



UUSC advances human rights by organizing advocacy campaigns urging U.S.-based multinational Unocal to stop doing business in Burma (left), supporting grassroots partners in Guatemala (center), and sponsoring Just Works workcamps to improve the lives of migrant farm workers in North Carolina.

UUSC works to complete the picture of human rights

**Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Associate Member Report to the Unitarian Universalist Association
June 2005**

The last twelve months has been a remarkable period of growth and progress for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee as we become a more effective voice and a stronger presence for human rights around the world and in the United States. Together with our 32,000 members and supporters, the Service Committee continues to be a voice for UU values around the globe. UUSC is a voluntary, membership organization whose mission is grounded in Unitarian Universalist principles that affirm the worth, dignity and human rights of every person and the interdependence of all life.

Over the last year, we completed our Program Review and Refocus (PRR) and announced our three new program themes: environmental justice, economic justice and civil liberties. We have reestablished our commitment to affecting public policy and to giving our members and supporters a voice in Washington, D.C., by reopening our office there. We have reaffirmed our roots in Unitarian Universalism by forging a closer relationship with both the UUA and with individual UU congregations.

Another product of the effort is the creation of the UUSC Ministerial Advisory Group. This group which consists of 12 ministers who are opinion leaders and/or associated with high-visibility congregations will focus on creating linkages between the programs of the Service Committee and the spiritual life of congregations.



UUSC volunteers put their values into action by supporting the organizing rights of farm workers.

Initial response to these efforts has been positive as demonstrated by the rapid rate of growth in UUSC membership over the past year and a half. Membership grew by 11 percent in FY04 and figures for the first six months of FY05 show a 20 percent increase over the same period last year.

In collaboration with the UUA, the Service Committee has taken the lead in collecting donations for tsunami relief, so far raising more than \$1.9 million dollars in relief and rehabilitation assistance. Our program staff is working with our partners abroad and the UUA Holdeen India Program to direct these funds to where they will do the most good.

Program Review and Refocus

UUSC supports human rights work in a variety of ways. One way is through financial support of programs and projects that seek to advance human rights and justice. Through grants of varying sizes, UUSC supports both U.S. and overseas local organizations. The selection process gives preference to grassroots groups that develop, implement and advocate solutions to human rights problems on the ground.

We achieve these goals, in part, by working within UU congregations and their local communities by building a culture of respect for human rights and a commitment to advocate for fair and equitable U.S. policies.

We accomplish this work by:

- ♦ Engaging members and supporters to be political social activists.
- ♦ Partnering with communities and organizations confronting unjust power structures.
- ♦ Challenging oppressive policies in the U.S. and around the world.

We also provide financial and technical support when disasters strike, especially where human rights are threatened.

In May 2004, the UUSC Board of Trustees chose these three themes for program development, with race/ethnicity and gender as cross-cutting themes:

- ♦ Economic justice, addressing the issue of globalization and privatization with a focus on defending and promoting workers' rights, especially the right to a living wage.
- ♦ Environmental justice with a primary focus on protecting and extending the human right to water.
- ♦ Promoting and defending civil liberties as well as access to democratic processes threatened by an increasingly authoritarian environment.

Economic justice: Labor rights and living wage

UUSC is committed to defending people's right to work in dignity for a living wage and to organize to defend those rights in both the international and national arenas. We specifically address how race, class and gender render particular groups of people vulnerable to economic injustice. UUSC supports the struggles of these groups to achieve both a living wage and to defend their labor rights.

Economic justice program manager Johanna Chao Rittenburg brings an extensive record of 17 years as an activist, community organizer and mediator. Most recently, she was a Steering Committee member of the Asian and Pacific Islander Women's Social Justice Project, and is completing studies for a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

Environmental justice: Defending the right to water

There is a strong and vibrant global movement of people fighting to defend their right to water. With our new program focus on the human right to water, UUSC works closely with grassroots organizations both in the United States and



Our work to promote human rights focuses on defending the rights of oppressed racial and ethnic groups such as these school children in Burundi.

internationally, supporting their struggle against privatization and depletion.

Deepa Joshi, who joined UUSC as manager of its environmental justice program, is a native of Nepal and has spent much of her academic and professional life in India. She has done extensive work on the effects of privatization and market-oriented water policies on poor and marginalized communities.

Civil liberties: STOP (Stop Torture Permanently) Campaign

UUSC launched the STOP (Stop Torture Permanently) Campaign in 2004 to educate and mobilize advocates to bring an end to U.S. government involvement in torture. The campaign is building a broad coalition of student organizations, human rights and faith-based networks to bring an end to U.S.-sanctioned torture.

The STOP Campaign is led by Jennifer Harbury, a human rights attorney who has spent the last twenty years working for human rights reforms both in Guatemala and the United States. Ms. Harbury's struggle to save the life of her husband, a Mayan

resistance leader captured by the Guatemalan military, resulted in startling U.S. official disclosures in 1995 about the CIA's use of known torturers as paid informants.

Ongoing program commitments

Until we have completed our program transition, UUSC will continue to support its ongoing program commitments.

Supporting women and oppressed racial, ethnic and indigenous groups

Africa

In Burundi, UUSC supported women's participation in peace and conflict resolution, focusing on women heads of households and refugee women returning home. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, UUSC supported women by funding research and the documentation of violence against women and women's participation in the peace process. Children's rights were supported through public awareness programs and legal representation for detainees and former child soldiers.

Asia

In India, UUSC supported groups working to promote indigenous rights, Dalit rights, and sex workers' rights. These programs focused on women and the prevention of Hindu/Muslim violence in Chennai, Andhra Pradesh and Calcutta.

In Northeast India, which has been under martial law for over 30 years, grants supported human rights monitoring and the documentation of indigenous groups. We also supported the participation of our partners at the World Social Forum last year in India.

On the Burma/Thai border, funds were provided to grassroots human rights organizations to promote democratization, conflict resolution and to advocate for human rights with a special focus on women. Support was also provided for health services and training at the Mae Tao Clinic which serves ethnic refugees from Burma. All partners relate local activities to global issues and do successful advocacy on those issues.

Latin America

In Guatemala, UUSC funded grassroots organizations in their work to: 1) restore justice in the wake of the civil war through programs that provide legal counsel and efforts at reconciliation, 2) assist indigenous communities in their quest for justice and equality, and 3) empower women politically.

Two UUSC delegations visited Guatemala – one to monitor elections and another to draw attention to the trial of the perpetrators of the Rio Negro massacres of the 1980s. When we learned of the imminent eviction of our partner, the Center for Legal Action and Human Rights (CALDH), we provided a mortgage which allowed them to purchase their own building. High lending rates in Guatemala previously prevented CALDH from doing so. The CALDH mortgage



UUSC and UUA members and supporters responded with unprecedented generosity to provide humanitarian aid to victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami.

represents UUSC's first Program Related Investment.

With support from UUSC, our partner, the Maya Achi Association for the Integral Development of Victims of Violence (ADIVIMA), offered a \$5,000 reward for the capture of Captain Jose Antonio Solares Gonzales who is wanted for charges stemming from the Rio Negro massacre.

In Mexico, UUSC supported work in Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero and Morelos. These projects focused on the rights of indigenous communities (especially in areas of ongoing conflict), indigenous women's rights and empowerment and the rights of indigenous children and youth.

United States

UUSC supported UU groups in five states in establishing UU statewide advocacy networks. In addition, support was provided to combat the high level of racism and social prejudice towards people of indigenous descent in southern California.

Disaster relief

UUSC once again responded to disaster situations where human rights are threatened, providing leadership and a UU response. UUSC is well-positioned to mount an effective response or to identify those agencies that are best-equipped to help vulnerable and neglected populations affected.

Currently, we are responding to survivors of the tsunami in South and Southeast Asia, our largest relief effort to date. The joint UUSC/UUA Tsunami Relief Fund has raised over \$1.9 million. We are working with UUSC and UUA Holdeen India Program partners on relief for tsunami survivors in India as well as with local grassroots groups in Sri Lanka and Indonesia. In addition, we are working with Burmese migrants in Thailand, one of the groups of survivors who have largely been overlooked.

This year, we also provided support in:

- ♦ Afghanistan, where the Afghan Women's Network promoted solidarity among Afghan women and empowered them to improve the quality of their lives. Support was also given to the Afghan Women's Welfare Department for management training for women.
- ♦ Iraq, where Women for Women International provided direct aid, established skills training and instituted income generation programs. All Our Children provided basic health care, including mental health care.
- ♦ The United States, where the National Immigration Project responded to abuses of civil liberties and immigrant rights resulting from current immigration enforcement practices.
- ♦ Haiti, where the Lambi Fund provided relief for survivors for Hurricane Jeanne.
- ♦ Sudan, for victims of the ongoing genocide in Darfur.

Advocacy

Reflecting our belief that our members and supporters are the "moral force" through which UUSC moves the world, we have renewed our emphasis on advocacy work. Kevin Murray, a well-respected and seasoned professional, is now the head of the newly created Advocacy and Communications Department. In February, UUSC's Washington D.C. Office was reopened with the hire of Shelley Moskowitz. In order to facilitate collaboration with the UUA, Ms. Moskowitz shares an office with the UUA team in Washington.

Thanks in large part to the efforts of UUSC's network of Human Rights Defenders, and other members and supporters, planned tours to Burma by four major universities have been cancelled. These announcements followed similar decisions over the past two months by other major U.S. institutions – also after concerns were raised by activists about the relationship between tourism and the Burma military regime – to scrap plans for group visits to the Asian country.



Young workcampers spent their spring vacation learning about electoral activism and registering voters in Orlando, Fla., as part of our get-out-the-vote initiative.

In another victory, the U.S. Senate has approved a resolution calling on the U.N. Security Council to address the situation in Burma. Agreement was reached on the landmark Burmese human rights case against Unocal. The case utilized the Alien Tort Claims Act, a 215-year-old federal law that allows victims of human rights abuses to hold U.S.-based multinational corporations accountable. In response to an appeal by UUSC, delegates to the 2004 General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to express support for the law which is under attack by both the U.S. business lobby as well as the administration of President George W. Bush.

We are pleased to report another instance of UUSC's shareholder advocacy making a difference in company policies. UUSC, the UUA and other investors have been working with ALLTEL for years, encouraging the company to include sexual orientation in its non-discrimination policy. This year, our efforts paid off and the company amended its non-discrimination policy to include sexual orientation, improving its zero rating on the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index.

UUSC has joined more than a dozen organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union and Amnesty International USA, in withdrawing from the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and pursuing legal action against the government's new "anti-terrorist" regulations. UUSC withdrew from CFC, a workplace-giving program, forgoing a projected \$100,000 in funding, in protest of the new federal policy that requires participating organizations to certify they do not employ or provide funds to people or organizations identified on lengthy government lists as suspected terrorist. To date, the administration has refused to make available the criteria used to determine organizations that are placed on the list.

More than 200 UU youth have visited UUSC to learn more about our organization and programs. While here they take part in advocacy calls and letter writing. Most come as part of their UU Heritage tour. While at UUSC, they are briefed on pressing human rights issues such as the genocide in Darfur, the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the oppressive conditions in Guatemala and Burma. The youth then call or write their members of Congress and other leaders, urging them to take action.

Education, outreach and action

This year, UUSC provided many opportunities for our members and supporters to engage in activism around issues such as the fair trade and the presidential election. We also provided experiential learning opportunities through participants could further motivate them to be activism in their own communities.

Defending Democracy

UUSC engaged in a broad national effort to help people identify opportunities for election-related action. Working in collaboration with UUA, UUSC worked to educate voters about their rights, register new voters, and provide information for forums in discrete geographic areas.

After the November presidential elections, UUSC continued the work of Defending Democracy by providing grants and technical assistance to Unitarian Universalist advocacy networks in California, Minnesota, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Florida and the Heartland District. These networks do not belong to either the UUSC or the UUA, but instead are completely independent and autonomous. We hope that with our financial and technical support, they will all develop into self-sufficient statewide or district-wide UU advocacy networks.

Just Works workcamps

Just Works workcamps are short-term projects that help volunteers examine and understand the causes and damaging effects of injustice. Participants work directly with people in the communities they serve, experiencing social justice struggles firsthand. The Just Works program is an important element in our mission to advance justice and protect human rights in the United States and around the world.



UUSC activists make their voices heard at an anti-war rally in Washington, D.C.

This year, UUSC workcamps included:

- ♦ **Freedom Summer: A Civil Rights Journey:** During the the first annual Freedom Summer workcamp last year, 15 young people heard the messages of many who were on the front lines of the civil rights struggles of the 1960s. They combined electoral activism with a service learning opportunity.
- ♦ **Defending Democracy Workcamp, Boston, Mass.:** This workcamp coincided with the Democratic National Convention, and provided training for youth and young adults in voter registration and get-out-the-vote programs.
- ♦ **Teen Workcamp on Native American Issues, Tacoma, Wash.:** UUSC worked with the UUA Pacific Northwest District, area UU congregations and the Muckleshoot Indian tribe to hold a weeklong workcamp that focused on human rights issues and included a service component.

Guest at Your Table and Justice Sunday

UU congregations joined together for two annual celebrations of human rights and social justice. On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, UUs of all ages came together for Guest at Your Table, building special connections to shared values while learning about defending human rights in the United States and around the world. On March 13, congregations nationwide stood together for justice by recognizing Justice Sunday. This annual program brings UUs together for change on an important and urgent human rights issue. This year, 270 congregations united in defending the human right to water.

UUSC Coffee Project

Through the UUSC Coffee Project, more than 600 UU congregations have supported fair trade with small coffee, tea and cocoa farmers and through their purchases have provided more than \$15,000 in grants for local human rights initiatives in the coffee growing regions. These congregations represent the largest percentage of participation by any denominational group working in partnership with Equal Exchange, a 100 percent fair trade company.

Working with the UUA

Staff from the UUA and UUSC worked together this year to identify ways both organizations could maximize the impact of our justice-related activities through collaboration. The group consisted of staff and managers from both organizations who met to explore for collaboration. UUA and UUSC have together enthusiastically embraced increased collaboration. Successful areas of collaboration so far have included the joint Tsunami Relief Fund, the expansion of the statewide advocacy networks, and the sharing of office space in Washington, D.C.

An invitation

Our membership affects our influence in the United States and abroad as we advocate for justice and confront oppressive power structures. In order to support increases in work and communication with our members and supporters, UUSC has announced the first increase in membership levels in over a decade. The new rates will take effect July 1, 2005.

As our new programs in economic justice, civil liberties and environmental justice take shape, UUSC is emerging as a strong advocacy organization. By joining UUSC, our members and supporters help ensure that UU values continue to have a place in human rights work in the United States and around the world.



Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

“The Power of You & You”