



Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation News – March 2020



UUWF President
Claire Sexton

A Note from Claire Sexton, UUWF President

This fall and winter, the UUWF has been engaged in a time of renewal. We've embarked on a strategic planning process, which includes the merging of the UUWF and UU Women & Religion.

Working with Rev. Diane Johnson's Mmapetu Management Consulting, our transitional board has done some assessments and created five working groups whose members are researching decision-making models outside of the patriarchal norm, the best ways to listen to ALL of the people we serve and hope to serve, and more. Of course all of these things are deeply connected, and each of the members of our leadership team are committed to multiple groups. The five working groups are:

- **Legal & Accounting**
- **Listening:** A big question is "What more will it take for us to be a formidable organization of UU Women, doing good for all women, here in the U.S.?"
- Examination of the **infrastructure** of board, committee, and staff possibilities, looking into many different models of leadership and decision-making as we combine two organizations with their own styles.
- The **Mission, Vision, and Values** of a merged organization
- **Assets and Resources**, which is a combination of the concrete assets, like bank balances and inventory of books and curricula; and less easily defined, like what other assets do we have as a group and what people and groups can we look to as a resource for this work in the near, medium, and long term?

All of this brings us back to the Listening Group and the connections we hope to gain and to foster with the upcoming conversations. You can learn more about that in the next article below.

This new decade brings lots of promise and still much political uncertainty. I am truly looking forward to seeing what our organization will soon become, as well as how our government and nation will evolve.

You Are An Important Part of the Conversation

We want to know what you think, what you feel, and who you are! As a key part of our strategic planning process and our ongoing commitment to serve and represent you, the UUWF transitional board is devoting considerable effort to listen to UU women across the country. We have crafted three ways of doing this and all are available on [our website](#).

One: [Sign up now](#) for a 30-45 minute conversation with one of our fabulous Listening Workgroup members. We will contact you by phone or Zoom, tell you a bit about ourselves, and ask you some questions about your experience and hopes for organizing with UU women. Our goal is not simply to get information from you... we are also eager to get to know you and your story, and find ways to strengthen your relationship with other UU women. If we don't know you already, we hope to have a budding friendship by the end of the call. We will also ask you to follow up by reaching out to several other UU women you know, to keep the conversation going.

Two: We've created a [Listening Circle Guide](#) so that you can hold conversations with other women. You can use it in your women's group, in a scheduled gathering at your congregation, or simply sitting down with another UU woman with a cup of tea. The guide covers all the same topics as the one-on-one conversation, and includes a link to a survey so that you can share everything you learn with us. We will be using a similar format at GA 2020 at various workshops and events.

Three: You can simply [fill out this survey](#). If a conversation with us or someone in your congregation is not an option, please make yourself a snack and sit down with this link. It should only take about 5 minutes.

We are listening! Let us know who you are and how we can connect with you.

Sermon Award Accepting Submissions

"**What They Dreamed Be Ours To Do**" is the theme of this year's UUWF sermon award. We are rooted in our history, aware of its successes and limitations, and this history inspires us to take action today. What can we learn from the history of women's suffrage movements, and what role can our Unitarian Universalist faith have in gender and racial justice today?

UU religious professionals and laypeople of all identities and genders are eligible; the deadline is March 20th. [Full details are available on our website](#).

In Memoriam
Phyllis Rickter



Former UUWF President Phyllis Rickter passed away in October. Other women who've also led the UUWF shared their memories of her.

Linda Lu Burciaga: As a former UUWF president, I know that my work was made so much easier due to being mentored by a remarkable woman, our dear Phyllis. Now Phyllis was not your "mushy" type. You always knew where she stood, no baloney, no skirting around the issue. But I so respected that quality of hers. I also had the honor of working with Phyllis and her husband, Don, for years on the Arlington, MA Civil Rights Committee, a justice issue that meant so much to both of them. Phyllis will be dearly missed but her work on behalf of women will be carried on by others who will do so in her honor.

Arlene Johnson: Phyllis Rickter was an amazing woman who was a servant leader to several organizations throughout her life and mentored so many women, including me, when we served together on the UUWF board. A talented writer, she always had an inner strength and unflappable ability to analyze any situation in search of the truth. Phyllis was a feminist to her core who frequently reminded us about the wisdom of our feminist foremothers and the paths they had taken to ensure our future. Phyllis carved out a path for all of us. Rest In Peace, dear one.

Rev. Marti Keller: Phyllis was a kind, perceptive, fierce and faithful legend in the UUWF family, and was personally so supportive of me during my presidency.

Nancy Warren Van Dyke: Phyllis was a constant, a mentor, a friend, an incomparable listener and supporter. She is so missed. We worked very closely in my years with UUWF. Feminism, UUism, UUWF, she touched so many lives, hearts and issues! I have a particular memory of my GA debut on the stage, presenting my first report from the revamped UUWF, of which Phyllis was so much a part. She was there with me, as were significant others, and – serendipity – I was introduced by Paul Rickter! Loving thoughts to all and may you treasure your memories as I do mine!

Recently Awarded Grants

Mariela Perez-Simons is the newest recipient of the **M. Bowens-Wheatley Scholarship**, which was established in 2009 in recognition of the work of Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley – a well-loved minister and mentor who worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the need for more interracial and intercultural congregations in our UU movement.

Mariela holds a master's degree in Writing and Literature from Bennington College, completed her Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, and is in her final year of Divinity School at Meadville Lombard Theological School.

Born and raised in Cuba, Mariela migrated to the U.S. with her family in 1995; they were asylum-seekers/political refugees. She currently lives in Tulsa, OK, where she serves as the ministerial intern at All Souls Unitarian.

Mariela is a multi-passionate individual who brings to ministry her love of intercultural work, social justice, art, nature, dancing, and community-building. Her life and her ministry are about balancing the existential agonies (suffering, oppression) with the existential ecstasies (awe, wonder, reverence, joy) of the human experience, as a way to build resilient lives and communities.



Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley Scholarship winner **Mariela Perez-Simons**

In our last funding cycle of 2019, we had four proposals for **Margaret Fuller Grants**, totaling requests for \$18,025. We were able to fund three of the programs, and are excited that so many folks are coming up with great projects. The three projects we are funding are:

- ***RISE: Healthy for Life***, a peer educator program for high school students in the Knoxville area, will increase the skills of peer educators to help them communicate about sexuality topics. This program will be offered with collaboration from the Holston Valley Unitarian Universalist Church.
- ***Curriculum development for congregational prison visitation ministry*** will be a workshop format designed to assist congregations to develop and maintain visitation ministries to women incarcerated at local facilities. The curriculum will be written by Cathy Marston, presented at the 2020 UUA General Assembly, and supported through the First UU Church in San Antonio.
- ***Publication and printing of the new curriculum, "The Circle Model of Shared Leadership"*** – a collaborative model of decision-making often used in grassroots women's and social justice groups, facilitating community and participation.

If you or your congregation would like to request funding for a program that promotes equity for women, [please send a letter of inquiry to the UUWF](#). The deadline for our current funding cycle is June 1st.

Clara Barton Sisterhood Welcomes New Members



The Clara Barton Sisterhood welcomes our newest inductees:

- (top left) **Mary Dugan** and **Mary Geissman** (*Women's Alliance of All Souls New York City*)
- (middle left) **Mary Donald** (Branch Alliance of Harvard UU Church, MA)
- (lower left) **Joan Moore** (First UU Church of Nashville)

(not pictured)

- **Joyce Henricks** (UU Fellowship of Central Michigan)
- **Sydelle Lopez** (UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, NY)
- **Sally Sabo** (UU Women's Fellowship of Santa Fe)

The Clara Barton Sisterhood was created in 1979 as a way for local women's groups, congregations, and individuals to honor women aged 80 and over for their contributions to their congregations and communities. [Learn more here.](#)

Rise Up Addresses Cultural Appropriation

By Elizabeth Fisher

Cultural appropriation issues have always been a key concern addressed in the *Rise Up and Call Her Name* curriculum. Cultural sensitivity notes, which address specific issues that may arise around the material in the session, are included. The introduction contains perspectives on cultural appreciation verses appropriation.

Currently, on the *Rise Up* website, there is a free booklet that contains all the cultural sensitivity notes and excerpts about what is in this course. Click on [this link](#) to get to the right page to download this free booklet. Pages 28-37 present the issues and cultural sensitivity notes. The rest of the booklet reviews the content overall, which might be helpful as well.

Another section on the website which might be useful is [Rise Up Key Perspectives](#). Part II is particularly relevant to this concern. It covers some of the same points but also has some different ones. The website has lots of related material that has been developed since the curriculum was first produced.

By experiencing cross-cultural symbols and practices, and sharing cultural/historical information and stories, we are developing appreciation for these diverse cultures and discovering woman-honoring aspects of these. If they wish, leaders of groups and participants can add material that is specific to their locations. All of this helps participants to develop authentic understanding and relationships across traditional cultural divides and to support one another in this effort. The curriculum also offers suggestions about how to accomplish in-person contacts with diverse groups in the participants' communities.



UUW&R Website Features Interactive Map of UU Women's Gatherings

Created by the UU Women & Religion, this new map includes links for more information about each featured event. [See it here](#) in action! Upcoming programs include:

Rivers of Change, Prophecy and Possibilities

Biennial Conference of The Association for the Study of Women and Mythology
 March 13-14, 2020 at Tamaya Resort, Santa Ana Pueblo (north of Albuquerque NM)
[Click here for more info](#)

UUWomenspirit at The Mountain, NC

April 22-26
 Journey to the Soul of Ancient Egypt
[Click here for more info](#)

Eliot Women's Weekend

Near St. Louis MO
 May 15-17, 2020
 Eliot Chapel sponsors a time to retreat, relax, and find community among other women
[Click here for more info](#)

Other News & Notes

Along with over 100 other organizations, the UUWF signed on to a [community letter](#) calling on the House Foreign Affairs Committee to take action on the Global Health, Empowerment, and Rights (HER) Act (H.R. 1055/S. 368) to **end the global gag rule**.

We are seeking a **volunteer to record and/or stream the GA programming**. Must have their own equipment and be familiar with live streaming. Contact the [UUWF Administrator](#) for more information.

Lois Deimel Whealey was awarded the [Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award](#), for social justice contributions over a lifetime.

East Shore Unitarian Church's Women's Perspective, in Seattle, is would like to **connect with other congregational women's groups**. [Contact Marcia Joslyn Sill](#).

2020 Women's March (*photo below*): UUWF Board member Betty McCollum said, "Here is our group, three of whom are UUs, as we marched in cold and snowy weather. I was on my feet for 3.5 hours, but we were all glad to have been part of it."



Linda Rousseau (All Souls NYC), **Jeri Cohn**, **Betty McCollum** (All Souls NYC), and **Margaret Wagner** (Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, NJ)

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Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation

advancing justice for women and girls and promoting their spiritual growth

www.uuwf.org

Contact us: uuwf@uuwf.org



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