

The newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee



THIS NEWSLETTER IS DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND DEEP APPRECIATION TO Dick Scobie, social justice stalwart and former UUSC Executive Director, who passed away in February. Dick led UUSC with steadfast faith and hope from 1972 to 1998. For more than a quarter of a century, he helped shape UUSC into the organization it is today: rooted in local partnership and committed to challenging inequity and creating systemic change.

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It is a blessing to be able to call Dick a mentor, colleague, and friend. At UUSC, we often say that advancing human rights is the work of many joining hands.

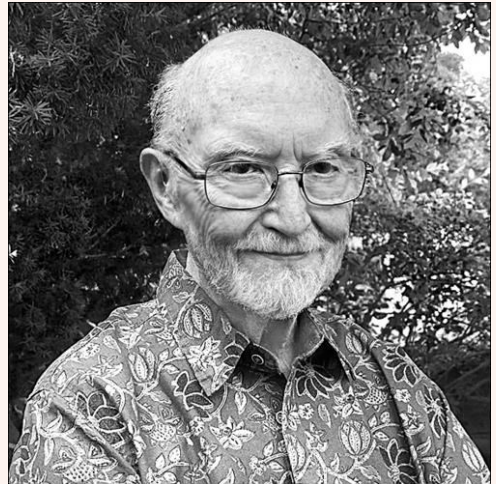
Dick's leadership, devotion, and warm smile were the sparks that brought him, and the people with whom he joined hands, to what mattered most ... advancing justice not for a few, but for all.

Dick's time at UUSC is a gift to those of us who have been fortunate to follow in his footsteps — and to anyone who hopes to lead with principle and values at the forefront.

He was driven by a commitment to humility, honesty, and justice, which never dwindled even when tasked with leading a social justice nonprofit through some of the most volatile human rights crises. He sought, in his own words, "to make a difference ... to be, in some way, a positive force in a tough situation."

*"I hope I can keep
reaching for a world
in which those
seeking justice will
find it ... and where
songs of freedom ring
out from every side."*

– DICK SCOBIE





As you read though some examples of the incredible work UUSC's partners are doing today, I hope you think of Dick and his call to us. I hope you are reminded of his commitment to transforming UUSC from a mere charity to a human rights organization that advances lasting change.

At one of his final events with UUSC, Dick shared, "I hope I can keep reaching for a world in which those seeking justice will find it ... and where songs of freedom ring out from every side."

We honor Dick's memory, the life he lived so abundantly, and the vision he helped make possible for UUSC and our partners.

I give thanks for his love and his legacy that will forever remain in many hearts and in our mission.

With gratitude,

MayKath Mon

Amplifying Women's Voices and Leadership in Haiti

There is a dire social and humanitarian emergency in Haiti. In a nation still recovering from the devastating 2010 earthquake — and another in 2021 — the situation has reached a boiling point as inflation skyrockets, fuel shortages make it nearly impossible to meet basic needs, and armed gangs effectively shut down major city streets.

As is often the case, the impacts of this crisis are falling hardest on women and girls. As part of a “toll” against people crossing territories that have been seized by armed assailants, our partner Solidarite

Fanm Ayisyèn (SOFA) reported that “buses are routinely pulled over, and women are taken to be gang raped.”

Horrific incidents like these are occurring with alarming frequency, and the situation for women and girls has only become worse under Interim Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who illegitimately took power in July 2021. Yet — in a country facing extreme gender-based violence — media coverage of the experiences of Haitian women is limited, and women-centered narratives are even harder to find.





SOFA, a Haitian-led feminist organization that UUSC began partnering with following the 2021 earthquake, is working to “flip the script” by centering women, their lived experiences, and their stories.

In an op-ed that UUSC helped publish earlier this year, SOFA shared that while wealthier households can travel outside of the country to seek medical help, most women in Haiti have very limited or no access to health care at all. SOFA not only exposes these inequities, but also provides aid to bridge these gaps. They offer counseling, advocate for

the right to health care, confront gender-based violence, and fight the disproportionate impact that poverty has on women and girls.

SOFA also amplifies the voices of women in Haiti through international advocacy. In March, SOFA’s former leader, Sharma Aurelien, traveled to New York City to speak on a panel that UUSC facilitated at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67).

“We talk about the security situation in Haiti, but we don’t tend to focus on how women and girls are impacted,” Sharma explained.

"Women are leading the response to the militarism and civil and political unrest... despite their susceptibility and vulnerability to the forces that are attacking them."

– Salote Sogo
UUSC Director of Advocacy

She also described how women and girls are being severely threatened by gang violence, militarization, and security issues. "[It's] as if we were at war. We are not free to move around, and this situation is impacting women especially, due to sexual violence that they are systematically suffering from."

Inflation is having a disproportionate impact on women too. "Heads of households, especially women, [are] unable to meet the most basic needs of their families," she said. "This situation affects women much more, as single-parent families headed by women represent approximately 60% of the total in Haiti."

SOFA's work exhibits the power — and importance — of Haitian women pursuing their path forward in the face of the crisis. Their mission to rally against the subordination, domination, discrimination, exploitation, and exclusion of women is helping to reshape women's narratives and lives.

As UUSC's Director of Advocacy, Salote Sogo, puts it, "women are leading the response to the militarism and civil and political unrest... despite their susceptibility and vulnerability to the forces that are attacking them."

UUSC is proud, and honored, to partner with civil society organizations and feminist movements in Haiti to foster solutions by, for, and of the Haitian people toward a democratic future ... and it is up to international audiences to be allies in support of their cause.

Photo credit: SOFA



WE NEED YOUR HELP! DONATE TODAY

The incredible generosity of our members allows UUSC to build out long-term, justice-based responses to crises like the war in Ukraine. Even if the war ends tomorrow, the people of Ukraine will still need support — including the more than 14 million people who have already been displaced.

Consider committing to our long-term recovery efforts with a monthly donation to our Emergency Response Fund by visiting [UUSC.ORG/ERF](https://uuscs.org/erf). Thank you for your trust in us to advance justice with a thoughtful, community-led approach.

To learn more about UUSC's partnerships, please read our Eyes on Eastern Europe series at uuscs.org/ukraine.

Photo credit: Voices (above), Mudita (page 8)

Promoting Grassroots Leadership in Ukraine

Immediately following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, UUSC mobilized resources to support those impacted by the crisis. Our initial grants were distributed to a long-term partner in Hungary and a trusted allied organization in Poland. A year later, many large international aid agencies have moved on from the region, while UUSC committed to doing the exact opposite. We expanded our partnerships to build out sustained support for refugees fleeing to Poland and communities within Ukraine who continue to face the consequences of military conflict.

On the following page you will find several of the new partnerships that UUSC formed this past year. Our partners focus on prioritizing communities who had faced injustices prior to the invasion — people of color, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and the Roma community. These groups are now experiencing limited access to traditional aid and discrimination as they attempt to receive the assistance they need. They are also the communities on the frontlines of the long-term fight against authoritarianism and Russian imperialism.



ALLIANCE FOR BLACK JUSTICE POLAND (BJP)

BJP is a coalition of organizations that came together to address the unequal treatment experienced by many Black and Brown people fleeing Ukraine and entering Poland. BJP provides services including transportation from the border areas, legal advice, and help accessing safe accommodation, healthcare, and other basic services. They also focus on longer-term support for Black, African, and Afro-descendant people who decide to stay in Poland.

MARTYNKA

Martynka is a female refugee-led organization that formed in direct response to the human-trafficking and sexualized violence crisis at the Polish-Ukrainian border. They work to prevent human-trafficking, help victims of sexualized violence obtain legal and psychological support, and provide access to and information on safe abortions, sexual health, and contraception. They also run a shelter in Krakow, Poland, and operate a 24/7 hotline in Kyiv to provide support to women in Ukraine.

REGENERATION

RegenerAction provides mental health care, counseling, and support to activist and humanitarian aid workers in Poland. As the war in Ukraine continues, those on front lines are experiencing fatigue and burnout as they advocate on behalf of those most at risk – including refugees, Black and African Ukrainians, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. The work of RegnerAction helps human rights activists get the care they need to sustain themselves for the long-term.

MUDITA

Mudita provides life-sustaining care and social support to people with disabilities (PWDs) in Poland. While reception points in Warsaw and Kraków are intended to support people in need of temporary shelter after having arrived in Poland from Ukraine, Mudita ensures that PWDs and their families are accounted for in this process. Mudita offers services including a bilingual helpline, assistance in securing wheelchair accessible housing, and help finding medical assistance and psychological care.

JOIN US FOR GUEST AT YOUR TABLE!

Please join us for this year's Guest at Your Table program — focused on **Reclaiming Freedom** — to learn more about UUSC partners working for liberation from the devastations of violence, climate disaster, and persecution.



LEARN MORE AT [UUSC.ORG/GUEST](https://uusc.org/guest)

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Photo credit: FSAR (left), Marsh Zhinok (front)