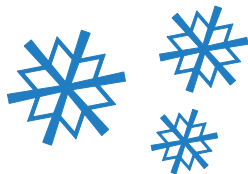




UUJEC News & Views: Winter 2023



| newsletter@uujec.org | Sally Jane Gellert, editor

Upcoming Web Seminars: Join us on 2nd & 4th Thursdays!

Thurs., Dec. 8: Debt Beyond Reason

We'll be joined by Bruce Knotts, formerly of the UU United Nations Office (UU-UNO). Bruce will speak of his experience in Africa where African nations are enticed to take loans they can never pay, and the servicing of the debt ruins all hope for progress. He heard the Minister of the economy in The Gambia mention that 60% of the national budget was going to service the debt, leaving 40% of the national budget for everything else: education, defense, infrastructure, etc.



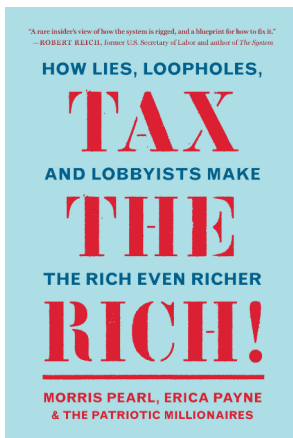
Bruce retired from the Foreign Service in 2007 and began directing the UU-UNO in 2008, founding faith-based advocacy for sexual orientation/gender identity human rights at the U. N. He continues to advocate for the rights of women and indigenous peoples and for sustainable development in moral terms of faith and values.

Having retired from the UUA on September 30, 2022, Bruce is currently Director of International Engagement at Community Church NY. In 2006, Bruce and Isaac Humphrie were wed in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Thurs., Mar. 23: Tax the Rich!

In her book *Nickel & Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, Barbara Ehrenreich pointed out that

The "working poor," as they are approvingly termed, are in fact the major philanthropists of our society. They neglect their own children so that the children of others will be cared for; they live in substandard housing so that other homes will be shiny and perfect; they endure privation so that inflation will be low and



stock prices high. To be a member of the working poor is to be an anonymous donor, a nameless benefactor, to everyone else.

Bill Gates contributes to the University of Washington in recognition of the hours of free overnight computer time he was given while he was learning to program, but he is collecting income from across the country (and globally), should he not pay federal income taxes just as his workers do?

Gary Cohn famously said, "Only morons pay estate taxes". That is not the insult it appears; rather, it is an indictment of our tax system with its many loopholes for the extremely wealthy.

Medicare (dis)Advantage Too often, a chimera

Last year during the Medicare Open Enrollment Period, we hosted a web seminar about the "gotchas" hidden in the promises of most Medicare Advantage plans. If you watch broadcast TV, especially shows that tend to have a large senior audience, you have been bombarded with Joe Namath, Jimmy JJ Walker, and others extolling the virtues of these programs—but notice the client saying "I call every year to find out if my doctor is still in my network", or "I call every year to find out what has changed in my policy"—neither of these stressful calls is needed with Traditional/Original Medicare.

Yes, Original Medicare is not perfect: it leaves out vision, hearing, and dental care, needs a supplemental Medigap plan, and doesn't cover long-term care, but it has a 2% overhead, no 15%, has no PPOs, HMOs, or other limitations on providers (nationally, 93% of physicians accept Medicare, though this may vary in some locations, such as New York City). However, the concept is still "Everybody In, Nobody Out"—all in one risk pool, not segmented by "cherry picking" the healthy and "lemon dropping" the chronically ill.

All Workers Need Sick Days!
See our comments on page 3.

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Why We Need Medicare for All

Rev. Judy Deutsch recommends this *Common Dreams* article from psychiatrist Belinda McIntosh, which presents a number of reasons that we need universal health care. Here's a quick quote:

Since 2018, over 100 cities and counties across the country have passed resolutions in support of Medicare for All. Last October, the American Public Health Association issued a policy statement declaring that healthcare is a human right and calling for the adoption of a single-payer health system to provide universal coverage in the best, most efficient, and equitable way.

Read more here: <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/11/01/im-doctor-heres-why-we-need-universal-healthcare>

It's (past) Time for Universal Health Coverage

This list of newly-elected legislators who support Medicare for All was forwarded by National Nurses United. In addition, there are more than 100 incumbents who are supportive of Medicare for All. Please write your legislators (if they are listed here), thank them for their support, and tell them that you want them to work hard to get Medicare for All passed and implemented.

House:

- Greg Casar - Tex.-35
- Summer Lee - Penn.-12
- Valerie Foushee - N.C.-04
- Shri Thanedar - MI-03
- Delia Ramirez - Ill.-03
- Maxwell Alejandro Frost - Fla.-10
- Sydney Kamlager - Calif.-37
- Robert Garcia - Calif.-42
- Becca Balint - Vt.-at large
- Morgan McGarvey - Ky.-03
- Glenn Ivey - Md.-04
- Kevin Mullin - Calif.-15
- Jill Tokuda - Hi.-02
- Jonathan Jackson - Ill.-01

Senate:

- John Fetterman - Penn.
- Peter Welch - Vt.

In addition, Healthcare-NOW! Brings us this list of state wins:

- Oregon voters approved Measure 111, a constitutional amendment enshrining access to

affordable healthcare as a fundamental right.

- South Dakota voters approved Constitutional Amendment D, expanding Medicaid eligibility under the ACA.
- Arizona voters approved Proposition 209, or the Predatory Debt Collection Act, which cuts down on interest rates on medical debt and increases the amount of assets protected from creditors.
- Massachusetts voters in 20 state house districts approved a non-binding ballot policy question in favor of Medicare for All
- Voters in Michigan, Vermont, California, Kentucky, and Montana protected abortion access.

A Season of Many Holidays

Late November marks the start of the "season of many holidays" that continues into New Years Day. It's a time for enlightenment and spiritual growth. Two holiday events have special importance for UUs concerned with economic justice.

Human Rights Day

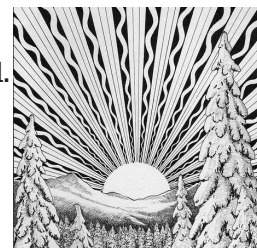
No, it's not a new holiday. Universalists and Unitarians have been involved since 1950. The Ukraine invasion, the COVID-19 pandemic, opposition to racism, the return of fascism and "semi-fascism", along with some other situations have led to the concept of human rights being rediscovered.

On Thursday, December 8th, Bruce Knotts from the UU-UNO will speak about UU involvement with international programs. Human Rights Day (December 10) will receive some mention. We'll have information about the climate-change conference, CoP27, in Egypt and some other topics.

Winter Solstice

What's the Unitarian Universalist message on the Night of the Winter Solstice?

Winter has its delights but it's damned difficult for many people. Energy and housing prices are rising. The homeless population has expanded. Like Scrooge, there are plenty of people who want the poor to use less coal, but it's cold outside.



In many cities, Homeless Memorial Gatherings are held on the Night of the Winter Solstice. Economic- and social-justice advocates gather. Homeless people who have died in the area during the preceding 12 months are remembered.

What's happening in your area? Groups involved with the homeless population know the calendar.

| *Continues on next page*

A Season of Many Holidays

(Continued from previous page)

In the city where I live, the Homeless Memorial Gathering will be on December 16th. It includes the community meal that's served in every season. Unitarian Universalists are active in this project.

Lots of holiday candles are lit in December and much gets said, in different traditions, about the need for light and shelter. Stories are told about the baby Jesus and Bethlehem. On the Night of the Winter Solstice, there's no need to be "religious" or even "spiritual". Some warmth and enlightenment will be appreciated in many places.

In Florida, the first edition of MAGGIE has appeared. MAGGIE is a radical 'zine about aging in Florida.

The first edition contains basic information about energy justice in the Sunshine State. This is "how to do it" information for people who are trying to stay alive during cold weather.

In central Florida, surveys indicate that about a third of the population using homeless services consists of people past the age of 60. Florida is becoming more expensive, but we still attract refugees who are searching for warmth and safety.

With best wishes for the season of many holidays,

| Bob Murphy

All Workers Need Sick Days!

This week has seen the legal end of a very important fight for worker rights. Railroad workers have been negotiating a contract since Jan. 2020, and despite a large cash offer, more than half of the workers voted against it. The sticking point is sick leave—something that we believe is due to every worker, although currently only about ¾ of U.S.A. workers are covered.

Railroad workers are in an especially difficult place. Their only sick time comes through a points system that is extremely restrictive, and they are on call for some 90% of nonworking time, even more than previously with railroads having laid off nearly a third of their workers. They are asking for 15 days of sick leave; management offered 0 and asked Congress to step in. The House passed a bill with 7 mandatory sick days. That bill was voted favorably by a majority of the Senate (52–43), yet failed to pass because of a Republican filibuster, and a subsequent bill passed 80–15 with no sick leave. Worse, they failed to pass an additional extension of negotiations, limiting union power.

We are upset that President Biden, who claims to be pro-union, did not support workers. He claims that all workers should have sick leave, but will he actually try to enact such a policy, or is that just rhetoric?

Reparations AIW

The UUJEC Reparations Task Force is seeking social justice and/or reparation chairpersons in New England Region congregations who are interested in holding small workshops in their congregations, with the goal of running several AIW workshops in are congregations before GA.

According to Task Force member Carl McCargo, ne feature of U.S. culture contributing to racism and bigotry is U.S. media, which teaches us to be violent, selfish and mean to each other. These are some of the roots/foundation of white supremacy. Carl McCargo's recent sermon, "Our Need to Know: Media the Great Teacher" on reparations will shortly be post on our UUJEC Web site. A multisession curriculum on is currently being prepared.

Letters!

UUJEC gets requests from various organizations to sign on to a variety of letters. Independently-active board members also suggest sign-ons for consideration by the UUJEC. Here we list those we have signed since the last News & Views:

- ◆ Joint NGO statement calling on the EU and Norway governments stop subsidizing the oil and gas industry and stop public funding for fake climate solutions.
- ◆ World Beyond War petition calling on CoP27 to include military emissions in official carbon counts.
- ◆ Oppose an LNG shipping port
- ◆ Energy Justice Network letter to the White House Council on Environmental Quality calling on them to direct the EPA to update its standards for incinerators.
- ◆ Pressure State Farm to leave ALEC
- ◆ Press the Biden administration to support measures to increase access to COVID tests and treatments,
- ◆ Support Interfaith Immigrant Justice Campaign call to set the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Presidential Determination (PD) at 200,000 refugees by October 1st,
- ◆ Oppose the proposal for federal leasing under the Five-Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program,
- ◆ Oppose a waiver from the Clean Air Act for pyrolyzing plastic.

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Georgism: Who owns natural resources?

Georgism is named for Henry George, who was a newspaper editor in San Francisco in the 1870s and wondered, *How can California be so rich and yet have so many poor people? Why is wealth being concentrated in so few?* George came to realize that land owners had a monopoly: they owned land and the poor stayed poor because they had to rent from the land owners—and since there is a limited supply of land, the price of land rises and the land owners get rich. George published his ideas in a top-selling book, *Progress and Poverty*, ran for president, and died in New York in 1897.

Georgism is about who owns natural resources and who gets the rent from use of those resources. The rent can be huge; as much as half of GDP. Most of this rent is privatized, leading to massive economic inequality that has often ended violently.

Long ago, we all owned the resources of the planet in common. Then some people began to enclose, actually steal, bits of land from the commons. Most land is now privatized and the enclosures continue as corporations make land grabs in Africa and South America. In the U.S.A., indigenous peoples have been removed from their lands; very few Black families have passed homes and land through generations.

We can understand Georgism by comparing it with Capitalism and Communism. In Capitalism, relatively few people own most of the resources and get the rent, leading to unprecedented wealth and economic inequality. Communism is said to nationalize resources and use the rent for public benefit. The Communists had to kill a lot of people to nationalize resources and Communism ultimately failed because

it reduced individual incentives and entrepreneurship and ability to compete with Capitalism.

Georgism is a compromise between Capitalism and Communism. Henry George said it is not necessary to nationalize resources; let the Capitalists keep their resources and tax them on the use of those resources. This is called a Land Value Tax, but it's a tax on the use of all natural resources. LVT includes use of the atmosphere as a carbon dump, and so the carbon tax is a form of LVT. Some Georgists would now extend LVT to tax monopolies that control all the things necessary for life, such as vaccine patents.

LVT reduces the price of land and thus house prices and homelessness. It reduces land speculation, which is a major cause of urban sprawl and boom/bust economic cycles. LVT can promote improvement of properties, as it is a tax on land only and not on buildings. A normal property tax is a disincentive to improving property, as it taxes both land and buildings and may rise if a building is improved.

LVT is not really a tax; it's the rent due to each of us for use by others of our commonly owned planet. Many LVT proposals include a citizen's dividend to distribute the rent equally to all. The LVT revenue can reduce or replace less efficient taxes, such as on incomes and sales. Since the supply of land is constant, land is "inelastic" and taxing it does not distort the economy as do taxes on incomes and sales—and since land values change more slowly than incomes or sales, LVT tax revenue is stable and predictable. Many economists consider LVT the best possible tax, or at least, the least-bad tax.

<https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/post-corona-balanced-budget-fiscal-stimulus-case-shifting-taxes-land>

Douglas R McLain
originally in substack, [Our Warm Future](#)
here with permission of the author

UPDATE: Article II Study Commission

Progress toward draft text:

At GA 2022 in Portland, the UUA Article II Study Commission presented its thinking about a possible revision of Article II during general business sessions, and there was time for discussion both in the room and in Zoom chat. The commission has used feedback from those discussions to create a first draft of a new Article II. This draft, very different from the current wording, was discussed in a round of Zoom workshops that just ended.

They will be taking feedback from these sessions to create another draft of this important section of the association's by-laws, and again will be asking for

feedback. In January, their third revision will go to the UUA board, and there will be a miniassembly (or miniassemblies?) in May for delegates to discuss and amend the text to be presented for its first vote at GA2023 in Pittsburgh. If it passes, it will go on, without further amendment possible, to a second and final vote at a virtual GA2024.¹

Should the proposal be rejected by delegates at either vote, the process will stop and the current language retained until the next scheduled review.

More information may be found on the Article II Study Commission's [web page](#).

¹Search uua.org for "GA 2024 and Beyond" for a direct PDF download of a possible scenario for future GAs.