



## General Assembly in Louisville Provides Ample Opportunity for Environmental Justice Engagement

Ellen McClaran, UU Ministry for Earth Board Member

This year's General Assembly (GA) offers an abundance of workshops and activities related to environmental justice that may be of interest to UUMFE members and supporters. This is particularly true for congregations looking for EJ projects for their journey towards Green Sanctuary certification.

A highlight is sure to be Thursday evening's worship and public witness event – **Where is Our Energy?**

**Witness for Earth, Our Communities, and Our Future** – featuring farmer/

philosopher Wendell Berry and Tim DeChristopher of *Bidder 70* fame.

UUMFE's Annual Meeting follows immediately and features a screening of *Bidder 70*, followed by a guest appearance from Tim (see page 3).

If you are attending GA, refer to your program for the location of the workshops described below and be sure to stop by our booth to say "hi." For those unable to attend, check the UUA website during GA for live streaming of some events and later this summer for comprehensive coverage and access to programs.

The Thursday, June 20, programming starts off with UUMFE's first workshop, **Building a Young Adult Environmental Justice Network**, at 10:45 a.m. Join UUMFE's YA consultant, Starr King seminarian Jennifer Nordstrom, and UU young adults organizing for climate justice to explore how UU values call us

to ecological justice work. Hear stories and explore our intergenerational covenant.

At 1:45 p.m., UUMFE presents another workshop, **Just and Sustainable Appalachian Community Transitions**, led by board member Vince Pawlowski. Three Appalachian communities demonstrate their successful transitions to a post-coal era, and describe what still needs to be done.

The UUA Committee on Socially Responsible Investing hosts **The Climate Challenge to Faithful Investing** at 3:30 p.m. UUMFE board member Cindy Davidson joins committee members as they respond to issues raised by the climate activist group 350.org's campaign for institutional divestment of fossil fuel stocks.

The **Public Witness for Environmental Justice**, mentioned earlier, begins at 5:15 p.m. for worship. Look for the UUMFE banner when we gather in the

park, then return to the Marriott Hotel to watch **Bidder 70** at 7:45 p.m.

Conceived by board member Rev. Frances Sink, UUMFE's final workshop – **A Theology of Eco-Justice: Appalachia and Beyond** – is Saturday at 1:45 p.m. Regional activists and faculty from the UU theology schools explore an emerging eco-justice theological and ethical framework to ground and guide our engagement. *cont'd on page 3*



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### ABOUT UUMFE

Unitarian Universalist  
Ministry for Earth is a non-  
profit organization whose  
supporters envision a world  
in which reverence, grati-  
tude, and care for the living  
Earth is central to the lives  
of all people. As a 501(c)3  
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## From the Board

### The Places We Name

Belle Glade or ‘Belle of the Everglades’ is the place I was born. The name speaks to the rich muck soil and the abundant water. Belle Glade is in the headwaters area for the Everglades, the Northern Everglades as it is now called. This is a small farming town on the southeastern tip of Lake Okeechobee. ‘Okeechobee’ is the Seminole word for ‘big water;’ when you stand on the shore of the lake, you see water to the horizon.

The names connect: to what the residents of the town see now, what our ancestors saw, and how the place relates to the entire southern portion of the state of Florida. The idea of connection to time and place is certainly not a novel one for us, but taking a few moments to reflect on the way our choice of names speaks to that network is a helpful model for the way we engage with one another in our communities. Where and who have we come from? Where are we now? And, then the tough one: Where do we want to go?

### Celebrating People in Our Places

The celebration of our Eco-heroes in our congregations gives us an opportunity to thank those who are part of the place we cherish and who have become an admired part of our history. Many congregations choose to recognize their heroes as part of their Earth Day celebration, but we encourage you to consider other times in the year when you might also extend the honor to your special contributors.

UUMFE is offering the film Bidder 70 to congregations to help celebrate the actions of Tim DeChristopher and the inspiration and support of the members of the First Unitarian Church of Salt Lake City for climate justice. They have formed a network – dare I say a movement – for caring for Earth.

### Learning About our Places

Perhaps your congregation is just beginning to build the connections to the place and time where you are located. If you are or would like to explore who your neighbors are and what their story might be, UU Ministry for Earth has some resources to help that search. For example:

- For young adults in the congregation, the UU Young Adults for Climate Justice network is forming nationally, and the focus is on local/regional training and actions.
- For multi-generational organizing, the curriculum Our Web of Life will help you ground your learning in UU values and document the network of communities – people and places – around your congregations.
- In the “Take Action” section of the UUMFE website, Earth Day materials are available year-round for your programming and inspiration. The topic of sustainable communities was published this year; previous topics include water, food, and immigration.

We celebrate our time and connection with you through UU Ministry for Earth. Please do let us know about your Heroes, your networks, and your needs. It is only in connection that we can support and inspire each other to continue building this movement that is caring for Earth.

– Irene Keim, Chair, UU Ministry for Earth Board ♦

# News From UU Ministry For Earth

## Environmental Justice at GA, *cont'd*

Many more workshops focus on the environment and/or ecological justice. Here are a few – see the GA program for details.

*From the Kentucky/West Virginia Ministers Coalition:*

- Connecting Extraction Industries to Rural and Urban Devastation
- Climate Change: Civil Rights for All Ages
- Our Covenant with Gaia: Networking with UUs
- Our Covenant with Gaia: Networking with Partners

*From the President's Advisory Committee on Ethical Eating (PACE):*

- Justice and Jazz: Moving to Commitment as Improvisation
- Cheap Eats. Just Eats.

*From Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC):*

- Choose Compassionate Consumption: Personal Choice to Collective Action ♦

## Bidder 70 at GA and Beyond

*Nancy King Smith, UUMFE Board*



Join UUMFE for its very brief annual meeting on Thursday, June 20, at 7:45 p.m., Marriott Hotel Ballroom 9/10, followed by a screening of the inspiring film *Bidder 70*.

The film chronicles the story of Tim DeChristopher, young adult UU from Salt Lake, who acted upon the courage of his convictions by derailing a widely protested federal oil and gas land sale, bidding millions of dollars to save thousands of pristine acres surrounding U.S. National Parks – with no intention of paying. He has just been released from two years in prison and, after a summer of kayaking and canoeing, will enter Harvard Divinity School on a full scholarship. Tim will be available after the film (around 9:30 p.m.) to answer all your questions.

To date, over thirty congregations have taken advantage of UUMFE's licensing agreement with the filmmakers, Gage and Gage Productions, to screen the film in their communities at a greatly reduced licensing fee – \$75 for congregations under 150 members and \$100 for those over 150. UUMFE will continue to make the film available as long as there is interest.

For details, please see the UUMFE website at <http://uuministryforearth.org/Bidder-70-Film> or contact UUMFE Office Manager Sabrina Louise Harle, [office@uuministryforearth](mailto:office@uuministryforearth) or 503-595-9392. ♦

## Cedar Tree Foundation Awards UUMFE a Second \$20,000 Grant

*Nancy King Smith, UUMFE Board*

UUMFE is thrilled to announce that we have received a second grant from the Cedar Tree Foundation for 2013-14 to continue building and energizing the Young Adult Climate Justice network and to help present a "Collaboratory," which is a strategic gathering of thirty select UUs (a core sample of influential and interested UU leaders and groups together with UUA staff) to explore the meaning of "Beloved Community" in a climate-constrained world, and the implications for how our denomination does business. The agenda would include: impact on UUA departments and priorities, ministries inside and outside the UUA, theological formation, congregational organizing and religious education, etc.

The 2012-13 grant allowed for the initial development of the young adult network and several workshops; training for the environmental justice curriculum "Our Place in the Web of Life;" and extensive interviews with stakeholders about how they see UUMFE meeting needs for resources and action.

The Cedar Tree Foundation's grant making focuses on sustainable agriculture, environmental education,



and environmental health, giving particular consideration to proposals that demonstrate strong elements of environmental justice and conservation. ♦

# News From UU Ministry For Earth

## Northwest Earth Institute Celebrates 20th Anniversary

*Nancy King Smith, UUMFE Board*

The Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI) has been providing wonderful discussion course for twenty years and just celebrated with an anniversary party on May 16. We are grateful for the recognition of UU Ministry for Earth as a nominee for their "Change for Good" award. Rev.

Katherine Jesch, former Director of Environmental Ministry; Sabrina Louise Harle, Office Manager; and Ellen McClaran, Board member and Treasurer represented UUMFE at the celebration and, by extension, all of you active UUs who are out in the world trying to make a difference.



NWEI has also just created a brand new website with lots of new features that make course organizing easier: <http://nwei.org>. Some books will now be available in pdf format. *Menu for the Future* has been completely revised, and *Powering a Bright Future, Global Warming: Changing Course* and *Just Below the Surface* are now combined into one course, *Change by Degrees*.

When you purchase books, please check the UUMFE partnership as NWEI shares some of the proceeds with UUMFE. ♦

## Are You Awake?

*Rev. Earl Koteen, UUMFE Board*

One of my favorite Buddhist teaching tales speaks about a group of travelers who see Buddha, whom they've never met, approaching on the road. They can tell that there's something very special about him, but they don't know what it is.

Once they are face-to-face with him, they ask whether he is a spirit. He says that he is not. They asked him whether he is a God. He says that he is not. They make several more guesses, but he answers "no" to all of them.

Finally, in frustration one of the travelers says to the Buddha, "Well, what are you?"

Buddha replies, "I am awake."

If you read Zen stories, you may get the impression that there are two distinct spiritual states: awake and not awake. However, most of us have had the experience of moments of awakening followed by returning to the fog of thought.

Around this country and around this world people are awakening to the threats of climate change and environmental degradation. Though we have many eloquent speakers calling us to action, Super storm Sandy and her friends have been much more persuasive than any words we can fashion.

The good news is that this awakening is creating the opportunity for building friendships and communities across generations, faiths, and cultures. The welcome mat is out, but we must leave the isolation of our immediate community before we step across it.

UUs around the country are joining environmental and environmental justice coalitions to do good in the world. They are learning that the other ills of our society – pollution, inadequate healthcare, food and water insecurity, economic and political injustice, reproductive injustice, and immigration injustice – are all intricately linked to ecological injustice.

It's a wonderful time to be alive. It's a wonderful time to be present. Time to wake up.

Join UU Ministry for Earth. All your loved ones and generations yet unborn will thank you. ♦

## Young Adult Climate Activist Group Is Growing

*Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board*

### UU YOUNG ADULTS FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

In less than a year, our rapidly growing YA environmental justice group – UU Young Adults for Climate Justice (UUYACJ) – already has over 200 active participants. Members have conducted several EJ training sessions, offered an introduction to UUMFE's EJ curriculum "Our Place in the Web of Life" at district assemblies, and, in partnership with the Young Adult Steering Committee of the Central Midwest District, just completed a major climate justice training in Chicago. Exciting things are happening!



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As stated on UUYACJ's Facebook page: "We are young adults who connect our Unitarian Universalist faith to our work for justice in the world. We are working to live in right relationship with people, non-human beings, and the natural world. We see these things as interconnected in the web of all existence, and are committed to creating ethical living systems—inter-generationally, internationally, among communities, among species, among ecosystems, and with the Earth." Be sure to tell all the YAs in your congregation about this great opportunity to connect.

To keep up to date with this very dedicated and active group, check out the new page on the UUMFE website: <http://uuministryforearth.org/young-adults-climate-justice>. The Facebook address is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/UUYoungAdultsforClimateJustice> and you can join the network by e-mailing [uuyacj@gmail.com](mailto:uuyacj@gmail.com). ♦

### Reflecting On Earth Day 2013



*Cindy Davidson, UUMFE Board*

This year's chosen theme for UUMFE's Earth Day materials was "Working Towards Sustainable Communities," and we are encouraged by the array of Earth Day services, events and activities that took place in UU congregations across the country. From the seventy-two congregations that registered their plans on our website, we heard common themes of reverence and care for our Earth home mingled with serious concerns for the future, and we saw wonderful examples of our UU faith in action.

**You worshipped:** Collectively, you held multi-generational Earth Day Sunday worship services lead by your ministers, DRE's, lay leaders, and guest speakers and ministers; you adapted plays, told the awe-inspiring, scientific tale of "Earth and her Birth Story;" and you participated in rites and rituals, including a creative compost communion! You included celebratory moments as well – the dedications of a new solar garden, a new steeple to replace one lost to a 2011 tornado, a new bee hive in the church garden, and new tree plantings! You lifted up

and honored young adult leaders, recognized the Eco-Heroes in your midst (see page 5), celebrated the completion of a 40-day challenge, and created special memories for bridging youth.

**You opened minds:** You tapped Earth Day as an opportunity to educate yourselves and others about environmental issues like climate change and sea level rise, mountain top removal, trees, "fracking," local water issues, bees, solar energy, food and hunger. Special movie screenings and discussions included a John Muir slide show; *Bidder 70*, the story of UU activist Tim DeChristopher; *Chasing Ice*; *Triple Divide*; and Bill McKibben's *Do the Math Tour*.

**You served:** You got "down to Earth" with hands-on, outdoor activities. You distributed tree seedlings, planted trees and a food garden, and undertook a large-scale project replacing invasive species with native plants. You turned out to clean up roadsides, neighborhood streets, stream, and trails. Other congregations participated in a green jobs rally, collected electronic and hazardous waste and crafted quilts and saddlebags from discarded clothing.

Thank you to those who shared your plans and enthusiasm with us! And, congratulations to Cedarhurst Unitarian Universalists in Finksburg, MD who won the drawing for the \$50 gift certificate to the UUA bookstore!

To read more about the activities registered by your fellow UU congregations, and connect with your peers in those congregations, view or download the latest table of Earth Day activities at <http://uuministryforearth.org/files/2013-ED-Events-04-25-2013.pdf>. If you have an Earth Day story or photos to share with others, please send them to us at [office@uuministryforearth.org](mailto:office@uuministryforearth.org). We would love to feature them on our website or Facebook page! ♦

### Celebrating Our Eco-Heroes

*Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board*

Each year, UUMFE invites congregations to honor an Eco-Hero with a special certificate during an Earth Sunday service or other occasion. An Eco-Hero is that dedicated, hard working person who has made a significant contribution to a church's Earth ministry during the previous year. You

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celebrated a record number of Eco-Heroes in 2013! Read a brief sentence about each honoree at <http://uuministryforearth.org/2013-ED-More-Resources>. Congratulations to all and thank you for your dedication and hard work!

## Congregational Eco-Heroes:

- Dr. Wangari Maathai, UU Church of Surprise, AZ
- Rev. Lisa McDaniel-Hutchings, UU Church of Tucson, AZ
- January Nordman, Throop Memorial UU Church, Pasadena, CA
- Billie Wachter, First Unitarian Church, San Jose, CA
- Beth Brownlie-Oakes, UU Community Church of Santa Monica, CA
- Chad Tolman and Donna Gonzalez, First UU Wilmington, DE
- Raffy Elias, UU Congregation of Lakeland, FL
- Don Ehat, UU Church of Fort Myers, FL
- Mark Causey, UU Congregation of Gwinnett, Lawrenceville, GA
- Idaho Lorax, Pocatello UU Fellowship, ID
- Pat Clancy, DuPage UU Church, Naperville, IL
- Dr. Rich Mattas, UU Church of Stockton, IL
- Robért Demarais Sullivan, First UU, New Orleans and North Shore UU, Lacombe, LA
- Anne Perkins, UU Society of Amherst, MA
- The Whole Congregation, All Souls UU, Greenfield, MA
- Karen Lynch, First Parish of Malden, MA
- David Uguccione, UU Parish of Monson, MA
- Toni Bandrowicz, UU Church of Greater Lynn, Swampscott, MA
- Hal and Donna Estray, First UU Congregation of Ann Arbor, MI
- Scott Prinzing, Billings UU Fellowship, MT
- Lisa Bilello, South Nassau UU Congregation, Freeport, NY
- Dr. Frans Vergahen, Community Church of New York
- Dave Staudt, All Souls Unitarian Church, Tulsa, OK
- John & Carol Doscher, UU Church of Athens and Sheshequin, PA
- Rev. Darcey Laine and President Katie Replogle, UU Church of Athens and Sheshequin, PA
- Amy Hoffman-Shehan, Red River UU Church, Denison, TX ♦

## Going Fossil Free?

*Cindy Davidson, UUMFE Board*

**A**ctivists across the US have responded with enthusiasm and dedication to the campaign calling for divestment of fossil fuel stocks as a strategy in the fight against climate change. Public and private institutional investors, including communities of faith, are being challenged to sign on to disinvest

in and divest from the top 200 companies holding the largest fossil fuel reserves. Burning those reserves would, of course, stoke runaway climate change.

Activist and writer Bill McKibben and the environmental organization 350.org are calling the fossil fuel divestment campaign

our best strategy against the powerful fossil fuel industry and key to keeping those reserves in the ground.



Seasoned investors and others counter that shareholder engagement and advocacy are a more effective strategy. Some suggest that, rather than taking an either-or position, we adopt a yes-and stance. Though all may agree that the goal is to address climate change and transition to a clean energy future, support for particular tactics differ.

UU Ministry for Earth has been following this debate and developments in faith communities with great interest. Within our UU denomination, the call for divestment is prompting individuals, committees and congregations to think about how to best invest for the world we want to see in the near and distant future. Socially responsible investment has suddenly, for some, become a hot topic! Weighing the moral and practical considerations of investing is proving to be religious work.

Some UU congregations have fully committed to the divestment movement: First Unitarian of Milwaukee, WI was the first UU congregation to divest, by resolution of the Board of Trustees on March 26th (<http://www.uumilwaukee.org/content/fossil-fuels-divestment-resolution>); First Unitarian Church of Salt Lake City, UT was the first to divest by congregational (unanimous) vote on May 19th; and First Parish of Cambridge, MA will be voting at their upcoming annual meeting, where a congregational decision to divest is likely. Other congregations are in the planning and educational phases of their campaigns.

Meanwhile, UU Ministry for Earth has been working behind the scenes to encourage dialogue and raise awareness of the divestment strategy in the context of a range of socially responsible investment strategies. While it is beyond our scope of practice to advise individuals or congregations, we are prepared

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to pose difficult questions and help you arrive at answers that fit your situation and meet your needs.

UU Ministry for Earth helped sponsor a “Divestment Forum” organized by a Boston-area UU congregant and held on May 13th at First Church of Boston. Seven panelists, including Tim Brennan, Treasurer of the UUA, and Rev. Jim Sherblom, Senior Minister at First Parish in Brookline, MA, presented diverse points of view in a lively moderated conversation. UUMFE will soon be hosting a videotape of the event on our website.

We are pleased that the Socially Responsible Investing Committee of the UUA has created a time and space to discuss the call to divestment and other SRI strategies at the upcoming General Assembly. Look for us at the workshop titled “The Climate Change Challenge to Faithful Investing” on Thursday, June 20th in Slot #3 from 3:30-4:45pm.

UUMFE, in our capacity as a provider of resources, will be making available on our website some updated materials on socially responsible investing, relevant sermons and writings. If you have a specific request, please let us know! Also, when possible, we have been connecting individuals looking for more detailed “on-the-ground” information and peer support. For introductions to the nationwide yahoo group of UUs for divestment (moderated by former UUMFE board member Terry Wiggins) or the Boston-area divestment study group email me at [cynthiadavidson@verizon.net](mailto:cynthiadavidson@verizon.net). ♦

### Environmental Justice Plunge Leads to Effective Congregational Involvement

*Nancy King Smith, UUMFE Board*

**D**uring March 2012, eight members of the UU Church of the Desert (UUCOD), an accredited Green Sanctuary in Rancho Mirage, CA, participated in an Environmental Justice Plunge in the eastern Coachella Valley. The Plunge was initiated by the UU Legislative Ministry of California (UULM) and facilitated by the local California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) office. Another twenty UU’s from Southern California congregations, including a contingent of UULM’s Spiritual Activist Leadership Training (SALT) fellows also participated. A narrated

mini-van tour of the East Valley allowed them not just to see, but much better understand, the many inter-related environmental and justice challenges there. The two photos in this article are from the Plunge.

Based on this experience, environmental justice became the Social Justice committee’s main focus for the year. An opportunity soon presented itself – a public hearing on concerns about ground water con-



tamination from a toxic waste treatment facility on tribal land that they had seen during the plunge. The Social Justice Chair

spoke at the hearing and was interviewed on camera by a local TV station. The lawyers and community workers at CRLA were present and this event demonstrated to them the congregation’s willingness to continue to educate themselves, show up, and speak up where they could be useful, and furthered the relationships they were establishing.

The committee invited the CRLA staff members to speak to the congregation at a Sunday morning service in July. The talk was a good overview to educate those who had not participated in the Plunge. Green Sanctuary sponsored a lunch following the service that allowed them to get to know their guests more personally.

They learned of a newly formed Environmental Justice Compliance Task Force meeting monthly in the East Valley, comprised of representatives of many government agencies and community organizations. The purpose of the meeting was to share information on reports on hazardous incidents, toxicology studies, clean-up efforts, etc. Members agreed to attend the monthly meetings on a continuing basis. [<http://www.ivan-coachella.org/about> and <https://www.facebook.com/PCDECV>]

Another public hearing was brought to their attention, one concerning a drafted plan for distribution of mitigation funds required for the permitting of a peaker power plant in the Coachella Valley. Again, the Social Justice Chair attended and spoke. The

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final draft replaced a for-profit project with several non-profit ones and included information on the availability of other funds to implement several side-



lined items, e.g., natural gas fueled school buses to replace old, more polluting ones. UUCOD was nominated for an Energy Oscar by California Interfaith Power and Light and then received notice that they were one of three finalists in the Advocacy category.

lined items, e.g., natural gas fueled school buses to replace old, more polluting ones.

UUCOD was nomi-

Judy Farris, the Green Sanctuary chair, attended the ceremony at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco in November, accepting the award on behalf of the congregation. They continue to be engaged with the issues and the people in the East Valley.

Judy Farris said that until she and others had actually experienced the conditions on the EJ tour they had little understanding the scope of the problems. Since engaging in this work they realize the importance of showing up at key events and showing that they care. She says, "At first it seemed too daunting and our efforts would be so small, but eventually things began to happen." Rancho Mirage demonstrates the value of first-hand experience, persistence, and building and maintaining relationships in doing environmental justice work. Bravo! ♦

## News & Commentary From Members and Congregations

### Book Review: *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*

Bob Keim, former UUMFE Board

Two pads of "Sticky Notes" pasted throughout 280 pages: *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*; that low growling in the dark of the night - the one I hear when I can't sleep - is getting louder and more disagreeable.

Slow Violence.

An expression coined by Rob Nixon, Rachel Carson Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, this work speaks to the "**...violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all.**"

Given our propensity to focus on events immediate in time, particularly in speaking to such events as Climate change, deforestation, the radioactive aftermaths of wars, acidifying oceans, and a host of other slowly unfolding environmental catastrophes, Nixon argues that we need "**...to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out**

**across a range of temporal scales."**

Beyond the lens of a media trained on the dramatic scenes of hurricanes, wars, and terror attacks, the real violence, according to Nixon, is one that works insidiously over time and outside of view on the poorest and most vulnerable citizens of the planet. So, instead of just chronicling the despicable practices of energy conglomerates - big oil, armament manufacturers and *the coalition of the willing (the IMF, World Bank, and neoliberal governments like our own)* - Nixon's book does something **much more interesting**. He focuses on the literary and imaginative responses of writer-activists around the world as they have joined forces with indigenous peoples and the poor to save lands and ways of life.

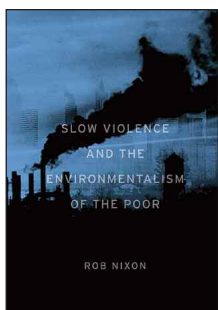
Nixon, who grew up in South Africa under apartheid and has focused much of his own literary and scholarly work on environmental justice issues, is a keen observer of how writer-activists have learned to use a whole range of literary forms - novels, plays, essays, blogs, testimonial protest, and literary journalism - to counter the powerful forces at work in the name of globalization, economic development, progress, and democracy.

With deep respect and careful contextualization, he highlights the work of several key writers and



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describes how their passion, outrage, and intellectual and artistic influences find voices in their causes.



We learn of the heroic work of Ken Saro-Wiwa, exposing the horrific poisoning of the lands and fishing culture of the Ogoni people of Nigeria by Shell Oil. We follow the work and life of Nobel Peace Prize-winning Wangari Maathai, as she helps to organize farmers and women to plant trees to

save the depleted soils in Kenya. And from India, Nixon examines the powerful protest essays and journalism of Arundhati Roy, in her support of indigenous Indians trying to save their lands against transnational mining and the mega-dam industry.

But all through this book, Nixon gives us a whole range of writers from the global south and north who have found "imaginative strategies," as he calls them, to shed light on various slow forms of cultural and environmental degradation ranging from waste dumping to depleted uranium from US bombings in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nixon reminds us that writers since the monumental works of Rachel Carson and Nadine Gordimer have always played an indispensable role in speaking truth to the powerful forces of industry and in inspiring local activism in the protection of the environment and those who depend on its health.

Moving, vexing, mind-expanding, challenging reading – a work that will, at times, rend you to the bones – *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* should be on the reading list of everyone active in standing up to the stygian voices behind Climate Change, or any other threat to the health and well-being of the living environment. We have more allies than we know out there – we need to begin acknowledging their presence and joining forces with them. ♦

### Healing Our World and Ourselves

Irene Keim, UUMFE Board Chair

In February 2013, three accomplished keynote speakers from three different disciplines and participants from many UU congregations in Florida came together to explore ways we can connect the

dots to heal ourselves and our world in the face of social, political, and environmental challenges. The speakers and their topics were:

- "The Rights of Earth" – Patricia Siemen, Director of the Center for Earth Jurisprudence, Barry University School of Law;
- "Maintaining the Right To Be Heard" – David Cobb, National Projects Director of Democracy Unlimited and the national spokesperson for Move to Amend; and
- "Addictions in the Broadest Sense" – Bruce Alexander, professor and author of *The Globalization of Addiction: A Study in Poverty of the Spirit*.

The speakers provided many ideas to ponder. For example:

- Real change happens when human beings raise hell.
- Environmental law is based on property law, not rights of Nature.
- Social movements need to do homework and build coalitions BEFORE deciding strategies.
- We can't win at Whack-A-Mole.
- There is no 'away' for all of our stuff.
- The faith community is one of the pillars of the movements founded in sustainable values.
- Humans must reclaim our ecological identity.
- It is important that we listen to Earth before we speak up for Earth.
- Two of the most damaging addictions in society are the addiction to money and to the media circus.

The unique learning experience of the conference was, however, the interaction of these creative lead-



Participants interact with keynote speakers. Far right: Irene Keim, UUMFE Board Chair, with husband Bob to her left. Photo: <http://healingourworldandourselves.org/>.

ers. None of the three had met or shared ideas before the conference, yet in a panel discussion after their individual presentations, they modeled for the

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audience how to begin to illuminate the intersection of their fields of concern and expertise, how to do some systems thinking. For many of us venturing out of our congregations into the wider community, this was a valuable exercise. Wisely, the conference planners allowed time later in the conference for the connecting to others, processing the ideas flowing around us, and planning the next steps. One session to facilitate this connection to action was a panel of activists from Florida including myself, who represented UU Ministry for Earth.

The creative exchange of information and ideas at the conference was the result of visioning by three different organizations: the UU Church of Brevard, Florida provided much of the planning and organizing; the UU Legislative Ministry of Florida participated in the planning and is supported in part from a grant from the Fund for UU Social Responsibility; and the members of the First Unitarian Church of Orlando hosted the event. The conference was so meaningful for the attendees that planning for the next conference began the very next week and a Facebook group has kept issues and information flowing across the state. ♦

### Faith Groups In CA Called To Action on Climate Change

*Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board*

Note: this article was adapted from coverage by Juliette Beck in a Feb. 23 special to *The Democrat*, Woodland, CA.

**O**n March 3, representatives of Yolo County religious communities hosted an afternoon conference – Climate Crisis: Putting Faith into Action – at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis, CA. Clergy, leaders, members of "green teams," and any interested congregants and members of the public were invited to attend the free, multi-faith gathering to explore what people of faith can do together to slow their own contributions to climate change and to lead the whole community to a more sustainable future.

"This conference was open to all faith groups in the region that wished to learn about how our congregations can work through both a spiritual and practical context to address the challenges that come with a changing, unstable climate," said conference organ-

izer Judy Moores, a member of Cool Davis and the UU Church of Davis (and recipient of UUMFE's 2012 Guardian of the Future Award).



The program included expert speakers and a choice of four workshops, providing the latest research on climate change and practical ways to green facilities, engage congregations, and advocate for the planet and those already impacted by climate change. After a brief opening, UC Davis Geology Professor Isabel Montanez provided the background for the day with the latest scientific insights into climate change and the potential impacts for California.

Susan Stephenson, Executive Director of the Regeneration Project and its Interfaith Power and Light campaign, gave the keynote address. The Regeneration Project is a national interfaith organization whose mission is to galvanize a religious response to global warming through both education and advocacy, which has grown over the past decade to include more than 560 member congregations in California alone, and thousands more across the country. Stephenson noted that climate change is also a social justice and public health issue. From air pollution to droughts to rising seas, it is poor people who are being hit first and worst by global warming.

Workshop topics included:

- Developing an Environmentally Sustainable Church – internal, institutional transformations such as building upgrades, transportation options, reducing consumption, etc.
- Engaging Hearts and Minds to Build Sustainable Lifestyles – starting with a faith's unique spiritual imperative, ways to support and help transform a congregation's households.
- Integrating the Care for Creation into Liturgy – ways to make the environment and our moral and religious responsibility as humans an integral part of most worship services.
- Acting Ethically for a Planet in Peril – considerations and practical ideas for advocacy beyond the local congregation, including spiritual /moral imperatives to pursue social and environmental justice in the context of people, both locally and in places around the world, who are and will be affected by climate change even though they have not contributed the cause (UUMFE Board

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member Rev. Earl W. Koteen, Consulting Minister for Environmental Justice, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry California, Climate and Water advocacy, was on this panel).

Cool Davis Interim Volunteer Executive Director

Chris Granger noted the importance of the conference and the role of faith communities in achieving this goal.

The conference was sponsored by Cool Davis and Faith Group Partners

for this event – Green Task Force of Davis United Methodist Church, Green Sanctuary Committee of Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis, and Stewards of God's Creation Group of Davis Community Church – plus Green Team of Lutheran Church of the Incarnation, God's Creation Committee of St. Martin's Episcopal Church, and EarthCare Group of Davis Friends Meeting. Members of the Muslim Community also participated. ♦



*Rev. Earl Koteen, Judy Moores, and Keynote speaker Susan Stephenson.*

### The Pipeline Fighters in Nebraska

*Terry Wiggins, former UUMFE Board*

**W**e're the Pipeline Fighters, according to the red-sleeved t-shirts and the oil-black arm bands provided to us by Bold Nebraska, when we went to the hearings on the Keystone XL. And so many of us are UUs! See the April 19 article in *The New York Times*, and the pictures, at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/19/us/foes-of-keystone-pipeline-sound-off-in-nebraska.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/19/us/foes-of-keystone-pipeline-sound-off-in-nebraska.html?_r=0).

In the photo in the next column, the woman in the yellow raincoat standing in line to get in the Nebraska Events Center was a member of our group of six who traveled from Milwaukee to express our opposition to the pipeline. She's Chris Zapf, a 25-year member of First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee.

We left the Milwaukee area at 7 p.m. Wednesday

evening, April 18, to arrive in Grand Island, NE at 7:20 a.m., have breakfast and get in line to check in. What a relief they let us come in out of the snow and cold to wait between 8 and 11, the beginning of check-in. The hearing started at noon, and after a pbj-filled break at 3:30 p.m. and a shorter break at 8 p.m., it went on. We decided at the 8 p.m. break to stay until we could testify – to do what we had come to do – between 9:45 and 10 p.m. Then we loaded back in the van and headed for home, arriving at our starting point about 10 a.m. I still wonder what time the hearing ended.

I have to give a shout-out to the State Department official who conducted the hearing. She said she was, and certainly looked to be, truly intent on listening to the speakers. Though she looked quite tired when I testified, I felt heard by her.

There wasn't much left to say that hadn't already been said by the time we spoke, but the five of us who spoke each managed to speak briefly while still giving a new image to the audience. For example, Mike talked about a petroleum-filled bathtub, to which we would say no if asked if we would mind if one more spigot were added to the tub; Chris talked



*Photo: Matt Ryerson/  
Lincoln Journal Star, via  
Associated Press*

about the recent and ongoing destruction from a pipeline spill in Jackson, Wisconsin; and I mentioned the image that UUMFE board member Rev. Earl Koteen spoke of a few years ago – “cooking our grandchildren.”

After the first break, all of the pro-pipeline

folks had left, and the next 100 or so speakers were all anti-pipeline. Are there more of us, or are we more dedicated to our cause?

In the end, this hearing gave me hope that there's still a chance that the Keystone XL pipeline might be stopped. It was a hope I did not have after traveling to D.C. in August of 2011 and being arrested. It was only later that it became clear that some attention had been brought to the issue. If President Obama does reject it, the victory will be all the sweeter for me, given that I have had a part in it. ♦





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*From the UUMFE Facebook page after the #Forward on Climate Rally on President's weekend. Links to more photos plus coverage are on our website home page.*



*Laura Evonne Steinman, Religious Educator and Artist in Residence at the Arlington Street Church in Boston, shared this image that she created for Earth Day 2013.*