover those cracks.
No glue will mend the gap. Some people think
they can shame you, make you small by calling you
a snowflake. What they don't know is this:
the snow is bright because the lines and lacy edges, the
crystals stacked, reflect back
the light shone down on them. And the light keeps
shining, just as you do. In this community, you choose

each other. You insist on blazing brilliant. Your
unique configuration is the Universe's expression
of what it means to be alive. And together, many
snowflakes make a mountain. You return to knowing
yourself and being yourself by the clarity of that
reflection. You can lay your burdens down and rest.
Lean into the place where you belong. Allow the
brightness
of who you are, both individual and community,
to light the way toward the future
you are building with your love.



Self-Care and Community Activism: Moving from Resistance to Liberation

Sermon by The Rev. Kimberly Quinn Johnson

Are you a part of the resistance? For the past few years, I have been slowly and steadily or *swiftly and abruptly* drawn into what is being fashioned as “The Resistance.” Everywhere I turn, I am surrounded by others: acquaintances, comrades, collaborators, beloveds, who proudly proclaim their inclusion among the ranks of The Resistance. Members and friends of my congregation; progressives in my community; Unitarian Universalists around the country are all resisting.

We have even adopted Resistance as an organizing principle of our faith. Love Resists.

In communities around the world, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is supporting this work of resistance. UUSC advances human rights and social justice around the world, partnering with grassroots activists who are challenging systems of oppression in their communities. Each year, we are invited into the work of UUSC through the Guest at Your Table Program. Guest at Your Table (GAYT) is UUSC’s annual program to raise support for and awareness about key human rights issues. The program highlights the work that UUSC does with grassroots partners around the world. In keeping with the ethos of UUSC, we are invited to really welcome these partners as guests, getting to know them and their work.

This year, we are invited to engage with the work of organizations such as *Live & Learn Environmental Education Kirbiati* (pronounce Kir-e-bas), which is helping communities mitigate and prepare for the escalating effects of climate change in the Pacific; *Women Peace Network*, which is working to uphold the rights of religious minorities in Burma; *Foro de Mujeres por la Vida*, which helps facilitate mutual support among women’s human rights defenders in Honduras; and *Activate Labs* in DC, which uses the creative arts to heal trauma and nurture resistance among migrant and refugee communities.

About Rev. Kimberly

Rev. Kimberly Quinn Johnson has served as minister of the UU Congregation of the South Fork in Bridgehampton, New York since 2015. Before that, she completed her ministerial internship at 4th Universalist Society of New York and received her master’s degree in divinity from Meadville Lombard Theological School, where she was a President’s Scholar and recipient of the Faculty Award for Religious Leadership.

In addition to parish ministry, Rev. Kimberly is a member of the Board of Trustees for the UUA? Metro NY District and teaches Women’s and Gender Studies at New Jersey City University. Specializing in youth programs, she is also a program leader with the UU College of Social Justice, a joint program of UUSC and the UUA that helps UUs of all ages deepen and sustain the work of justice in their congregations and communities. Before ministry, Kimberly worked as a union organizer with the United Auto Workers.



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All of this work, deeply grounded in community needs and relationships, reverberates with the strength and power that comes from collective struggle centered around love and creation. Resisting systems of oppression and domination are essential. But resistance, alone, is not generative. At best, resistance allows us to hold our ground; it does not move us forward. And the work of resistance is hard; grueling; draining. We need something nourishing that grounds that work and prepares us to do more of it.

In the last months of 2016, right alongside of the resistance, it is not surprising that so many turned to self-care as an answer to this burnout, exhaustion, hurting. Yet in many ways, the popular notion of self-care post-2016 has drifted from its radical roots and potential. There is nothing wrong with face masks, seaweed wraps, and inspirational quotes on Instagram – but to me those are something else, not the self-care that liberates us, makes us whole, sustains our relationships and our work for justice.

If we scratch at what often is called self-care today, what we find is often a beckoning to conspicuous consumption, a kind of short-term feel-good easy gratification, or another way that women are encouraged to improve their looks and self-esteem through making just the right purchase. It is a cruel irony that this version of self-care so often targets women: our insecurities, external pressures, and the real ways that our energies are spent caring for others.

If we look closer at some of the versions of self-care today, what we often find is a general ethic of individualism and self improvement. You can be forgiven if you imagine that such an ethic might be squarely Unitarian Universalist. We are, after all, the inheritors of Emerson, to whom is often attributed this legacy of self-reliance—of fierce individualism. Married to a uniquely American strain of rugged individualism, it is no wonder that we might find ourselves embracing self-care as deeply personal and individualistic.

But a true and radical self-care could not be farther away from this ideal. Self-care is grounded in an ethic of love and mutuality; it entails a level of obligation that is often missed. Self-care takes the personal and makes it political, all in the service of community liberation. This is self-care as it was originally envisioned by women of color during the 1960s and 1970s. Self-care as a radical act of autonomy, an act that removes the promise of well-being from racist, patriarchal, and heterosexist systems and institutions and, instead, places this power back where it belongs: in and among the community.

While an ethic of self *improvement* tries to convince us that we are not enough, ethics of love and self-love encourage us to tap into the deep knowledge that we are each and all worthy. An ethic of self-love, rather than asking us to fix those things that are imperfect, accepts and embraces all of the ways that we are beautifully imperfect and holds those imperfections with tenderness and compassion. In a world that tells us that we are not much; that our bodies do not matter; that we are not worthy of tenderness, self-care is an affirmation that we are worthy to be cared for.



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Thirty years ago, Audre Lorde, black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet proclaimed that “caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” At the time, Lorde, already an activist and champion in the struggle for collective liberation across and through identities, was fighting cancer. She wrote: “Battling racism, and battling heterosexism, and battling apartheid share the same urgency inside of me as battling cancer.”

In our organizing for resistance and collective liberation, it is women—women of color, Indigenous women, poor women who are often at the nexus of interlocking oppressions. We are often the first to feel the effects of forces like economic oppression, environmental destruction, threats and actual acts of violence. And we are least and last likely to be served by formal mechanisms of care. And because of cultural histories of caring, we are often the best equipped and the most likely to offer care and to participate in networks of care for others. Self-care is an affirmation that we are worthy of being cared for. It is an affirmation that bodies like ours are worthy of care. It is an affirmation that our beloveds are worthy of care.

For me, radical self-care is taking a bath or shower; visiting the doctor; nourishing my body with healthy food; drinking water. Radical self-care is putting my feet on the earth, be it red clay dirt or wet sand or sun-warmed rocks. Radical self-care is turning my face to the sunshine and fresh air. Radical self-care is prayer, meditation, silence. Radical self-care is a conversation with my pastor, my spiritual director, my therapist, or my trusted friends. Radical self-care is singing, dancing, creating art. Radical self-care is knitting. It is gardening: growing food and flowers. Radical self-care is taking care of body, my mind, my spirit, and my community.

In the 2017 reissue of Audre Lorde’s collection of essays, *A Burst of Light*, where she articulates this notion of self-care, the poet Sonia Sanchez opens the foreword with a poem from by Pulitzer Prize-winner, Gwendolyn Brooks: “Paul Robeson.” The last few lines of the poem affirm one of Lorde’s lifelong teachings: “that we are each other’s harvest: we are each other’s business: we are each other’s magnitude and bond.”

Marta Velásquez, a leader of Foro de Mujeres por la Vida (The Forum of Women for Life), one of the GAYT featured partners, describes the self-care in her work as an act of justice:

What gives me hope about Foro’s work is that political stance of self-care as an act of justice, since ourselves/our bodies are our own first territory. That has been so tainted and women have been so unaware of it. We haven’t made right with Mother Nature; the patriarchy has made us lie to ourselves, forced us into the market model. We’ve begun to recover our ancestral knowledge, worldview, medicine, nutrition—all of this is power for us—the recognition that I have got to be sure that I am well. It gives me hope to support other women who can use some of our strength to break out of the roles that have been imposed on them, to keep seeking strategies of resistance that deconstruct the patriarchy. All of this is justice, to us—and they are processes, but we have begun



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the process and that is the important part.

I also want to say that my hope for self-care is that it is personal, collective and involves the whole person.

We are each other's harvest: we are each other's business: we are each other's magnitude and bond.

When we practice self-care that is grounded in love for ourselves as beloveds of God; beloveds of Creation, and beloveds within community, that is a radical and collective act. I am someone's beloved; and when I care for myself, I care for them. When I care for myself, I am caring for my collective body.

That is how we transform systems of oppression from the inside out. This is the work of women-centered and women-led organizations like *Foro de Mujeres por la Vida*, which has equipped Marta Velásquez to be a leader who inspires women to value their own voices and fight for their rights in Honduras. This is the work of *Live & Learn Environmental Education Kirbiati*, where Pelenise Alofa is uniting her community as they strive to save their homeland from the devastation of climate change. This is the work of *Women Peace Network*, founded by Wai Wai Nu, to amplify the voices of Rohingya women who have faced ethnic cleansing in Burma. This is the work of *Activate Labs*, which was created by Monica Curca to bring the tools of self-expression and self-determination to the Central American migrants held at the border; using the arts to foster healing and resiliency among asylum seekers. Having been a refugee herself once, Monica knows that human beings need more than just the basics of survival. We need creativity, beauty, self-expression, love, joy.

This is at the heart of the partnership model that is the foundation of UUSC's work around the world. Radical self-care honors the wisdom within each individual and each community to know what is required to not just to survive or resist but to flourish, prosper, bloom, and create the world we want to live in. When we practice radical self-care that values the nourishment of our bodies, minds, spirits, and communities as essential to the collective body, we are moving beyond resistance to creative liberation.

I hope you will join me on this path of radical self-care, this deep knowledge that you, and all people, are worthy of deep compassion. I also hope you will join me in learning more about the lives and work of this year's guests through the Guest at Your Table program, which helps UUSC's grassroots partners not just respond to social justice issues and resist human rights abuses, but also take care of the full range of needs of themselves and their communities in order to truly thrive.

Some Sources

Audre Lorde; *A Burst of Light: And Other Essays*; Firebrand Books; Ithaca, NY, 1988.

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Moment for All Ages

by Rev. Laura Randall

Optional materials: One loaf of bread and one rose

Good morning! Today I would like to tell you about women who saw that something was wrong in their communities and worked to make life better and more fair for their friends and neighbors.

Over a hundred years ago in the town of Lawrence, Massachusetts, there was a large factory called a textile mill that turned raw cotton into fabric. The people who worked there were immigrants who had come from many different countries around the world to make a new life for themselves in the United States. In addition to being immigrants, most of the workers at the textile mill were women. They worked long hours in very hard and unsafe conditions in order to earn a living. One day, the factory owners decided that the workers would have to work even faster but with lower pay, so the workers went on strike.

Who here knows what a strike is? (*Wait for answers.*)

That's right! A strike is when employees stop working in order to protest unfair or unsafe conditions.

In 1912, the factory workers in Lawrence went on strike to protest being told to work harder and faster for less pay. The workers marched in the streets for months to protest these conditions. During the protests, a group of young women from the textile mill carried a banner that said, "We want bread, but we want roses, too!" This message on the sign came from a speech that a young immigrant worker named Rose Schneiderman had given the year before. Rose had said, "The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too."

What do you think Rose meant when she said that people need bread *and* roses? (*Wait for answers. If needed, help guide the discussion by asking other questions such as: What can you do with bread? Do you think that she meant that people need actual roses? What might roses represent?*)

Rose Schneiderman was saying that people need food to get by, but they also need things like beauty, love, dignity in their lives. Food and shelter are very important, and without them we could not survive. But we also need things we enjoy, like music, art, or fun with friends to live a good life.

Rose Schneiderman and the women who went on strike were saying that immigrant workers like themselves deserved not only enough food and a safe home but also a chance to experience the beauty and joy of life, just like the people in society who had more money and power than they had. They were saying it was important to meet the needs of the body and the heart. Because of this message, the strike became known as the "Bread and Roses Strike."

Thanks to the women leading the Bread and Roses Strike, workers in the textile mills of New England were eventually given an increase in wages. This strike also inspired a poem called "Bread and Roses" which was later turned into the song we sang this morning. That song has now been sung for over a hundred years, helping inspire people to work for the rights and dignity of all people and remember the



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women who so often lead these movements.

Courageous women are working to make the world a better place today, too. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (called UUSC for short) works with women all over the world who are leading their communities toward change. One woman UUSC is currently partnering with is Monica Curca. Monica founded an organization called Activate Labs, which brings art, music, and storytelling into spaces that migrants are passing through as they seek safety and a better life in the United States. These places include shelters, transit stations, and border crossings.

Like the women in the Bread and Roses Strike who understood that people need to have their bodies *and* their hearts cared for, Monica knows that joy and creativity are essential human needs, just like food and shelter. That is why Monica and her team, with help from UUSC, bring art, music, and video-making supplies into places migrants are traveling through. This helps migrants, who are often having a hard time because they had to leave their homes, express how they feel, have fun, and have a good experience amid so many challenges. As Monica explains, “We need joy, creativity, art, and self-expression to return us to ourselves.”

This is an important message for all of us to remember. Joy, creativity, dignity, and beauty are just as important to people as food to eat. As we work to make the world a better place, it is important to make sure everyone can have food and beauty, bread and roses.

About Rev. Randall

As Associate Director of Development for Congregation Relations at UUSC, Rev. Laura Randall facilitates partnerships to strengthen the impact of UUSC and the social justice reach of UU communities. Through preaching, teaching, relationship building, and fundraising, Laura connects the work of UUSC to Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Prior to joining UUSC, Laura’s denominational work included serving as the Legacy Campaign Director for the Wake Now Our Vision Collaborative Campaign, and as the Legacy Gifts Manager for the Unitarian Universalist Association. Laura’s ministry has also included hospice chaplaincy and Alzheimer’s education and advocacy. Laura holds a master’s degree in divinity from Harvard Divinity School and a bachelor’s degree in English and communication studies from Alfred University.