

# Two year Initiative proposals, March 2016

## Proposal A

### Injustice in the Criminal Justice System

Why this topic is timely and relevant:

- A lot has been going on in Champaign County and beyond concerning prevention of the building of a new jail, banning “the box,” reducing phone rates for calls between inmates and their families; studying racial disparities, setting up a Racial Justice Task Force, preparing for physical contact visits between children and their incarcerated parent.
- Much more needs to be done: Abolish “Debtors’ Prisons;” exorbitant bail, fines and fees, which the poor can’t pay, but which a guilty plea is encouraged, to “fix.”

Possible activities:

- RE activities for children aged 5 and up: Discussion of right and wrong, doing bad things and appropriate responses, bullying, how and when to involve adults (teachers, parents.) Seek ideas from “Teaching Tolerance.”
- Education activities for middle-school kids: Discussion of ethical dilemmas implicit in social/political issues around policing, courts, and jail; common ideas of justice, fairness, & right and wrong (where do they come from?).
- Adult activities that individuals could join:
  - Discussion topics: “The New Jim Crow,” “Maori justice,” “Fixing Juvie Justice” (PBS.) Restorative Circles (Mikhail Lyubansky)
  - Education Justice Project, and Ripple Effect (Rebecca Ginsburg)
  - First Followers Reentry Program (Marlon Mitchell & James Kilgore)
  - Books to Prisoners donations. Volunteers to catalogue/distribute
  - C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice. Build Programs, Not Jails. BLM
  - Assist with CourtWatch.
  - Write letters to legislators to restore funding to mental health services and drug treatment services, and to end the “War on Drugs”
  - Groups advocating decriminalizing of pot possession
  - Network with other churches and religious groups doing similar work
  - Once a month, have discussion groups and sermons on topics such as capital punishment and “getting tough on crime” a deterrent?; should punishment for crimes be humane?; are there limits to self-defense? and stand your ground defenses in homicide trials?; should sex offenders be subject to lifelong registration and restrictions on where they can live after serving their sentence?; documenting and reporting on the behavior of judges, juries, attorneys, and spectators; and how are our provisions for court supervision, public service, probation, parole, amnesty & clemency working?
  - Refugee Center (ECIRMAC)
  - Amnesty International/ Prisoners & People at Risk

## Proposal B

### **Food and Water Security: Environmental Social Justice and Fundamental Human Rights For Seven Billion People**

(UU Areas: Environmental Stewardship, Food Security, Family Health, Food Assistance/Sustainable Agriculture, Terraculture, Youth Development, World Peace, Society) All life is interconnected. "Globally, nearly 870 million people, or one in eight, suffered from chronic undernourishment in 2010-2012. (Organization/UNFAO) 16 million live in developed countries..." "Half of humanity lives in cities, but 70% of the water we use is for commercial agriculture."(Foley) Growing food, using local food resources, conserving water will impact world peace and the survival of humanity. UUA offers Environmental Justice Programs: Commit2Respond, Green Sanctuary Program, Ethical Eating, Socially-Responsible Investment.) Worship, Learn, and Live Your Faith: Worship materials for environmental engagement:

- Demonstrating Our Values through Eating (DOVE): a free food education curriculum written for Unitarian Universalists. The six-week course incorporates video, discussion, cooking sessions, and themes of health, justice, compassion and sustainability.
- "Our Place in the Web of Life": introductory curriculum designed by the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth (UUMFE).
- Climate Change Religious Education Curriculum: This curriculum has been developed by the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office (UU-UNO) "Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change" Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Statement of Conscience
- UU Circle Suppers can use local and organic food sources and themes of seasonality, food miles, and plant growth. Classes at Red Herring. Create edible gardens at UUA Green Street and share produce with community or Red Herring Vegan Restaurant.
- Ted Talks Come to the Table.

**Partnership:** Effective justice ministry depends on partnership, since climate change and environmental destruction touches everyone. UU partners for environmental justice work, beyond the Unitarian Universalist Association, include UU state advocacy networks, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the UU College of Social Justice, UU Ministry for Earth, and the UU United Nations Office Climate Change Task Force. Interfaith partnerships; GreenFaith and Interfaith Power and Light. Also, Oxfam, **Jane Goodall Roots and Shoots affiliate "Roots and Shoots For Peace"** National Arbor Day, Growing Food and Justice Conference, Newman Shares Food Pantry, Red Herring Vegan Restaurant, ( collaborate with Channing-Murray programming) Freiburg Memorial Food Surplus Program, Daily Bread Soup Kitchen, Randolph Street Community Garden, Prosperity Gardens, Sola Gratia Farms Small Farms Educator, ACES and UIUC Extension, Master Gardeners, American Community Gardening Association, Community Garden Toolkit, Climate Reality Project.

**Social Justice programming and film series:** TED Talks, "The Other Inconvenient Truth." The Garden by Black Valley Films, Flow: How Did a Handful of Corporations Steal Our Water?, Food, Inc., Tapped, The Future of Food, Vanishing of the Bees, Cowmania, The Island President, The Story of Stuff, Bag It, Trashed, The World According to Monsanto, The Inconvenient Truth, TED Talks: Al Gore: Averting the Climate Crisis, New Thinking On The Climate Crisis(Al Gore)

Submitted By Carolyn Knox

Resources: UUA website; UIUC University Extension; *The Public Health Effects of Food Deserts: Workshop Summary*; USDA Urban Agriculture Resource Page

---

## Proposal C

### In Solidarity with Black Lives Matter: Examining White Privilege and Dismantling White Supremacy

- 1. African Americans make up approximately 14% of the population of Champaign County yet make up on average 70% of the jail population
- 2. Black students in Champaign Unit 4 District schools and Urbana District 116 schools make up 75% and 66% of all suspensions; and 78% and 86% of expulsions respectively.
- 3. 38% of Black people in Champaign County live below the poverty line
- 4. Our national community sees similar or even worse statistics than these concerning systemic racism against African Americans
- 5. Our Unitarian Universalist Association has declared that Black Lives Matter and has urged local congregations to take up this mission of support and solidarity

I propose we become a congregation in the larger UU community dedicated to taking this movement seriously by allowing ourselves to learn and grow together to support an inclusive and Blackled social justice movement, as well as challenge institutions of white supremacy.

**ACTIVITIES:** Could include the following, though I stress the need to communicate with interested congregational members, including youth, on what they would like to include in this list:

- Installing and dedicating a "Black Lives Matter" or "Standing with Black Lives Matter" banner on Green St. side on church. (All ages could participate in this dedication ceremony.)
- Helping collect food, clothing, hygiene products for Black and participating organizations trying to distribute these to low income families/individuals. Could also learn about Black "survival programs" from civil rights history during these initiatives. (All ages)
- Study Circle: *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander including the Study Guide and Call to Action Addition (14 years and older); a program for younger children on practices of Restorative Justice could be adopted as a parallel project.

- Adopting one of the selfadministered UUA suggested curricula addressing white supremacy for adults, such as “Examining Whiteness: An AntiRacism Curriculum” (<http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/curricula/whiteness>) and/or initiating our own “Mosaic Project Report” to better support youth and young adults of color in our congregation (<http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/mosaic>)
- Organizing a direct action committee to education and support our UU congregation to take organized and safe steps to show up for actions organized by local Black social justice activists. (Young adult to adult thought a protest activity could certainly be created for youth.)
- Develop a partnership and develop a cooperative project as well as pulpit exchange with local Black churches (all ages).
- Develop a relationship with groups that have a racial justice focus such as Education Justice Project, Black Lives Matter ChampaignUrbana, Cradle to Career, and more.
- Encourage members to attend the White Privilege Conference and report back ([www.whiteprivilegeconference.com](http://www.whiteprivilegeconference.com)) Data sources: <https://programsnotjails.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/overviewofracialdisparityinchampaigncounty.pdf> More on UUA initiatives for Black Lives Matter: <http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism>

Submitted by Kristina Khan. Other individuals who helped and are interested in working on this proposal include Kathleen Robbins and Millie Davis.