

Rights Now

The newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

FALL 2021



CREATING POWERFUL NETWORKS OF SUPPORT

THIS YEAR UUSC IS FACING THE CHALLENGE OF ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS

with renewed energy. While we know a new administration will not be the one solution to addressing many of our world's injustices, we will not squander the new opportunities made possible.

Recent events have certainly been disheartening... The U.S. government is now backing a company building a tar sands pipeline through sacred Indigenous lands, the Trump-era policy Title 42 continues to deny asylum-seekers entry to

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the U.S., ecological crises are worsening and becoming more frequent, and so much more.

Still, I remain inspired by the many ways our grassroots partners are developing community-led solutions to injustice. During yet another challenging year, our partners have seen victories and overcome immense obstacles.

By following the lead of frontline community leaders, we have all the wisdom, strength, and perseverance needed to build a better world.

In the pages ahead, we share the steady advances made with one of our migrant justice partners since 2016; the start of a new partnership with a youth-led coalition for climate justice; and how UU congregations are creating networks of support for immigrants in the U.S. I am confident that by following the lead of frontline community leaders, we have all the wisdom, strength, and perseverance needed to build a better world.

Thank you for helping us reimagine how the inherent dignity and power of all people can be centered, valued, and cherished. We are so grateful for your solidarity and the many ways you join UUSC and our grassroots partners in achieving justice for all.

Sincerely,



Rev. Mary Katherine Morn
President and CEO



Youth Leaders Demand Climate Action

UUSC is helping amplify the voices of young people advocating for their futures. With climate change escalating – and communities around the world at risk of displacement as a result – UUSC formed a new partnership to address this very immediate crisis.

The Loss and Damage Youth Coalition (LDYC) is an alliance of more than 150 youth from over 40 countries working on mitigation efforts, advocating for climate action, and demanding compensation for loss and damage brought on by climate change.

Like its parent organization The Loss and Damage Collaboration, which supports developing countries to address climate impacts, LDYC

recognizes that communities bearing the harshest impacts of climate change often have the fewest resources for dealing with them.

That is why, with funding from UUSC, LDYC raises awareness about climate impacts in developing countries through its global network of youth leaders. It advocates for loss and damage to be addressed and provides resources to mobilize impacted communities – especially youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples – through actions, trainings, and storytelling. With your support, LDYC is creating a platform for communities to share their experiences around climate change, advocate for change, and hold leaders accountable for their roles in accelerating the climate crisis.

“We can be that light that illuminates others and helps others ignite their own light, and we can contribute to reducing the effects of climate change.”

- Roxana Borda Mamani
LDYC Member

"We, the youth, are a large population, and with our strengths we can achieve anything," says Roxana Borda Mamani, an LDYC member. "The climate crisis is an environmental crisis. It doesn't matter what language you use: climate change affects everything. We must remain united and get youth to join the cause. We can be that light that illuminates others and helps others ignite their own light, and we can contribute to reducing the effects of climate change."

Youth leaders are demanding action to ensure a more sustainable future for our current and next generations, and LDYC is creating a network for them across country borders to help make this happen.

Learn more about LDYC and hear directly from its youth leaders by visiting [**uusc.org/indigenousswisdom**](https://uusc.org/indigenousswisdom).

Help us get to know you better!
Please take our 3-minute survey at
[UUSC.ORG/MEMBER-SURVEY**](https://uusc.org/member-survey)**



National TPS Alliance in
Washington, D.C.
Photo credit: Ash Ponders

Partner Timeline: Scalabrinianas Misión con Migrantes y Refugiados

A UUSC partner since 2016, Scalabrinianas Misión con Migrantes y Refugiados (SMR) provides refugees and asylum-seekers in Mexico with services ranging from shelter to psychological support. As policy and on-the-ground realities shift on a near daily basis, UUSC remains committed to supporting the evolving needs of our long-term grassroots partners. Below is a timeline of our work with SMR.



2016 With the support of UUSC, SMR was able to provide legal support for migrants needing humanitarian protection. In addition to legal aid, psychosocial support and social work assessments were made available to help them successfully navigate the asylum-seeking process and begin to work through their trauma.

ABOVE: A mural adorns the wall of SMR's office.

MIDDLE: SMR staff member discusses their work.

RIGHT: SMR's migrant shelter in Mexico City.

2017 Building upon the work of the previous year, SMR continued its accompaniment of migrants into 2017, providing comprehensive medical, legal, and psychosocial support. With a new shelter in Mexico City and a strong advocacy platform bolstered by connections with public institutions and civil society organizations, SMR expanded its reach at a critical time.



2018 SMR provided key support to migrants in the exodus from Central America, providing food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, and legal advice along the route. The team also set its advocacy sights on government institutions, pressuring Mexican federal and state entities to take responsibility for the humanitarian emergency.

2019 SMR increased its capacity to support young people in migration, improve the quality of care, and better coordinate their work along the migration route. With an increased number of asylum seekers in Mexico, SMR expanded their accompaniment work to meet the demand within the country and continue to provide holistic support.

"Being at SMR-Casa Mambré has helped me a lot, I have learned new things, the support I have received is more than I expected, and I thank you all for your support, affection, understanding... for the roof, for the food - very delicious - and the great love and respect that we give to those who came to this place."

- SMR member from Guatemala

2020 Despite the challenges of COVID-19, SMR remained steadfast in their support of those in migration, increasing safety measures and obtaining supplies of health and sanitation materials. With funding from UUSC, they not only continued to provide legal advice and representation, but also worked towards building a network of public and private support to better address immediate needs.

2021 SMR continues to grow their local support network, facilitating access to humanitarian aid and aiming to combat discrimination against people in migration. Alongside their continued accompaniment work, the team has built lines of communication with federal migration authorities and political bodies in Mexico in an effort to effectively respond to violence along the migrant trail.



Community-Based Solutions to Immigration Detention

For-profit companies are making millions of dollars operating private prisons as immigration detention centers, and have a long history of abuse and neglect. Since 2014, UUSC has been advocating for an end to this cruel practice of detaining people who are seeking asylum in the U.S., with an emphasis on ending child and family detention. We follow the lead of our grassroots partners who advocate for community-based alternatives to detention — solutions that allow families to seek asylum together and in freedom.

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In many cases, those seeking asylum have friends or family in the U.S. who can host them. But what about those who do not have a support system in the U.S.?

In these cases, having access to community-based options becomes critically important. In response to this need, UUSC launched the Congregational Accompaniment Project for Asylum Seekers (CAPAS) in early 2020 as one alternative to detention. The CAPAS program connects UU congregations with a person or family seeking asylum, and the congregation agrees to provide housing, financial support, and accompaniment throughout the legal process.

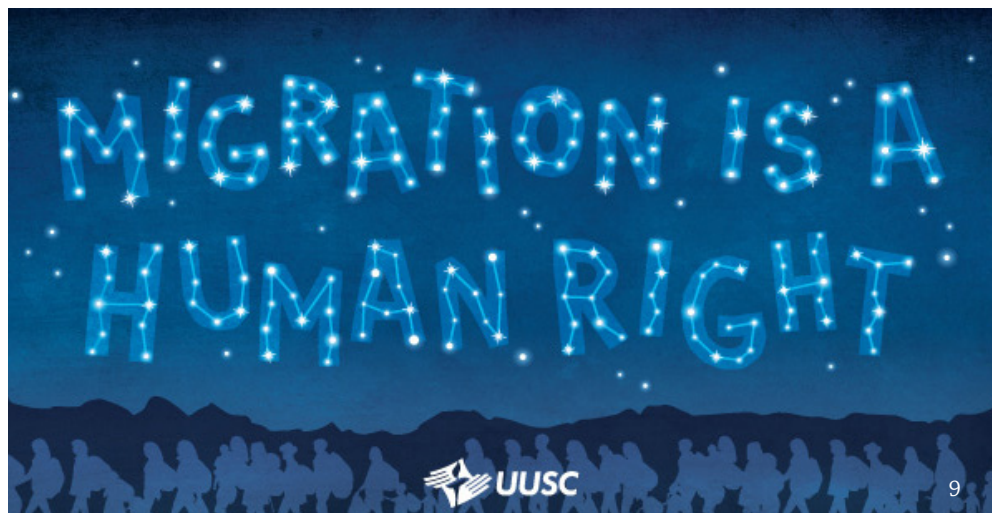
UUSC partner Al Otro Lado identified Ana, a woman from Central America who fled because she feared for her life, as someone with a strong case for asylum. She was being held at the Otay Mesa Detention center in San Diego when UUSC connected Ana with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Quad-Cities (UUCQC) in Davenport, Iowa. The 200-member congregation agreed to fly Ana to Iowa, find a place for her to live, provide a monthly stipend, and pay for legal support. Though ICE still requires her to wear an ankle bracelet so they can keep tabs on her, Ana is living in relative

freedom with a family in Illinois and with a community of support around her while she pursues her asylum case.

Ana's story is not only an example of how local communities can rally around people in migration, it also illustrates UUSC's investment in funding strong partnerships, maintaining UU congregational connections, and actively engaging our members to develop powerful, coordinated networks of support. Real change is only possible when people come together to create a better world. UUSC, Al Otro Lado, and UUCQC brought their own particular skills and strengths to bear, each playing an important role in providing a community-based alternative to detention for Ana.

We are grateful for your continued generosity, enabling UUSC to provide support to people in migration and work to end all forms of immigration detention.

To learn more about whether your congregation is a good fit for the CAPAS program, please visit **uusc.org/capas**.



NOW IS THE TIME FOR COURAGEOUS CHANGE!

Guest at Your Table 2021-2022

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**PARTICIPATE IN UUSC'S LONGEST-ESTABLISHED
FUNDRAISING AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR
CONGREGATIONS!**

Join us for this year's **Guest at Your Table** program to learn what UUSC partners are doing to address immediate injustices – as well as what they envision for the future. At this juncture in history, we invite you to listen to their stories on the path toward justice. Please visit uusc.org/guest to learn more.



FRONT COVER: UndocuBlack
in Washington, D.C.
Photo credit: Ash Ponders