

## **Annual Report from the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation (UUWF)**

Founded in 1963 through consolidation of Unitarian and Universalist women's organizations, the UU Women's Federation has evolved in an education, advocacy, and funding organization with a vital mission: To advance justice for women and girls and promote their spiritual growth. UUWF is one of two associate member organizations of the UUA, along with the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC).

The UUWF "affirms the inherent value of every woman, defined inclusively as one who identifies as a woman, trans\* woman, or genderqueer woman."

- We affirm the importance of women's voices in our religious movement;
- We pledge action against the religious roots of sexism;
- We pledge to support the diversity of religious feminisms;
- We work to raise consciousness of the linked nature of oppressions;
- We seek justice for all women in the struggle to transform institutions of oppression.

Now, more than ever, this mission is imperative. We have not conquered sexism in our society or our denomination, and our work reflects our resistance to injustice, as well as the celebrations as we collectively take big and small moves forward.

### **UUWF Leadership**

Our board of directors is comprised of passionate volunteers committed to gender justice and intersectionality. 2016-2017 board members include:

- Justice Waidner Smith, President and Chief Executive Officer
- Rev. Beth Dana, Vice President of Recruitment and Outreach
- Gretchen Ohmann, Vice President of Communications and Fundraising
- Claire Sexton, Vice President of Funding Programs
- Sue Boone, Treasurer/Clerk

Our other leadership team members are:

- Rev. Marti Keller, Affiliated Minister
- Rev. Joyce Palmer, Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley Scholarship Chair
- Dana Robb, Administrator

At the 2017 General Assembly, we welcomed our newest board member Marissa Gutierrez-Vicario. Currently living in Brooklyn, Marissa is the founder of Art and Resistance through Education, or ARTE, a nonprofit that engages young people to organize for human rights via art. She has been involved in UU justice work since she was 15. We are excited to have her joining our team.

## **Women and Religion Resolution 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

This is a big year for women in Unitarian Universalism. Forty years ago, at General Assembly, the Women & Religion Resolution was passed, which called on the UUA “to examine the religious roots of sexism and to address justice for women.” As we mark this anniversary, we acknowledge the great progress that has been made, and re-commit ourselves to continued work.

In honor of this anniversary, we are excited to announce that the UUWF and UU Women And Religion are exploring uniting in a more formal relationship to strengthen our mutual quest toward gender equity and a Unitarian Universalism which affirms and promotes diverse feminisms.

Also in honor of this anniversary, we have created a new sermon award: “Justice for Women and Girls.” The first award is going to UU minister Erin J. Walter for her sermon “From Eve to Hillary.” In partnership with the GA planning committee, we sponsored a program at GA in which Ms. Walter shared her sermon, exploring the silencing of women’s voices from Eve to Hillary, to us. She was joined by two respondents, Rev. Theresa Ines Soto and Chris Crass, who engaged in a lively conversation about actions each of us can take to heal from sexism and misogyny, and create justice for women and girls.

## **Financial Support for Women Religious Professionals**

We also are proud to have recently awarded a Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley Scholarship designed to provide direct financial support to aspirants or candidates to the UU ministry, or candidates in the UUA’s religious education or music leadership programs, who identify as women of color, Latina, or Hispanic.

Our awardee, Aisha Ansano, has shared how her multi-racial, multi-national, and, multi-ethnic identity helps her to see herself as both a bridge builder and a leader within Unitarian Universalism. We are so pleased to support Aisha on her path to ministry.

## **Addressing Racism**

In response to concerns raised about exclusion in hiring at the UUA, the UUWF issued a statement that articulates our commitment to being an active part of the work to address racism with UUism. In it, we affirm:

“...all white Unitarian Universalists must know that we have benefited from first the outright subjugation of people of color, and now the less obvious (but no less painful) pushing away, passing over because ‘you’ don’t ‘fit’ with the team. Therefore, as the UUWF is committed to justice for women and girls and is an organization that recognizes that white supremacy and patriarchy are deeply intertwined, we support the call to deepen our understanding and hold up a mirror to ourselves and our institutions. We further commit to being an active part of the solution as Unitarian Universalism

continues the journey of becoming a fully inclusive and equitable faith community. This is a moral imperative.”

## **UUA Presidency**

We are very pleased to have had three incredibly talented women run to serve as what would be the first female President of the UUA. Another way we sought to support our mission was to ensure gender justice was part of the presidential campaign. As in past elections, the UUWF interviewed the candidates for UUA President.

To read the individual responses to our questions about gender equity and justice, both within the UUA and society, please visit our website.

## **Women’s March**

The UUWF also was very proud to be an early partner organization for the Women’s March in Washington DC. On January 21, 2017, UUs all over the country and world marched for women.

The UUWF pledged support and financial resources to this march because we believe in their mission – that women’s rights are human rights; human rights are women’s rights. Women have intersecting identities and are impacted by a multitude of social justice issues, therefore no woman is free until all people are free.

We also have signed the Women’s March Pledge of Liberation, calling for:

- the end to sexual violence, state violence and police violence,
- securing reproductive rights, LGBTQA rights, worker’s rights, disability rights, and immigrant rights,
- Working for environmental and economic justice, and ending war.

## **Activism**

On behalf of intersectional, gender justice, we persist and resist.

We have continued our expanding commitment to active partnerships with groups working on the full range of gender issues. Partner organizations include: Sistersong, National Employment Law Project, and The National Partnership for Women and Families, Planned Parenthood, Catholics for Choice, National Council of Jewish Women and many others. Beyond our focus on reproductive choice and rights, we have educated about and advocated for economic justice: including raising the minimum wage, securing paid family leave, protecting compensatory time, and requiring equal pay disclosures for federal jobs.

In additional advocacy, specifically in response to a call for faith organizations to respond to the GOP health care bill that would repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, we crafted a public response. This legislation, which would harm millions of

Americans, would be especially disastrous for women, endangering not only basic health care services, but especially access to reproductive health care.

Our statement read, “As Unitarian Universalists committed to gender equity, we believe in justice, dignity, and compassion for all, and that universal access to affordable and comprehensive healthcare is a moral imperative.”

### **Black Lives Matter**

Another partnership of which we are excited to have been a part was between Standing on the Side of Love (SSL) and the UUWF, when we joined together to provide financial support for women-identified Black Lives Matter leaders who are also caregivers. SSL staff were a part of strategy conversations with leaders of BLM who raised how family care costs are creating a burden for women to stay in the movement. UUWF provided \$10,000 to fund 10 women with \$1000 each to help offset dependent care.

### **Conclusion**

These are just a few of the numerous recent highlights of our work. The UUWF seeks to amplify the voices of women in the Unitarian Universalist movement and the voices of UU women in our country. We are committed to engaging UUs in the work for gender justice. For more information, please like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and visit our website: [www.uuwf.org](http://www.uuwf.org).