



# UUJEC News & Views: Autumn 2023



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

**UU Advocacy Conference: Sept. 26 to 28** (See page 2 for details.)

## Supporting Starbucks Workers (and others)—more than Labor Day

Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community supports the Starbucks workers who are organizing democratic labor unions.

Our Unitarian Universalists principles affirm the “the inherent worth and dignity of every person” and call for “justice, equity, and compassion in human relations” as well as affirming the use of the democratic process in society at large.

In addition, Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community is aware of the current economic issues, including lingering economic effects of the pandemic, and our main focus has always been address income and wealth inequality, including helping to secure economic justice for young adults and other workers.

Starbucks employees in many communities continue to organize labor unions to gain workplace democracy, fair wages, adequate medical insurance, and healthy and safe working conditions, and continue to face repression of their efforts.



Unitarian Universalists are now developing their plans for the 2023 Labor Day weekend, and we encourage these to include information about the Starbucks workers’ efforts, as well as those of Amazon, Walmart, and Trader Joe’s workers, the UAW, and Hollywood Guild of America writers and artists.

Specific to Starbucks organizing, we ask individual Unitarian Universalists to respect picket lines and consumer boycott campaigns established by Starbucks employees in support of union organizing. We also call upon Unitarian Universalist congregations and the Unitarian Universalist Association to work in solidarity with the Starbucks workers who are organizing labor unions in the form of consumer boycotts, letters of support, and support for the mutual aid programs that help workers and their families during strikes.

We also ask congregations to designate the Sunday of Labor Day weekend as “Labor Sunday”, to be dedicated each year to honoring the spiritual and educational aspects of the labor movement.

## Upcoming Web Seminars: Join us on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays!

### Thurs., Sept. 14: At Stake in the Farm Bill

In preparation for our conference—and for those who are unable to get to Washington this month—we invite you to this session with Pam Hess, executive director of Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture.

The Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture cultivates local food systems that prioritize health, equity, and sustainability from the farm forward. The Center works in 3 program areas:

- ◆ sustainable agriculture—producing food and

training military veterans farmers;

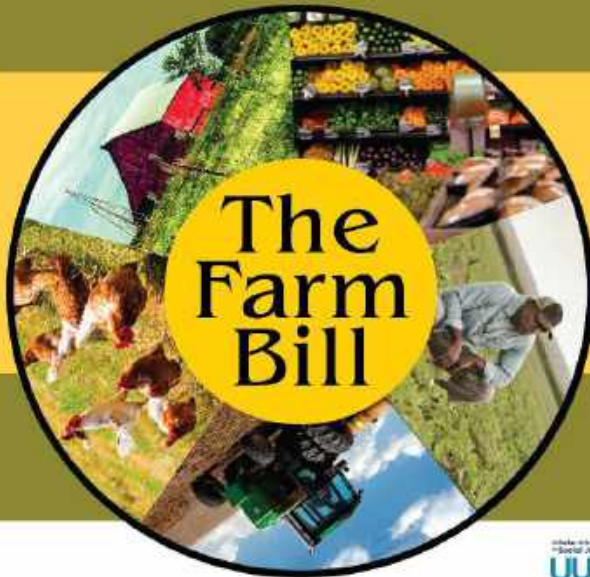
- ◆ farm and nutrition education—teaching schoolchildren to love their veggies with hands-on learning on the farm, in school, and in community gardens
- ◆ food access—overcoming barriers to healthy food in low-income neighborhoods via a network of 8 weekly Mobile Markets in Washington, D.C.

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The Farm Bill addresses food quality, soil, water waste and contamination, food deserts, equity, and conservation

IF YOU EAT FOOD - YOU CARE ABOUT THE FARM BILL



## Farming for our Future:

Systemic Changes for the Climate Crisis

September 26-28

9:30am - 4:00pm ET

All Souls Church

1500 Harvard St NW  
Washington, DC



**WHO:** UUs and others interested in the Farm Bill—that is, anyone who eats!—and can travel to the nation's capital to learn about the many issues, what constitutes a fair farm bill,

**WHAT:** speakers, advocacy training, breakouts for strategy, in-person advocating, and even some music, religious inspiration, and, of course, networking and camaraderie

**SPEAKERS:** Karyn **Bigelow**, Creation Justice Ministries • Scott **Faber**, Environmental Working Group • Joe **Van Wye**, Farm Action • Madison **Mayhew**, Interfaith Power & Light • Loyd **Wright**, USDA (ret.)—& **Jim Scott's** music Tuesday evening!

**WHEN:** Tuesday, Sept. 26, and Wednesday, Sept. 27, 10–4 and 7–9; Thursday, Sept. 28, 9:30–4.

**WHERE:** Sept. 26 and 27, All Souls Church Unitarian; Sept. 28, luggage drop and debrief at St. Mark's Episcopal Church and gathering for lobbying at Capitol Visitor Center, Room 209

**WHY:** The Farm Bill is a "once -in-5-years" opportunity to affect our food system, from farm to distribution to subsidies at all steps from sowing seed to cleaning the table. Agriculture provides more than 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions (U.N. Environmental Programme). Many "special interests" make themselves heard: what about family farmers and everyday eaters? We want a fair farm bill to support family farms, not mega farms (they do fine on their own!), that ensures those who need SNAP (formerly food stamps) are able to access funds, that farmers who want to use regenerative, organic farming methods can do so. What part of the Farm Bill matters most? Do you know about the "marker bills" that can be folded into the final bill? Do you have a favorite? (If not, you may well have one by Wednesday afternoon!)

### Logistics

**GETTING AROUND:** We recommend using the Metro & buses rather than renting a car—parking in a major city is never great, and All Souls Church does not have its own parking lot. Nearest Metro stops: All Souls Church: Columbia Heights; both St. Mark's and Visitor Center: Capitol South. <https://www.wmata.com/>

**EATING:** Lunches will be provided; primarily plant-based, but special needs will be taken into account—let us know when you register. We'll have something "breakfast-snacky" at opening each day, and pastries and coffee/tea at the Capitol Visitor Center on Thursday. Dinners are on your own—we'll suggest some restaurants, and maybe some folks will join up for group dinners.

**LODGING:** There are many options in the Washington, D.C. area; we'll curate a list and post it on our site.

We extend our appreciation to the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program for supporting this event through its Fund for Social Responsibility. For details and registration link, go to <https://uujec.net/climatejusticeconference2023/>

## Signing Up for Medicare? **Be Careful!** **DON'T Sign Up for Medicare Advantage**

According to Rep, Ro Khanna, "Medicare Advantage is private insurance. It profits by tricking patient into enrolling and then denying them coverage."

Medicare Advantage plans have been found to falsely advertise their benefits. A 2022 report from the United States Senate Committee on Finance states that Medicare Advantage marketing includes

- ◆ seniors being told that their physicians are included when they aren't;
- ◆ seniors being called as many as 20 times a day, in attempts to convince them to switch to Medicare Advantage

- ◆ beneficiaries being inundated with fraudulent and misleading communications across all modes of communication;
- ◆ marketing materials falsely designed to look like official communications coming from federal agencies.

Reader Supported News states that hidden audits reveal millions in overcharges by Medicare Advantages; some Medicare Advantage insurers often claimed patients were sicker than they were, in order to get more money from the government.

In February 2023, Reps. Mark Pocan, Ro Khanna, and Jan Schakowsky reintroduced legislation that would change the name of Medicare Advantage to make clear that the plans are run by for-profit insurers. We encourage you to inform your representatives about this common-sense legislation.

## 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. Recently, we have signed letters that

- support the *Juliana v U.S.* youth plaintiffs and endorse the **Children's Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery resolution** reintroduced in July by Sen. Merkley and Reps. Schakowsky and Jayapal.
- call on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to implement the **strongest possible climate pollution standards** for existing coal and gas power plants and new gas power plants.
- express to the Senate Agriculture Committee our **opposition** to including in the 2023 Farm Bill measures that would **expand electricity generation from forest biomass**.
- ask President Biden to support a **moratorium on CO<sub>2</sub> pipelines**.
- call on the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to immediately use equipment and certified staff to detect further toxic releases and hold Shell Chemicals Appalachia, LLC accountable to **reducing emissions and protecting the health of residents in Southwest Pennsylvania**.
- express concern about the Army Corps of Engineers' (ACoE's) permitting of carbon dioxide (**CO<sub>2</sub> pipelines**) pursuant to Nationwide Permit 58, and ask the ACoE to "require pipeline developers to apply for **individual permits** and to ensure that the projects are subject to **full environmental review**", and "refrain from issuing any permits until the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Administration (PHMSA) adopts **revised carbon pipeline safety standards**."
- ask Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security, to **redesignate Temporary Protected Status (TPS)** for El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Nepal, and do what is needed to designate or redesignate TPS for all other countries that qualify, including Guatemala and Venezuela.
- **oppose gas certification** by the Department of Energy (DoE) as a dangerous diversion.
- ask Sec. Buttigieg of transportation for **full environmental review of LNG export infrastructure**, both up- and downstream effects.
- petition Pres. Biden and Sec'y. Haaland of the Interior to **reject oil or gas leasing** in the National **Outer Continental Shelf** Oil and Gas Leasing Proposed Program 5-year plan.
- support Farm Bill policies to safeguard Creation and **mitigate climate change**; address the effects of climate change on farmers and farm workers; and **leave a habitable world** for future generations.

*Write icon created by Freepik - Flaticon*

## from Elderberries—Ministry: Organizing for Health Equity

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are themes that my wife (Lyn Dalzell) and I have embraced in our community ministry. We know that systemic racism, with the other forms of oppression, prevents many people from enjoying good health. We encourage new alliances so that people in different communities can care for each other. Lyn and I started our community ministry during the 1990s, when I was a circuit rider on the coast of North Carolina. Lyn and I moved to Florida in 2015. Officially, we're both "retired", although that label is inappropriate.

We're baby boomers in the American South, which means that we're senior citizens in a region that has lots of seniors. We minister to congregations and communities from Key West to Pasco County with special attention given to health equity and environmental justice concerns. Much of our time is spent with Gray Panthers and Raging Grannies, and with other activists who are past the age of 60. We help with holiday celebrations, with pastoral care, and with wellness education, and we do a lot of community gardening. We exchange recipes. We're involved in advocacy work.

The health equity concept is explained in an Action of Immediate Witness, *Organizing for Health Equity*, that was endorsed by the 2023 General Assembly. The document mentions topics that have been mentioned before by political reformers. It expresses support for a strong Social Security program. Once again, there's a call for a medical insurance plan that will cover all people in all places in the United States.

What's significant is that the Health Equity statement moves beyond lobbying and into some deeper waters. The statement begins with the understanding that some groups are being kicked aside or exploited in health and safety programs. Individuals want to have more control over their bodies. People want to live in communities that are safe, welcoming, and sustainable. Wellness requires sense of personal responsibility, and there's always a need for

social action. People of faith can join in multicultural efforts to reduce suffering and to overcome injustice.

The health equity movement has developed with significant support in BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color) communities. Historically, the BIPOC communities have had a holistic understanding of health and healing. The religious leaders who are part of the different communities have been among the healers and teachers. White people have much to learn from the BIPOC traditions. BIPOC communities know that pollution and disease are often the products of imperialism.

The *Organizing for Health Equity* statement ends with some comments about accountability. To whom or what, if anything, are people accountable? The question is important in organized religion. It was discussed at the 2023 General Assembly, and the question will be raised again in future years. There will be long debates. While the debates continue, people will shape the environment and social arrangements for future generations.

Good religion stays grounded. It's organic. It bends towards justice, and it's sustainable. Elders in some of the Native American communities have said that 7 generations and more will hold today's people accountable. They're right. If you're involved with health equity and environmental justice ministry, keep this bit of wisdom in mind. Plant the trees that others will need because each summer is hotter than the last, and the sea level keeps rising.

Robert Murphy  
UUJEC board member

Note: Elderberries is the newsletter for retired UU ministers and their partners. Reprinted by permission of the author. Robert Murphy is in fellowship with the UUA. Lyn is a physician's assistant (retired) and a former social worker from West Virginia. They live in a retirement community in Saint Petersburg, Florida.

## COOKED: Survival by ZIP Code

UUJEC is pleased to cosponsor a screening of *COOKED: Survival by ZIP Code* on Wednesday, August 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 EDT (6:30/5:30/4:30 going west across the continent), along with People's Response Network (PRN), Radical Elders, Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community, Soulardarity of Detroit American Descendants of Slavery, and Mississippi Rising. We'll watch the 53-minute film, then have a group discussion, and a panel of experts: Judith Hefland, director/producer, Lonette Sims, People's Response Network, Orrin Williams, Center for Urban Transformation, Shimekia Nichols: Soulardarity, Leo Carney: American Descendants of Slavery, Raoul Contreras, Latino Studies Professor, Indiana University

**COOKED: SURVIVAL BY ZIP CODE**  
A film by director/producer Judith Hefland

"It's 2023. It's a hot year for our planet. It's a hot year for our people. It's a hot year for our communities. It's a hot year for our future. It's a hot year for our survival." — Judith Hefland

**Panelists:**

- Judith Hefland, director/producer
- Lonette Sims, People's Response Network
- Orrin Williams, Center for Urban Transformation
- Shimekia Nichols, Soulardarity
- Leo Carney, American Descendants of Slavery
- Raoul Contreras, Latino Studies Professor, Indiana University

We'll conclude with a group discussion and a panel of experts: Judith Hefland, director/producer, Lonette Sims, People's Response Network, Orrin Williams, Center for Urban Transformation, Shimekia Nichols: Soulardarity, Leo Carney: American Descendants of Slavery, Raoul Contreras, Latino Studies Professor, Indiana University

**JOIN US!**  
Wednesday, August 30, 7:30 p.m. EDT  
(6:30/5:30/4:30 going west)

Hosts: The Institute for Urban Transformation & Social Justice

**Sponsors:**

- People's Response Network (PRN)
- Radical Elders
- Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community
- Soulardarity
- American Descendants of Slavery
- Mississippi Rising