



UUJEC News & Views: Autumn 2025

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

2nd & 4th Thursdays with Peace, Equity, and Climate Task Force

Sept. 11: Demystifying AI-Powered Militarization

AI technologies, the newest stage of digital evolution, are being rapidly integrated into existing systems of extraction and domination, with plans underway to increase the speed and scale of these projects. This comes as human and ecological systems are already being stressed and shattered by existing technologies as well as emboldened projects of authoritarian fascism. We stand at a crucial point at which demystifying AI and its impact is paramount for the fight for democracy and life.



Dr. Nicholas Rabb will explain the nuances of AI technology—what it can and cannot do—and its interaction with existing social systems. Drawing on emerging declarations from U.S. military bodies, as well as recent AI-powered military operations in Palestine and against U.S. immigrants, he will illuminate the consequences of current and future projects where AI is being used to advance human and ecological suffering. But perhaps more importantly, Rabb will make clear how AI is just another tool in service of old and persistent aims – capitalist growth, international control, domestic compliance – and that these sites of struggle should remain our focus even in the coming AI era.

Oct. 9: No MAS—VFP Climate Crisis & Militarism Project



Our own Cindy Piester, also a leading organizer for Veterans for Peace, joins us from the [Wake Up to Climate Crisis & No MAS](#) tour of 3 military air shows and many college campuses, where they are calling for an end to these energy-intensive events that serve as recruiting programs, cause noise and air pollution, reawaken veterans' trauma, and waste tax dollars. No More Airshows (No MAS)

Oct. 23: Book Talk, *Burned by Billionaires*



Recently, it has become increasingly evident that extreme concentrations of wealth and power have profound impacts on our politics, but extreme inequality's influence on our daily lives—and our futures—has been vastly overlooked.

In *Burned by Billionaires*, author and senior scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. Chuck Collins chronicles how the actions of the top 0.01% have severe consequences for the rest of us, especially those of marginalized identities. Collins takes down the "myth of meritocracy," unraveling how the rich rig the game in their favor, resulting in a concentration of wealth in the hands of a tiny (but growing) class of billionaires—leading to both intense income and political polarization.

Nov. 13: Medicare for All or Medicare (Dis)Advantage for All?



Medicare Advantage is not Medicare. In many cases, it isn't an advantage, either. *Medicare Advantage* is the misleading name given to the private, corporatized portion of Medicare: the part that funnels tax dollars through private insurance companies to provide enrollees a private insurance plan. How are those Medicare dollars being spent by these private insurers versus the public, traditional Medicare program? Nurse/advocate Rose Roach will provide detailed facts about how corporate Advantage plans are robbing our Medicare fund, how they limit access to care for enrollees, and how we can work together to improve and expand traditional Medicare to make it a financially viable option for all Medicare recipients.

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Register at <https://tinyurl.com/uujecthursdays>. One registration for all events!

Our calendar of events is at <https://uujec.net/calendar>.

Text of a Letter to the UUA Board, Moderator, and President



This was sent just days before *News & Views* was completed, so there has not yet been time to reply. We are concerned about the economic-justice and democratic governance aspects of the announced plans for GA 2026. We'll keep you informed of any UUA reply—we realize that they have not had much time yet.

30 August 2025

UUA Moderator
UUA Board in lieu of GA Planning Committee
UUA President
All via e-mail & USPS, 30 August 2025

Greetings!

As the UUJEC board discussed plans for the year, I searched uua.org/ga and found the document titled *GA 2026 Proposal v.4.9.2025.pdf*. I was very disturbed by plans for an in-person component, after it was *clearly stated* at GA 2025 in Baltimore that GA2026 would be all-virtual, with a return to an in-person/hybrid gathering in 2027 in California. This breaks the promise, or at least implied promise, that we were given. To some degree, it also disempowers those with fewer funds and less ability to travel. Whereas there are benefits to in-person gatherings, when folks were told to plan for an all-virtual event, changing to in-person is inappropriate. This has not been shared widely, compounding the issue.

This document also included GA being split into 2 disconnected events over 2 weekends— not sequential weekends, but 2 weeks apart, with business separated from workshops, etc., with no clear plan for highlights such as the Ware Lecture, Service of the Living Tradition, and the Synergy Bridging Service.

Later, I found uua.org/ga/travel, which has the time frame collapsed into a single week, from June 14th to 21st, including the traditional Wednesday to Sunday. However, all general sessions are set for Monday and Tuesday, with in-person events Friday through Sunday. The intervening Wednesday and Thursday are devoted to “professional and leadership development”—at the very least these days should be flipped with Monday and Tuesday’s general sessions, so that nonprofessionals have all events within a condensed time frame. Having business separated by 2 full days from the very-vague “in-person programming” with “online participation” raises concern that those who are mostly interested in educational and inspirational programming will have no opportunity to be exposed to any GA business, done earlier in a virtual meeting. This removes democratic participation and transparency; a step backward in terms of our stated principled support of democracy.

Unitarian Universalism has stated that we intend to be inclusive, which I presume includes not only typically marginalized identity groups, but especially those of differing wealth, income levels and physical abilities for whom in person GA adds financial or logistical challenges. This move will more drastically affect those with fewer resources. Moving the 2 sessions closer in time is a good first step, but business and enrichment programs need to be intertwined, so that folks can choose their agenda without logistical restriction of temporally separated events.

The proposed pattern decreases democracy in our association. We request that the original plan for a virtual GA be honored, with no multiday interruption that would serve to exclude many UUs from general business sessions. *Was the GA Planning Committee on board with this? Or is their concern the real reason that we were asked to disband that committee?*

Cordially yours,

Sally Jane Gellert,
UUJEC cochairperson, for our board of trustees

Labor Day: Make Billionaires Pay, Mobilizing a Movement

We at UJEC are far from alone in seeing new indications of authoritarianism from the would-be dictator/monarch/emperor who was elected in 2024. Movement organizers are not sitting back quietly and accepting the attacks on our federal agencies, our regulatory systems, our neighborhoods, and our neighbors themselves, whether students, journalists, or “just” everyday people living as best they can.

As you read this, Labor Day was last week, along with MayDayStrong.org’s *Workers over Billionaires* march/events, and we found an article on *NonProfit Quarterly.org* titled *A Labor Movement That Matters: From May Day to Labor Day and Beyond*. The article includes a quick recap of the history of general strikes in our country, from the “general strike of the slaves” that led to the Emancipation Proclamation

and the North’s victory, to the 1886 strikes for an 8-hour work day, to the strikes of the 1930s that ushered in social-safety-net programs. A quick quote:



[P]olitical scientists who have studied authoritarian regimes highlight the crucial role that both targeted and general strikes have played and could play in defending democracy. Under authoritarian regimes, the standard tactics—voting, protests, legal action—are often much less effective. Movements need to disrupt, and general strikes provide one of the clearest examples of how this can be done.

<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/a-labor-movement-that-matters-from-may-day-to-labor-day-and-beyond/>

Update: Peace, Equity, and Climate Task Force



Peace, equity, and climate are concerns of PE&C, UUs in general, and of the U.S. population. We are addressing them and other related topics with action items in our monthly webinars. We are bringing in interesting, well-informed thought leaders, and our own UUs, as speakers as we creating a free library of resources for use by interested UUs, our congregations/fellowships/societies, and other UU organizations. We have partnered with like-minded organizations, and are taking action in multiple ways as our concerns for peace, equity, and climate catastrophe are all under attack as never before.

PE&C will be addressing critical topics including Artificial Intelligence; Eco-Socialism; Veterans For Peace’s *No More Airshow (No MAS)* tour, which addresses the role of militarism on climate; Gaza; ICE; the Economics of DeGrowth; the Petro-Military-Industrial Complex; the UN’s Climate Conference; Rising Fascism; and more in the coming months. Stay tuned to catch up on the latest at UJEC.net.

Update: Organizing for Health Equity AIW

At GA 2023, UJEC presented this Action of Immediate Witness, which was inspired by health-equity work in Saint Petersburg, Florida, in Boston, and in other cities. The AIW was affirmed by the General Assembly. Health-equity organizing continues to develop because of systemic racism as well as recent attacks on Medicaid, family nutrition programs, vaccination and emergency services programs, and other programs supporting public health and safety. For Friday, September 5th, activists in Saint Petersburg developed a new kind of community health fair. This radical event took place at a community center in a mostly African-American



neighborhood. Music and a healthy meal prepared by community gardeners were included. The emphasis was on mutual aid, environmental justice, and health equity. UJEC volunteer Bob Murphy reports from Florida that UUs in the Tampa area worked with nurses and other medical workers (labor union members) in preparing Labor Day weekend activities. The UJEC involvement with healthcare was mentioned. Some medical workers, primarily from SEIU, expressed interest. Keep watching UJEC social media, our Web site forum, and our Thursday Web seminar series for reports and suggestions for ways your congregation/fellowship/society can put our AIW into action.

Medicare Open Enrollment—Confusing Comparison Shopping

Every year, Medicare's Open Enrollment period runs from October through early December, and new 65-year-olds must make decisions that will affect their healthcare access for decades to come. We have committed to an annual Web seminar with a health professional or advocate to separate the facts from the advertising—and there is a lot of advertising, particularly of what the insurance industry calls "Medicare Advantage"—though it is neither Medicare nor an Advantage. These are private insurance policies masquerading as our public program. They offer a lot of shiny trinkets, but for serious illness,

coverage varies widely. This year, along with our cosponsor, the Radical Elders Healthcare Working Group, we welcome Rose Roach of Minnesota Healthcare for All (see page 1). For more information, visit <https://pnhp.org/> (Physicians for a National Health Program), <https://justcareusa.org> (Just Care USA), and <https://www.healthcare-now.org/> (Healthcare-Now!). Also recommended are the official SHIPs in each state—the State Health Insurance Assistance Programs, which are considered to be unbiased. Join us on November 13, and check our YouTube channel, @uujec, for programs from previous years.

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 the following letters:

- Citizens Trade Campaign letter about the **US-Mexico-Canada Agreement Review**,
- Endorsing the **Make Billionaires Pay March** on September 20th,
- Earthjustice's comments in response to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's Request for Information on a new 5-year **off-shore oil and gas leasing** program,
- The Bethesda Declaration, led by National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Health and Human Services (HHS) staff, calling for NIH and HHS leadership to deliver on promises of **academic freedom and scientific excellence**,
- Supporting the **End Polluter Welfare Act**, which would rein in the corporate power of the polluting fossil fuel industry, lower climate emissions, reduce related harm in frontline communities, and raise billions of dollars in revenue over the next 10 years,
- Supporting the **International Maritime Pollution Accountability Act**, aimed at reducing harmful pollution from the global shipping industry, including local air pollution in port communities,
- Supporting HR 2550, which would reverse the Trump Administration's executive order **banning collective bargaining agreements** at a number of federal agencies,
- **Protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge** from 3-D seismic testing, a prelude to industrializing one of our few wild places,
- Opposing attempts to exempt houses of worship and religious organizations from the Johnson Amendment, which clearly prohibits 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations from endorsing or opposing partisan political candidates for public office,
- **Opposing the crypto-industry-protective CLARITY Act** (H.R. 3633), which would either totally exempt many elements of the industry from any oversight or replace existing regulatory standards with weaker protections for customers and markets,
- Joint interfaith statement marking **80 years since the first use of nuclear weapons**,
- Defending the **National Environmental Protection Act** (NEPA),
- Supporting the **John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act**,
- Asking **Starbucks** management to work together with unionized baristas to **finalize fair union contracts**,
- Asking Congress to **reject funding cuts to the Chemical Safety Board**,
- HCV Coalition Letter asking Congress to pass the **Cure Hepatitis C Act of 2025**,
- Asking the Senate to include in the federal spending bill measures to **block any future attempts to use partisan rescissions**,
- Rejecting the House Homeland Security Committee's **Unfounded Inquiries into 200+ Nonprofit Organizations**.

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