



Speaking of Justice

Social Justice Program & Action Group Weekly Update || Thursday, August 13, 2020

"Love calls us to the sacred work of seeking justice." This is the core of our social justice covenant at First Unitarian Portland. As we adapt our organizing and actions to this period of physical distancing, the sacred work of justice continues. What follows are updates from our Social Justice Program and our Social Justice Action Groups.



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Portland United Against Hate Report: on Police Violence on Protesters

The organizations [Portland United Against Hate](#) (PUAH) and [Coalition of Communities of Color](#) (CCC) have jointly produced a report (content warning: violence [PDF](#)) on incidents of police violence in Portland during the Black Lives Matter protests that began after the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police on May 25th, 2020, and continue today. It contains testimonials reported to PUAH through its crowdsourced tool [ReportHatePDX.com](#) and an analysis of the data contained in the testimony. The report finds “evidence of indiscriminate use of force by the Portland Police Bureau, lasting injury and trauma on innocent civilians, and illegal and unethical targeting of media, legal observers, and medics.” It details the PUAH-initiated and community-supported list of demands to end the use of indiscriminate force by law enforcement against protesters exercising their First Amendment rights. (This list was sent to Mayor Wheeler with nearly 1,500 sign-ons, including 1,300 individual signatories as well as 66 organizations and 92 clergy. First Unitarian leaders and congregants were among those signatories; you can add your name to the list by going to [this link](#).)

Information about PUAH and CCC can be found [here](#) and [here](#). PUAH is unique among social justice organizations in that it is a coalition of more than 80 community organizations, neighborhood groups, agencies, and local governments working to support those targeted by hate. First Unitarian is represented on its Steering Committee by Director of Social Justice Dana Buhl.

No More Deaths • No Mas Muertes Humanitarian Aid Camp Raided

Two years ago, a delegation from First Unitarian Portland including Lena Lee, Ann Zawaski, Fiona McDonald, and Dana Buhl, carried water and supplies into the Sonoran Desert in solidarity with [No More Deaths • No Mas Muertes](#). This was a solidarity action called *Faith Floods the Desert* and was organized with the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee ([UUSC](#)).

On July 31, 2020, [US Border Patrol raided No More Death's Byrd Camp](#) in Arizona and detained over thirty people who were receiving medical care, food, water, and shelter in the 100+ degree heat. Border Patrol's militarized Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC), which was recently deployed as part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) occupation here in Portland, descended on the camp with an armored vehicle, ATVs, helicopters, and dozens of marked and unmarked vehicles. In an effort to suppress documentation of their actions, they seized all cell phones and paperwork. The raid came shortly after No More Deaths • No Mas Muertes had released emails obtained via the Freedom of Information Act about BORTAC's 2017 raid of the same camp. Read more and view photos on their [Facebook](#) page. The UUSC [condemns this act](#) as a retaliatory campaign driven by racism and xenophobia and warns that DHS's brutal actions are frightfully close to totalitarianism. The UUSC calls for elected leaders to take a strong stand against attacks on democracy and civil rights by [defunding the DHS](#).

You can help by [donating](#) to No More Deaths • No Mas Muertes.



Photo Credit No More Deaths • No Mas Muertes

Sacred Stories From the Streets

Hosted by the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMIrJ), powerful local interfaith leaders give heartfelt witness to what has been happening on Portland's streets, including Rev. Lenny Duncan, Rabbi Debra Kolodny, Rabbi Benjamin Barnett, Alaide Vilchis Ibarra, and our own Dana Buhl. They reflect on why they've taken to the streets, what they've witnessed and learned over the past two months, and



the transformations and revelations they've experienced along the way. [Watch the recording here.](#)

Take Action:

1. Help share a story different from the dominant narrative being told about Portland.
2. [Sign Portland United Against Hate's Stop Cop Riots letter.](#)
3. Be a part of/start/co-host a Sacred Circle with IMIrJ, the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice.

Volunteer for the Protest Aid Station at First Congregational UCC

First Unitarian Portland has partnered with First Congregational UCC (on SW Park and SW Madison) to provide an AID STATION for the ongoing protests in downtown Portland. It is open for 3 hours each night, going from 10pm till 1am. This is a respite center and aid station for protesters. It is a place where protesters can stop in to use the restrooms or to get help from a medic, as well as to seek psychological first aid. Fellow congregant Christine Cha has been volunteering as the on-site medic many nights,

helping to organize the medical and psychological first aid parts of the aid station. Troy McKinlay is coordinating volunteers from First Unitarian to be hosts. These are the folks who welcome people in, direct them to where they need to go, and offer hand sanitizer and masks or other safety equipment. Our best efforts are made to maintain social distancing, and hosts and medics wear masks at all times. **If you are interested in being a host, please email to UU Congregant [Troy McKinlay](#).**



BLUU is Our August Plate Recipient

This month we share our offering with Black Lives of UU. BLUU provides information, resources, and support for Black Unitarian Universalists and works to expand the role and visibility of Black UUs within our faith. BLUU provides guidance and best practices for the important work of congregations supporting groups seeking to organize safely, spiritually, and effectively. BLUU also provides worship and educational resources for deepening the connection between our faith and our shared vision of justice for all.



Comments Requested on Proposed Cleanup of Willamette Cove

Following a [Webinar](#) put on by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, people of faith are asked to write Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) regarding the cleanup of Willamette Cove.

[The Portland Harbor Community Coalition](#) (PHCC) was formed in 2012 to advocate for the impacted people, fish, and ecosystem.

As Unitarians, we are awakening to systemic reckless disregard of Earth's land and creatures and the poor and the BIPOC who have been forced to the toxic sidelines. Industries that located along the once glorious Willamette River, heedless of their legacy to the people and land, left a toxic stew of contaminants. Willamette Cove was used extensively for industrial purposes from the early 1900s to the 1970s. Uses included a lumber mill, plywood mill, barrel manufacturer, and dry dock and ship repair facility. Metro purchased the property in 1996 and plans to preserve the land primarily as a natural area, while integrating a regional trail. The 27-acre parcel ([Willamette Cove Uplands](#)) is located south of the St. Johns Bridge; adjoining or nearby neighborhoods include Cathedral Park, St. Johns, and University Park. At long last, it is proposed for cleanup — AND YOUR COMMENTS ARE NEEDED BY MONDAY, AUG 31.

The people using this area the most are houseless who camp there and BIPOC poor folks who catch and eat the contaminated fish. Overall, DEQ's proposed cleanup plan may alleviate some of the risks posed by the contamination at the property to people and animals; however, it is unacceptable because it leaves in place contamination at concentrations above human and ecological risk-based standards and will require "long-term monitoring and maintenance in perpetuity..." (Section 5.2.4.3, page 47). While Table 20 in the staff report estimates the cost of long-term monitoring for this option, it does so for a period of only 30 years, with conservative assumptions. Thirty years is a long time, but is not the same as forever, or in perpetuity.

The cancer exposure limit should be lower for houseless community members than for occasional recreational users, not the reverse. Houseless community members sleeping and staying at the site have direct exposure to cancer risk through touching contaminated soil and accidentally ingesting, as well as inhaling, toxic dust, more so than recreational users.

Despite 50 years without industrial use, nature has not been able to reclaim this contaminated area. In time bioremediation from fungi may prove helpful, but the plan by DEQ is analogous to putting radioactive waste in barrels and hoping for the best.

Please Comment: all you need for talking points and an address can be found [here](#).

Take Action to Support Migrant and Refugee Justice

It's easy to tick off recent events that undermine immigrant, migrant, and refugee justice these days:

- The continued [assault on the DACA program](#) by Donald Trump
- US Customs and Immigration Services [proposed fee increases](#) for asylum seekers
- Border Patrol agents' [raid of humanitarian aid station](#) in Arizona
- Shortening the [census timeline](#) and unconstitutional [census policy](#)

It's easy to become discouraged. The pandemic creates avenues for the administration to virtually close down asylum; unrest over the killing of Black people by police leads to massive peaceful

demonstrations and the use of specialized Border Patrol units in Portland and other cities; and the threat of contracting the novel coronavirus impacts our ability to gather safely in protest.

Yet we must remember that every action we take can make a difference in the lives of immigrants, migrants, refugees, and their families. Recently, members of the Immigrant Justice Action Group (IJAG) participated with [Farm Worker Ministry Northwest](#) in a car caravan to Hillsboro farm camps, delivering needed food supplies and masks and displaying signs of solidarity. Many of us are writing letters of support for detainees in Tacoma who are facing deportation; we have learned that one such case ended with the release and granting of a T-visa for one woman who has been reunited with her family in Portland. Many of us write comments on proposed federal rule changes during the public comment period. Many of us attend vigils and pop-up rallies for BLM. Many of us continue to learn about the intersectionality of immigration and race. **Will you join us to take action?**

- Join the Immigrant Support Network to receive requests for letters of support by contacting the [accompaniment project](#) of the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice
- Learn about immigrant justice and antiracism with resources from [The Black Alliance for Just Immigration](#) and supporting asylum and TPS at [Undocublack Network](#).
- Make donations to organizations supporting immigrants, migrants, and refugees.
- Participate in one of many [webinars](#) or group activities to create community. Join a Sacred Circle for Justice - contact [Linda](#) or [Laurie](#)
- Attend a [virtual fundraiser](#) for legal groups supporting immigrants, migrants, and refugees.
- Join us for monthly IJAG Zoom meetings, generally held on the fourth Sunday of each month at 12:00. To receive the link for the meeting please contact [Mary Ann](#).

Our actions will create the world we envision.

Javon Johnson - "cuz he's black"

The Speaking of Justice Editorial Team offers this spoken word for reflection. [WATCH HERE](#)

