



Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry of California
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This year has demanded so much of all of us as individuals and communities, people of faith, and co-creators of justice. Even now – in addition to spending nearly a year of our lives surviving a global pandemic that has uprooted and claimed millions of lives – we are bearing witness to and resisting even greater atrocities against democracy, reason, and human dignity at the national level of the United States government. For some of us, the difficulties of this year have impacted us in sharply personal ways – job losses, community members facing deportation, wildfires threatening or destroying our homes, rights of passage and celebrations cancelled or postponed, and perhaps, hardest of all, physical separation from friends and family members whose presence we crave, some whom we may never see again.

The grief, fatigue, anger, despair, and uncertainty of this year would stretch any spirit past its breaking point, as I know they have my own. And yet, in the midst of a year where oppressive structures and their supporters did their damned hardest to suppress our power and deny our imaginations for what this world could and should be; in the midst of a year where all of our communities have experienced traumatic isolation and loss; in the midst of a year that virtually none of us saw coming – there is an undeniable, sacred, prophetic, and simple truth that we have faithfully returned to and embodied – **we are not alone.**



*"What makes an ancestor?"
Answers from UUs in Marin*

We created new ways of staying connected,

When the UUA and state action networks like the UU Justice Ministry of California first began our **UU the Vote** work, we had not planned on its going nearly 100% virtual. But with the ingenuity, commitment, and faithfulness of justice makers like you, we not only adapted our strategies to meet the world – we leaned into and even had some fun with it! UJMCA was there participating in national efforts, **connecting the local organizing brilliance of the Youth Voter Movement in Fremont, California to other state action networks**, and contributing to the national UU the Vote worship resources released in September.

At the state level, UJMCA was a proud supporter of two high-priority propositions in November – Proposition 15 (Schools & Communities First) and Proposition 17 (Free the Vote). While we are disappointed by the outcome on Proposition 15, and the missed opportunity to create economic transformation in California, we are thrilled that **50,000 Californians now have their right to vote restored!**

Plant #SeedsForJustice financially or as a volunteer online at uujmca.org/Give2020. Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry of California is a 501(c)3 organization. Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.



*UUJMCA's "From Worship to Work" Sunday
Phonebanks with Reclaim Our Vote*

And in these last few months, UUJMCAs UU the Vote ministries have continued. Every Sunday in September and October, **UUJMCA partnered with Reclaim Our Vote to run phonebanks** to voters in states with a history of voter suppression, making thousands of calls. As part of interfaith coalitions, UUJMCA has supported efforts to ensure that every vote is held sacred, including **actions targeting the Jones Day Law Firm's California offices.**

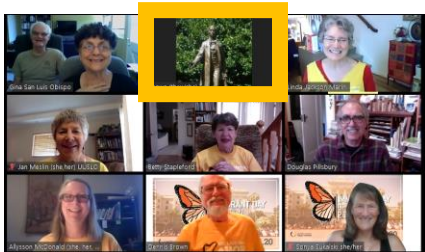
While our UU the Vote ministry was a 2020 priority, UUJMCA's connected communities did not stop there. After moving our **2020 Turning the Tides Justice Leadership Summit** online, UUs across California – from Humboldt, Riverside, San Diego, Davis, Ventura, and more – connected with each other and California justice partners in informational sessions, issue collectives, online worships, and **daily "Lunchtimes for Liberation" actions.** And knowing the importance of spiritually-nourished community for our work for justice, UUJMCA **hosted monthly justice vespers services** with an online format that brought together UUs not just across California but around the country. (Save the date for our **Justice Song Share on December 20 at 6:30pm PT** – sign up at uujmca.org/DecemberSings)

we found new ways to collaborate for justice,

As part of our mission to **ensure California UUs had access to and engaged in opportunities to create justice** while staying as safe as possible, your UUJMCA worked alongside partners to generate several forms of online justice-making ministries. Adapting a model shared by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, UUJMCA's Immigrant Justice Action Team hosted several **"Free Them All" Community Action Circles**, bringing together groups online to participate in a spiritually-rooted hour of reflection and action - making calls, signing petitions, sending emails, and advocating for immigrant justice in California and beyond.



*Participants of a "Free Them All"
Community Action Circle bless each other*



*UUs at this year's Immigrant Day of Action
online have lunch with Thomas Starr King!*

UUJMCA was excited to work with the **California Immigrant Policy Center's Immigrant Day of Action online.** Dozens of Unitarian Universalists once more attended and participated in the education, advocacy, and witness opportunities of the day, including advocating for **California Earned Income Tax Credit expansion to more immigrant families and #Health4AllSeniors.** We even had our annual "field trip" to the Thomas Starr King statue at the Capitol!

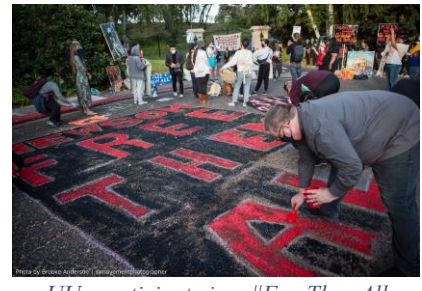
Of course, not everything could happen at home. When we were able to promote and engage in **safe in-person calls to action, California UUs were carefully there!** With the spread of COVID-19 in California prisons and ICE facilities claiming so many lives, UUJMCA connected UUs to #FreeThemAll actions that called on Gov. Newsom to literally save lives. From **direct action at the Governor's mansion to a statewide banner drop,** UU's across California were a faithfully-rooted presence advocating for the lives of our incarcerated community members.



UUs at a #FreeThemAll Banner Drop in downtown Walnut Creek



UUs at a #FreeThemAll Banner Drop in Westlake



UUs participate in a #FreeThemAll Action in at the Governor's Mansion

and we moved our world closer to collective liberation.

As part of our faith-rooted commitment to centering, listening to, and following the leadership of communities that have long been impacted by and dismantling structures rooted in white supremacy and economic oppression, **UJMCA in 2020 has continued to voice our support for calls to defund the police, invest in community services, and abolish prisons in favor of more restorative justice practices.** Like the majority of Unitarian Universalists, we supported the Action of Immediate Witness passed at this year's UUA General Assembly – *“Amen to Uprising: A Commitment and Call to Action.”* Emboldened by this national affirmation of our ministry and mission, we have continued to **amplify and advocate for changes in California's reliance on policing and mass incarceration** at local and state levels.

Similarly, we remain committed to understanding and **dismantling the ways in which this country's colonist roots have led us to violate our relationships** with people and the planet. In line with another 2020 Action of Immediate Witness – *“Addressing 400 Years of White Supremacist Colonialism”* – your UJMCA has been **(re)-building accountable relationships with indigenous communities and nations** in what we now call California, working to protect ancestral lands from further desecration, and the area's water and wildlife from destabilizing development projects. As these relationships have grown, we are excited **to invite even more California UUs into acting locally while thinking globally** about our call to be stewards of this earth, supporting justice makers in building connections with frontline organizers in their region.

So what's next for you and UJMCA?

Moving into 2021, your UU Justice Ministry of California is focusing our efforts on building up the networks that sustain your faithful work in the state. This includes a variety of relationship-building opportunities, including **monthly “Issue Collectives” and “Cluster Calls”** to connect justice makers across congregations and communities with local and statewide organizers. As we work with interfaith coalitions in different parts of the state, we are prioritizing the **supporting of UU volunteer organizers** to make cross-congregational and cross-community connections.

And while we still cannot offer trainings in person, UJMCA will be offering a variety of online faith-rooted educational opportunities to deepen and strengthen your engagement with liberation movements in California. justice-making. **From general skill building, to faith-rooted non-violent direct action training, to issue and campaign-specific sessions to learn and engage,** we are excited to offer virtual spaces for California UUs to thrive in their commitment to justice. We are also excited to share that we are developing an **“online UU-Borders” opportunity for March of 2021,** as part of our ongoing partnership with the GaryMar Academy in Tijuana.

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A Different Kind of Ask for 2021...

As we turn the page from 2020, holding all that we have learned, lost, and accomplished, we are moving towards 2021 with the seeds of justice in our hands. Literally. You may have noticed that my letter this year is accompanied with a seed packet for the drought-resistant California poppy. **This packet is our gift to you, and an invitation to join me in a spiritual practice of planting #SeedsForJustice in 2021.** Plant these seeds where you can water, cultivate, and learn from them; share their beauty with friends; offer them at your next flower communion service! **Plant these seeds with hope and intention, and water them with a commitment to growth, creativity, and sustainability inherent to our Unitarian Universalist faith.**



Illustration by Elena Arce, age 13

When we plant seeds of justice, we sustain the movement towards liberation.

And you can plant, water, and nurture the seeds of justice with UJMCA. First and foremost, **we must make a financial ask. That is why we included a donation envelope with this letter. Funds help our programs – much of which is free – stay free and accessible to California UUs.** We cannot sustain or grow our work without your willingness to water those seeds.

For those of us for whom the economic capacity to give absolutely does not exist, you can still make an impact by planting a justice seed with time and talents. This year, **UJMCA is launching a volunteer drive as part of our December ask.** Ranging from one-time tasks like writing a blog post to sustained engagement like serving on statewide issue team, your **time and talents are just as essential** a contribution to this ministry as your treasures.

We know we are not alone. We know that together, we are creating a world rooted in love. Whatever seeds you can plant to support UJMCA today will make a tremendous difference in sustaining our work for collaborative justice tomorrow. **The world is at a turning point, and it is up to us to make sure it turns towards liberation and love.** You can make your impact by donating/volunteering online at ujmca.org/Give2020 or by returning the enclosed donation envelope postmarked by December 31st.

Thank you for being part of the UJMCA family and for planting your #SeedsForJustice – in California and our world.

With gratitude and blessings,

Rev. Dr. Betty Stapleford
President, UJMCA