

BENDING THE ARC: A SOCIAL JUSTICE QUARTERLY, JANUARY-MARCH 2017

From the Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis, CA

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Photo: Dan & Millie Braunstein, Sharon Hale, Dawn Student, Robin Dattel, and Stefan Harvey visit the African American Museum and Library in Oakland and the “Truth Stone” at UU Oakland next door to the museum.

How UUCD members and friends bent the arc in the last quarter of 2016. They . . .

- Shared a potluck dinner at our church’s Sukkah on Oct. 21, connecting the historic Exodus of the Jews from Egypt and their travel in the desert for 40 years (a focus of the Jewish holiday of Sukkot), with the current waves of refugees being forced from their Middle Eastern homes.
- In October, registered voters by participating in the Yolo Interfaith Immigrant Network voter registration project.
- Listened in our sanctuary on Nov. 9 to UUA President Peter Morales encourage us to engage in local efforts, including interfaith efforts, congruent with our principles and values, in the face of national election results that signaled different principles and values.
- Contributed multiple welcome kits, sets of basic household items, full children’s backpacks, stuffed diaper bags, and cash for the International Rescue Committee in Sacramento to use in their resettlement of refugees locally.
- Met with Evan Junker, Executive Director of the UU Justice Ministry of California, on Nov. 30 to learn about UUCMCA’s Action Teams for Immigrant Justice, Economic Justice, Environmental Justice, and Equity Ministry.
- Contributed \$1,554 to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee through the “Guest at Your Table” fundraiser.

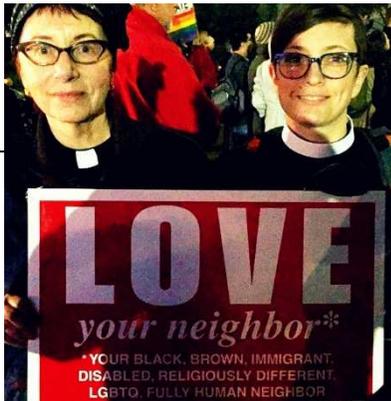




- Co-sponsored a post-election community gathering on Dec. 4 attended by many from UUCD, who heard from vulnerable local communities and discussed ways to reduce those vulnerabilities. Among groups represented were the AB 540 and Undocumented Student Center at UCD, which Rev. Beth and others from our church are supporting.
- Provided homemade and healthy snacks and drinks to the International Rescue Committee for their on-the-go refugee resettlement staff in Sacramento.
- Wrote holiday cards to the more than 100 detained immigrants in the Rio Cosumnes Correctional Center in Elk Grove as part of the on-going Faithful

Friends/Amigos Fieles justice and visitation project.

- Visited the SALAM Center and Mosque in Sacramento on Dec. 16 for dinner, conversation, and a program on Muhammad as a family man, mentor, and leader of youth.
- Participated in an anti-Islamophobia vigil, sponsored by Jewish Voice for Peace and Council on American Islamic Relations, with “Love Your Neighbor” signs in hand, on the west steps of the State Capitol on Dec. 21.
- Gave \$5,875 raised in third-Sunday special collections to the Yolo Interfaith Immigration Network (October), the Sacramento Office of the International Rescue Committee (November), Davis Media Access (December), and the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter (Christmas Eve).



How YOU can help bend the arc
in the first quarter of 2017.
YOU can . . .



- ✧ Plant a “Love Your Neighbor” sign, created by our former intern minister Laura Thompson, in your front yard. Available in the Social Hall before and after services for a donation of \$5-10. The sign is ideal for protests and vigils. Get yours soon!
- ✧ Deepen our relationship with local refugees by volunteering with the Sacramento office of the International Rescue Committee (IRC). We are exploring new opportunities at IRC’s urban farm, New Roots, in West Sacramento. IRC has invited us to help refugees improve their knowledge of nutrition and to learn how to grocery shop wisely in Sacramento. Watch weekly bulletins for more information.
- ✧ Participate in a community service project on Jan. 14 or Jan. 16 in honor of Martin Luther King Day. Sign up in the social hall after church on Jan. 15.
- ✧ Attend the Martin Luther King Day concerts by the Free Range Singers, to benefit Empower Yolo. Sunday, Jan. 15 at 2:00 p.m. and Monday, Jan. 16 at 7:00 p.m. Both at UUCD.
- ✧ Join our UU Campus Ministry in supporting the UC Davis Muslim Student Association’s second annual 5K run/walk on January 21. 8:00 a.m. to noon. East Quad Avenue, UC Davis. Funds raised go toward building wells abroad and providing clean water to the residents of Flint, MI. <http://msaatucd.wixsite.com/5kforcharity>.
- ✧ Meditate, pray, and send a message of loving kindness into the world during the presidential inauguration on Jan. 20. Contact Lorraine Visher, lvisher@gmail.com.
- ✧ Join the Women’s March on Sacramento (a sister event to the Women’s Marches on Washington, San Francisco, Oakland and other places on the same day), Saturday, Jan. 21. This inclusive event underlines a commitment to



protect “our rights, our safety, our health, and our families.” March begins at 10 a.m. at Southside Park; rally on the West steps of the Capitol starts at noon. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/womens-march-on-sacramento-tickets-30065581965>.

- ✧ Read *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson’s account of the work of his Equal Justice Initiative, “a legal practice dedicated to defending the poor, the wrongly condemned, and those trapped in the furthest reaches of our criminal justice system.” Join the conversation, sponsored by Uniting for Racial Justice and led by Marty West, about this award-winning book and criminal justice reform, on Sunday, January 22, at 12: 45 in the church library. You can also watch a TED talk by Stevenson: https://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice?language=en#t-34097 and read an article in *The New Yorker* about him: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/08/22/bryan-stevenson-and-the-legacy-of-lynching>. Related opportunity: exhibits on the history of the Black Panther party continue through Feb. 12 at the Oakland Museum of California and through Feb. 28 at the African American Museum and Library in Oakland. Participants in a recent (auction) excursion to visit the exhibits point out how the Black Panther Party was born out of a sense of outrage against the racially oppressive criminal justice system.
- ✧ Attend a presentation on compassion by David Breaux, on Sunday, Jan. 29, at 12:45 in the church library. David has experienced homelessness, and his talk will provide context for our hosting of the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter starting the same evening. For background, read: <https://boomcalifornia.com/2013/09/21/david-h-%E2%80%8A%E2%80%8Abreaux-action-for-compassion/>. David’s bio: David H. Breaux is a votary for compassion. His intent is to bring awareness to compassion by encouraging people to think about what compassion means to them. He offers that space in downtown Davis at the corner of 3rd and C to think about compassion and also facilitates discussions on the topic. Through these simple gestures, people are moved to contemplate compassion and inspired to act toward the alleviation of suffering in the world.
- ✧ Help UUCD provide a safe sleeping spot and food for up to 40 homeless guests as we host the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter, Jan. 29 – Feb. 3. Sign up in the Social Hall on Sundays to be part of a driving, cooking, kitchen, hospitality, overnight, or set up/take down crew. Details from Lindsay Weston, lawweston@sbcglobal.net.
- ✧ Volunteer to set up and serve at Davis Community Meals on the second Tuesday of the month, including Feb. 14 and Mar. 14. Contact Kathy Boyajian, katboy3@gmail.com.
- ✧ Attend the third International [Unitarian] Women’s Convocation, Feb. 16-19, at Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove. <https://www.intlwomensconvo.org/third-international-womens-convocation/>. Contact Peg Swain of Dove & Serpent, mbswain01@gmail.com.
- ✧ Volunteer and/or attend the Yolo Interfaith Alliance for Climate Justice annual conference, March 11, 2017. Contact Lynne Nittler at lnittler@sbcglobal.net.
- ✧ Have fun on a Social Justice Scavenger Hunt, a still-available auction item for all ages. Explore Davis by bike as you follow clues to places and artifacts that embody the city’s social justice past and present. Ideal for families with children who bike. Saturday, March 25, at noon. Includes lunch and dessert at Central Park. \$10 per adult; children free. Contact Stefan Harvey, stefh2002@yahoo.com.

Justice Updates: Our “Black Lives Matter” Banner

In October, the church received an e-mail from a member of the public who wrote, “Hello, I noticed that there is a “black lives matter” [banner] in front of your building. Is this yours? If so, have you considered that all lives matter? Or are you proposing that some lives matter more than others? You have the right to do what you choose, but is this “selective” messaging really beneficial for all people?”

Here is the reply that United for Racial Justice sent:

Thank you for sending us a letter asking about our banner and expressing some of your concerns. One of the purposes of the banner is to engage our community in conversation about these issues.

On March 13, 2016 the Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis overwhelmingly voted to display prominently on church grounds a banner stating Black Lives Matter. This is part of a nationwide UU campaign to visibly demonstrate our support for the

movement, *Black Lives Matter*, which has grown in response to highly publicized police violence toward people of color in communities nationwide. The movement's values are consistent with our UU principles, especially "to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person."

Of course we believe that all lives matter. Black lives have been valued less in our country's history and that legacy lingers in our institutions and culture, resulting in the necessity to state that Black Lives matter, too. The fact that this banner troubles people makes the point that race is indeed an issue. Discussing these difficult issues is beneficial for everyone, so we can achieve collective liberation from the damage done to all of us by structural racism.

We have held a worship service on the topic of Black Lives Matter, engaged in related discussions, and we continue to educate all ages in our congregation to participate in the conversation surrounding this issue. You are welcome to join us!

You may also contact us to discuss this issue further:

Jen Higley-Chapman jhigleychapman@yahoo.com

Leanne Friedman ljfriedman@ucdavis.edu

Tim Burkhardt timothy.burkhart73@gmail.com

Warmly,

The Uniting for Racial Justice Committee, Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis

The letter writer sent a further reply indicating that they were still uncomfortable with our position, but like the original message, it was civil and respectful.

Uniting for Racial Justice has also sent a letter of support to the UU Community of the Mountains in Grass Valley, which has had their "Black Lives Matter" banner stolen three times.

The Social Justice Coordinating Committee, with the support of URJ, has asked our Facilities Manager, Chris Hendrix-Chupa, to install a light on our banner, so that it can be seen at night. Expenses to light the banner will be covered with the SJ Coordinating Committee budget.

URJ has a second, mobile, "Black Lives Matter" banner for use while tabling, marching, etc. Contact URJ for more information.

Addressing Homelessness

Beyond the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter, our Yolo County communities need more housing that can reduce homelessness.

Valerie Olson of our congregation is on the advisory board for the Tiny Homes for the Homeless group in Woodland. They are proceeding with plans to form a board of directors, create bylaws, incorporate, and begin fund raising. The next meeting is at 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 17 at the Christian Church in Woodland. Contact Val Olson, valerieolson718@icloud.com. The Davis Community Church is examining a Tiny House initiative in Davis as well.

Also in Davis, the New Pathways program, a partnership between the City of Davis and Yolo County Housing, currently provides short-term supported housing for four chronically homeless adults. This effort, which plans to serve 45 individuals over three years, recently received a \$233,000 grant from Sutter Health. In addition to housing, it will provide job training, bridge rental assistance, and supportive services.

Last summer Yolo County received a \$2 million grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to support people struggling with homelessness with substance abuse. The county will use these funds to work with Fourth & Hope, an organization that operates mostly in Woodland, to provide permanent housing and supportive services.

We encourage you to participate in our hosting of the IRWS and then consider getting involved in homelessness and related issues in other ways.

(Thanks to County Supervisor Don Saylor's Dec. 14, 2016 e-mail update for some of this information.)



“The People Speak” – and Act

Last September, about 40 UUs watched “The People Speak” at three screenings (one at church, one at the Glacier Circle Senior Community, and one at the Woodland home of Val Olson and John McKean). The film is based on Howard Zinn’s book, *A People’s History of the United States*. The book and the film vividly convey how injustice and inequality have needed addressing again and again in our nation’s history and how efforts to address them often start small and at the bottom, but eventually gain enough power to make significant progress.

Our church is reaching out to groups in our communities who are feeling particularly vulnerable in light of the recent presidential race and election. We have our own leadership groups and activities as well as allies outside our church who are reaching out to Muslims, immigrants, refugees, women, African Americans, those who identify as LGBTQIA, and others. Earth’s vulnerability is also on our radar, as are issues characterized by *intersectionality*, for example, indigenous people’s rights and climate change.

We engage in social justice work in various ways, including educating ourselves and others, making individual behavioral changes, serving vulnerable communities, and organizing and advocating for socially just laws, policies, and programs. Growing inequality, as well as the change in administration at the national level, calls us at this time to step into protest and advocacy roles.

The importance of “push back” is captured in a piece by Bill Moyers (shared with us by Valerie Olson), which calls for a shadow government that will act as a watchdog of the new administration. Read the piece here: <http://billmoyers.com/story/hillary-clintons-inaugural-address/>. And consider how you will participate and contribute to the kind of history revealed in “The People Speak” and *A People’s History of the United States*. UUCD’s 2017 justice agenda can expand to include new projects; contact Robin Datel or Stefan Harvey with ideas and to learn the steps involved in starting a new justice leadership team.



Your leadership is needed.

In addition to participating in the activities listed above, several unique opportunities are open. They include:

- Chair of Green Sanctuary
- Contributing writer for UUCD’s *Bending the Arc*
- Policy coordinators (develop an advocacy agenda: petition signing, letter writing, public testimony and witness) for one quarter or more – mentoring available. One way to begin is to visit the UU Justice Ministry of California website: <http://uujmca.org/>.
- Two (2) at-large member positions on the Social Justice Coordinating Committee

Interested in finding out about any of these opportunities? Contact Robin Datel, rddd@dcn.davis.ca.us, or Stefan Harvey, stefh2002@yahoo.com.

Written by Robin Datel and Stefan Harvey; edited by Elli Norris.