



***Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation***

**News –  
April 2021**

**Reflection from  
Rev. Terry  
Cummings**



During the last couple of years I have enjoyed serving on the governing body of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Association. I joined the Board in 2019, as UUWF began a journey of re-imagining its place and role in the world.

That journey has had some stops and starts, has involved some lively discussions, and has helped to shape the organization and its leadership for years to come. I am excited about the direction in which UUWF is heading. Although it is still very much a work in progress, the signs are encouraging that UUWF will soon forge a new path in working for justice at the intersection of race, gender and class oppression.

I believe in the gifts of Unitarian Universalism, and that UUWF will be a leader in the efforts by women and woman-identified Unitarian Universalists to work for justice for everyone in our world.

When I discovered Unitarian Universalism thirteen years ago, I found myself identifying more with the unitarian side of our denomination than the universalists. Over the years, however, I have moved steadily towards universalism as the bedrock of

Rev. Terry Cummings is a UUWF Board member and currently serves the UU Congregation of York, PA as its minister.

justice and salvation in this life, regardless of whether there is a life to come.

Working for justice in the 21st century requires all of us to confront the centuries-old oppression of black and brown people, as well as the harmful class distinctions that create unfairness for millions of people, and the patriarchy that has created a society where most women of all classes and races lead lives a tier below the lives of their male counterparts. Since I decided to follow a call to ministry in 2012, I have increasingly had to grapple with the implications of my being at the center of white privilege, gender privilege, and class privilege, what I refer to as the *privilege trifecta*.

Before my gender transition in 2008, I was a successful lawyer working in New York City, having all of the trappings of whiteness, maleness, and class privilege. It is impossible to shed these things overnight, and I question whether one can ever shed them fully. It has taken years of reflection during seminary, CPE, and active ministry to begin even to comprehend the extent of the impact of these privileges on my life and livelihood, much less do something about them. My gender transition is old news; my former life in maleness has all but disappeared from my mind. Yet fifty plus years of male socialization still lingers in the way I move in the world. While I have experienced patriarchy and misogyny since I transitioned, and even occasional instances of transphobia and trans-misogyny, those experiences do not come close to the reality that most women experience from their childhood beginnings.

The events of 2020 involving police killings of innocent black people, the resurgence of patriarchy, and the ongoing assaults on our democracy have left me feeling angry and sometimes hopeless. For me, the challenges we all face nowadays include finding ways to use my privilege to oppose the racist and oppressive forces that are so harmful, so destructive, of just about everything I value.

Knowing that I will, in all likelihood, never be entirely free of these influences, it is good to know that through my ministry and my involvement with organizations like UUWF, UUJusticePa, and UUtheVote, I can use them for the betterment of everyone. This too, for me, is an ongoing work-

in-progress, but in the words of *Emma's Revolution*, "I'm gonna keep on moving forward, never going back."

May it be so.

---

## Abortion is Healthcare Everywhere Act

The UUWF has proudly signed on to support the [Abortion is Healthcare Everywhere Act](#). Originally introduced in summer 2020 and reintroduced to the new congress on International Women's Day 2021, the bill would repeal the racist, over-controlling Helms Amendment.

As you may know, the Helms Amendment (to the 1973 Foreign Assistance Act) prohibits international assistance funds from being used "for the performance of abortion as a method of family planning" and has been implemented as a complete ban on the use of U.S. assistance funds for abortion care. The accompanying policy, known as the Global Gag Rule, was rescinded by the Biden administration in January. Because it could be reapplied by a future administration, there is a parallel piece of legislation to ensure that other presidents cannot re-introduce the Global Health, Empowerment and Rights (HER) Act.

We encourage you to get in touch with your representative to voice your support too! For more information, here is a [summary from the Guttmacher Institute](#).

---

## UUWF Welcomes an Interim Executive Director

It's exciting to be joining UUWF during these intense and turbulent times—times when we all need more connection, more justice, more collective vision for the future.

I am what I would describe as an "underperforming" UU in that, with two kids and a demanding career, I have not been able to throw myself into congregational work as much as I'd like. I came to the UU faith having been raised Catholic, and it is still a novel joy to me to have a faith theology, practice, and community that aligns with my world view.

I've been working at the intersection of politics, social justice, and philanthropy for over 20 years; that's one of the reasons UUWF is such a great fit. I got my commitment to community



from my mother, who is a nurse and lifelong volunteer; my love of a good meal and robust political debate from my father, whose first run for office was when I was in grade school; my comfort with people from all walks of life from working as a bartender in Las Vegas; and my sense of humor from living on this wacky, broken, hilarious, heartbreaking, and inspiring planet.

Ann Wiesner is the new interim Executive Director for UUWF

The UUWF Board and I are diving deep into questions of purpose, intersectionality, identity, and vision, and we are excited to share what we're finding. Stay tuned in the coming months for more on the questions we're asking ourselves and the choices we're making. Meantime, stay healthy, safe, and masked.

---

## UUWF Story Sought

*By Denise Tracy*

When I became Unitarian Universalist in 1972, I attended UUMA, UUWF, District, and GA meetings. Often, off to the side were several older women who were lay leaders and/or ministers from an earlier time or era. I never spoke to them. It was not until they were no longer present that I realized the opportunity I had missed – the first person stories of women who changed our denomination.

Recently, I realized this is happening again. Before 1970, the UUA was a white male denomination. As feminism became familiar, its tenets changed Unitarian Universalism. I am collecting stories from women who were changed by living out our feminism in the UUA. I do not want to lose this perspective.

What I am missing in my collection is the voice of the UUWF. What role did the UUWF play in the transformation of the UUA into a denomination that accepted feminist beliefs? If you are interested in writing this piece, [please contact me](#). The story can be told from the first person – how you entered UU-ism and how you became active in the UUWF. I am looking for 2,500-3,000 words.

---

## Articles of Interest

The COVID-19 lockdown showed **how the economy exploits women**. Silvia Federici already knew. She has been warning for decades of what happens when we undervalue domestic labor. [See the full article](#) on *The New York Times Magazine* website.

**What's in a surname?** A new biography of the painter Isabel Rawsthorne highlights how talented women have often missed out on the recognition they deserved. [See the full article](#) on *The Guardian* website.

---

## Clara Barton Sisterhood Welcomes New Members



The Clara Barton Sisterhood welcomes our newest inductees (pictured from the top):

- **Phyllis Stenerson** (*Association of Universalist Women, Minneapolis, MN*)
- **Janet Merrill** (*Association of Universalist Women, Minneapolis, MN*)
- **Ellen Livingston** (*Monte Vista UU Congregation, Claremont, CA*)

As well as not pictured:



- **Pat Hadley** (*Women's Alliance of the First Church Unitarian, Littleton, MA*)
- **Anne C. Olson** (*Decatur, GA*)
- **Mary Ann Van Osdol** (*The Women's Alliance of the Unitarian Church of All Souls, New York, NY*)
- **Barbara Whitcomb** (*Women's Alliance of the First Church Unitarian, Littleton, MA*)
- **Joyce Williams** (*Women's Alliance of the First Church Unitarian, Littleton, MA*)

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.](#)



---

Donate to UUWF

**Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation**

*advancing justice for women and girls and promoting their spiritual growth*

[www.uuwf.org](http://www.uuwf.org)

Contact us: [uuwf@uuwf.org](mailto:uuwf@uuwf.org)



[Unsubscribe](#)