

Saturday, June 24, 2017

Today's schedule includes the Debate and Vote on the Escalating Inequality SOC.

Workshop on Social Witness —Friday June 23.

In lieu of Actions of Immediate Witness (AIWs) this year, we offered this workshop on strategies for Witness at General Assembly. Look to your General Assembly app for the results of this session.

Congregational Study Action Issue- Escalating Inequality – 2014-2018

Draft Statement of Conscience (SOC) on Escalating Inequality – TODAY, General Session IV - Debate and Vote on SOC – 8:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Escalating Economic Inequality

Challenging extreme ~~inequality~~ inequity locally and globally is a moral imperative. As a pragmatic faith we are committed to working to change economic and social systems with a goal of equitable outcomes of life, dignity, and wellbeing experienced by all. The escalation of income and wealth inequality ~~inequity~~ undergirds many injustices that our faith movement is committed to addressing, ~~from including:~~ economic injustice, ~~to~~ mass incarceration, ~~from~~ migrant injustice, ~~to~~ climate change, ~~from~~ sexual and gender injustice, and ~~to~~ attacks on voting rights. Since the adoption of the 2000 Statement of Conscience on *Economic Injustice, Poverty, and Racism*, economic inequality has escalated. We have experienced accumulation of debt, decreased support for growth and innovation, and increased concentration of wealth ~~at the top~~ accompanied by wage stagnation ~~for 99% of the population~~ for most of our population. In 2013 the average income of the wealthiest 20% of those in the U.S. was 15 times greater than that of the poorest 20% (\$202,600 vs \$13,100), while their accumulated wealth was 4 times greater than the poorest 20% (\$265,000 vs \$73,200). Furthermore, within the 99% huge racial and class disparities in income and wealth increased. exist between racial groups. For example, the typical black household has just 6% of the wealth of the typical white household, and the typical Latino household has 8%.

~~Factors that have contributed to this escalation include~~ The growth of inequity does not happen by accident. It is a direct consequence of the decisions of those people who own and control the nation's and world's corporations and resources and their allies in government, who take for themselves the wealth created by the hands and minds of the many and the bounty of our fragile planet. Their actions and policies have led to the decline of labor unions, the increased cost of education and health care, and automation. Unlimited funding of campaigns by wealthy individuals and corporations, lack of access to conventional financial institutions and predatory lending, and flawed tax policies increase inequity and insecurity. In the political realm, corporate personhood and the focus on individualism (rather than the collective good) have also contributed to escalating inequity.

Intersectionality

All forms of oppression or privilege intersect and contribute to inequity and inequality. We are not a homogenous nation. Social differentiation; where we live, work, and play; and our family systems all determine our access to money and wealth. Our political, social, and economic constructs do not provide an equitable playing field. Because the tax system in the United States is increasingly regressive, billionaires often pay little or nothing, while ~~middle class and lower middle class people~~ others pay taxes and are still driven into financial insecurities by complexities of bankruptcy, by combinations of educational debt, unexpected medical costs, and a lack of public services.

The 2000 Statement identified systemic racism as a major factor in economic inequality. ~~and racism continues to contribute to inequality, but is not the only contributor. Other systems that are intrinsically intertwined with the~~ We also call out white supremacy and capitalism as key factors. Other oppressions based on identity are deeply imbedded in systems of economic system include technology, health care, education, judicial and criminal justice, community

35 development, environment, and transportation. A change in one system usually affects other systems. Therefore,
36 improving our economic system requires making changes beyond the finance and business sectors. ~~For example, people~~
37 ~~with ill health and low literacy tend to have lower wealth, conversely one's financial position influences health status~~
38 ~~and educational attainment.~~ Increased rates of incarceration have disenfranchised and made less employable large
39 numbers of people, especially people of color. The persecution and lack of protection for the large numbers of
40 undocumented workers, increased automation, and the decline of unions worker and labor protections puts downward
41 pressure on wages for many ~~unskilled and semi-skilled~~ jobs and encourages exploitation. Within societal systems,
42 gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, race, class, religion, and physical, mental and developmental ability and
43 disability all intersect with issues of economic inequity. These identities shape one's labor market experience,
44 opportunity, and outcome.

45 Women are especially vulnerable to economic inequity. The gender pay gap has life-long financial effects and
46 contributes directly to increased poverty levels of women of all ages, races, and cultural backgrounds. Lack of access to
47 affordable and effective reproductive health care threatens the economic well-being of women and their families.

48 Marginalized people including, but not limited to, people of color, LGBTQA+, transgender, and gender-diverse people
49 as well as immigrants, refugees and migrant workers ~~Many black, Latino, Native American, transgender, and immigrant~~
50 ~~workers~~ are relegated to "~~second-class~~ socially devalued work, and are over-represented in ~~low-skill, low-wage~~
51 occupations with limited chances to move up the ladder of opportunity. ~~People in low-skill, low-wage occupations are~~
52 ~~likely to lack a college degree due in part to underfunded public schools and the increasing costs of higher education.~~
53 ~~Those that do get advanced education often end with huge student debt that limits their purchasing power.~~ These issues
54 are compounded by underfunded public schools, increasing costs of higher education, and increasing student debt which
55 limits purchasing power. People in poverty often cannot get to jobs ~~far from their homes~~ because of inadequate public
56 transportation services. ~~Low-income people often live where employers don't locate, where local and county~~
57 ~~governments have failed to build public transit, and where the tax base is too small to properly fund schools.~~ Even when
58 people of color and other marginalized populations surmount these obstacles, they still often face job discrimination
59 discriminatory policies and practices.

60 **Religious Grounding**

61 Our Unitarian Universalist faith ~~demands that we~~ calls us to respond to economic injustice and advocate for those among
62 us being harmed by inequity. We know that there is enough for all everyone's need but not enough for greed. ~~and that~~
63 We can create a world global beloved community based on inclusive ~~wealth creation and wealth~~ sharing of resources
64 and universal sufficiency. We cannot ignore the harm caused by a system that gives control of wealth and resources to a
65 very small percentage of people while many others, including those who carry out the work of the world, struggle to
66 survive. Our sources, principles, and theologies of our faith compel us to act.

67 Wisdom from the world's religions inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life. Buddhists acknowledge the poisonous
68 nature of greed. Islam asserts that the principle of justice must be at the core of economic activities. The *Tao Te Ching*
69 states that if you chase after money and security your heart will never unclench. ~~Judaism~~ Our Jewish and Christian roots
70 teach us that poverty is an unjustifiable burden and ~~our Judeo-Christian roots teach~~ that we should love our neighbors as
71 ourselves. Our own Universalist tradition counsels us that we should manifest our mutual salvation on the earth by our
72 individual and collective efforts in service of sufficient abundance for all.

73 We believe that our worth and dignity is inherent in our humanity, not dependent on ~~Our~~ economic status. ~~does not~~
74 ~~determine our inherent worth.~~ We will all live in more abundance when our economy connects human gifts with human
75 needs. ~~and when budgets at all levels, especially those derived from tax dollars, value equity and people over property.~~
76 People are prioritized over profits when the moral statements inherent in budgets implement Unitarian Universalist
77 values. Money should be a tool to serve the collective good; ~~It is~~ not an end unto itself or a measure of success.

78 Words and deeds of prophetic people challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil such as inequality with
79 justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love. We are called to be in solidarity with the most vulnerable,
80 disenfranchised, and oppressed among us. Our prophetic call is to speak out against toxic ideas and falsehoods that
81 divide us and pit us against one another rather than bringing us together in love.

82 **A Moral Economic System**

83 Our principle of justice, equity and compassion in human relations drives us to work for healthier and more equitable
84 economic systems. We strive to build communities where everyone is supported in living healthy, safe, and sustainable
85 lives.

- 86 A moral economic system would include:
- 87 - Equal pay for equal work and elimination of the racial, ethnic, and gendered wealth gap;
 - 88 - A major societal investment in communities that have been left out and locked out;
 - 89 - A guaranteed minimum income for everyone;
 - 90 - A minimum wage, indexed for inflation, that provides a living wage with benefits regardless of disability or
 - 91 ability and a career path;
 - 92 - A tax structure that rewards the creation of good paying jobs and adequately and fairly taxes the wealthy and
 - 93 corporations, including the reconstruction of the inheritance tax;
 - 94 ~~Higher marginal tax rate and closing tax loopholes;~~
 - 95 - ~~Stronger~~ Worker protections and rights, a ~~strong~~ union movement, and ~~more~~ worker-friendly trade agreements;
 - 96 - A growing sector of locally owned businesses and worker-owned cooperatives;
 - 97 - Wages that honor the work of hands as well as minds;
 - 98 - Universal access to non-predatory lending and affordable banking;
 - 99 - Financial sector reforms that lower risk and create markets that reward long term investments, research,
 - 100 development, sustainability, and reinvestment in people and communities;
 - 101 - Investment in innovation, long-term growth, and institutions and businesses that provide good paying jobs and
 - 102 career paths;
 - 103 - Environmentally sustainable economic practices and policies, for example renewable energy;
 - 104 - Universal access to affordable quality education at all levels (from preschool through vocational or graduate
 - 105 school) and to job- training and retraining plus support in achieving a career path;
 - 106 - Universal health care and paid sick leave;
 - 107 - Access to paid family leave and other economic support for those who care for children, the elderly, and people
 - 108 with disabilities;
 - 109 - An open immigration system that provides equal opportunity and protection for both citizens and non-citizen
 - 110 workers;
 - 111 - Affordable and equitable housing for all;
 - 112 - Dismantling of the system that forces many to enlist in the military to achieve a basic income, healthcare and
 - 113 education; and
 - 114 - Dismantling of the prison industrial complex, including reform of laws pertaining to bail, sentencing, and
 - 115 incarceration, and civil forfeiture; and implementing systems of restorative justice.

116 **Actions**

117 Unitarian Universalism has a prophetic message about the human capacity to create change and make our world,
118 societies, systems, and communities better. By speaking, acting, and spending in concert with one another and by
119 centering, resourcing, and empowering communities who are most impacted by economic inequities, we can create
120 better and more just economies. Together we can make a difference. Listed below are possible actions to select from.

121 As Individuals we can:

- 123 • Review our personal history and our national history with money, our class backgrounds, and how that shapes
- 124 our relationships with financial matters.
- 125 • Examine our role in the financial system and what we are willing to change.
- 126 • Assess how we personally spend money and use our money in support of our values.
- 127 • Invest in social impact hubs that fund entrepreneurs representing those parts of society that are economically
- 128 oppressed or marginalized.
- 129 • ~~Seek out and support black-owned businesses and other enterprises directly benefiting those who are~~
- 130 ~~marginalized or oppressed.~~
- 131 • Seek out and support black-owned and indigenous owned businesses, as well as businesses owned by other
- 132 racialized and marginalized groups.
- 133 • Recognize and support other enterprises directly benefiting those who are marginalized or oppressed.
- 134 • Consider the ecological consequences of every economic decision and whenever possible, buy local and
- 135 participate in Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), farmers' markets, and locally owned businesses.
- 136 • Spend money compassionately, considering whether items are ethically sourced and employers have ethical
- 137 labor practices.
- 138 • Track, promote, and abide by boycotts and support firms that treat workers, suppliers, and the environment
- 139 fairly.
- 140 • Actively support or participate in unions, union retiree groups, worker centers and organizing drives.

- 141 • Mobilize ourselves and others to use the ballot box, campaign donations, and letters to the editor, social media,
142 and calls/emails/visits with elected officials to work for a moral economic system.
- 143 • Invest in micro-loan projects, crowd-source funding, time banks, and other finance options outside the corporate
144 banking and investment system.
- 145 • Engage in ecologically and socially responsible investing and use our power as stockholders to influence
146 company policies.
- 147 • Divest from racist systems; invest in communities of color.
- 148 • Move accounts from corporate banks to local banks or credit unions.
- 149 • Report and avoid businesses that use enslaved labor.

150 As Congregations we can

- 151 • ~~Create a study group on the~~ Engage in continuing study on inequality using materials such as the Commission
152 on Appraisal's 2017 book on Classism and take action on it.
- 153 • Assess the congregation's biases and attitudes toward those from various class and economic backgrounds and
154 then make adjustments as needed to be more welcoming and inclusive.
- 155 • Examine the congregation's relationship with money, including how finances drive operations and programs and
156 how money is discussed, disbursed, and secured.
- 157 • Create an equitable salary scale and benefit package for the congregation's staff including the minister(s) using
158 the UUA guidelines.
- 159 • Determine how transparent the congregation is about money matters.
- 160 • Organize advocacy initiatives such as postcard, Twitter storm, flash mobs, petition drives, or other large volume
161 campaigns in support of a just economic system.
- 162 • Keep the congregation's money in socially responsible investment vehicles.
- 163 • Divest from racist systems; invest in communities of color.
- 164 • Advocate for affordable housing and other community efforts that assist those who are oppressed, marginalized,
165 or disadvantaged.
- 166 • Partner with other local faith communities and social justice groups on joint actions for livable wages,
167 affordable housing, disruptions of intact low-income neighborhoods, gentrification projects, etc.
- 168 • Actively participate in interfaith and other community organizing efforts for local policy and systemic changes
169 that affect economic inequality.
- 170 • Organize or participate in local alternative financial opportunities such as time banks and co-ops.
- 171 • Sponsor educational opportunities within the congregation and the community that reveal factors contributing to
172 increased economic inequity as well as potential solutions.
- 173 • Advocate for getting money out of politics, ending corporate welfare, reforming corporate governance, changing
174 tax laws to be more equitable, revising bankruptcy laws, and increasing support for public education.

175 Our State Legislative Ministries can

- 176 • Include ~~wealth~~ economic inequity as a factor in determining legislative advocacy priorities.
- 177 • Create and publish report cards on state legislators' records on issues impacting the financial well-being of
178 marginalized groups.
- 179 • Host bi-partisan forums that bring attention to issues identified as part of a moral economic system.
- 180 • Engage in advocacy consistent with a moral economic system: getting money out of politics; ending corporate
181 welfare; reforming corporate governance; reforming bankruptcy laws; reforming the tax code; reforming work
182 place protection to include the LGBTQA+; reforming laws pertaining to bail, sentencing, and incarceration, and
183 civil forfeiture; state level universal health care; universal parental leave; fair wage legislation; and increasing
184 support for public education and job retraining.

185 As a Denomination we can:

- 186 • Offer to all interested Unitarian Universalists an affordable group health insurance plan and advocate for
187 universal health care coverage for all.
- 188 • Continue socially responsible investment practices.
- 189 • Invest in state legislative ministries and in advocacy at the national level.
- 190 • Participate in interfaith coalitions and other social justice groups that work toward achieving a moral economic
191 system.

- 192 • Continue to work cooperatively with the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) on projects such as
193 “Behind the Kitchen Door.”
194 • Invest in low income communities.
195 • Invest in communities and leaders of color, and support reparations.
196 • Advocate for the various elements of a moral economic system.

197 As Unitarian Universalists our faith calls us to counter fear with courage and manifest a collective vision of a more just,
198 equitable, and compassionate society.

UNINCORPORATED AMENDMENTS

- A. Insert in Line 2 after first sentence: “Rampant capitalism, which places profit over people, is a central part of the system that creates and enforces white supremacy culture and global oppression. As Unitarian universalists this system is radically incompatible with our faith and our values.”
Substantive change, deserves consideration by full assembly.
- B. Line 4: insert after inequity “and rampant corporate capitalism”.
Substantive change, potentially redundant if previous amendment accepted.
- C. Insert before 2nd Sentence in Line 2: “The current levels of economic inequity are a genuine moral outrage. They are a deep violation of the first principle of Unitarian Universalism and run counter to the moral teachings of all major religions. And the sad fact is that it did not happen by accident. Two significant factors created the current situation. First, capitalist profit, i.e. quarterly corporate returns to investors were elevated to our highest value; far above the well-being of citizens. Second, were concerted, carefully planned, and well organized campaigns against progressive taxation and inheritance taxes. Insatiable greed is an infirm base on which to build a civilized world. Our UU values demand that we speak out loudly and then act boldly for justice”
Substantive change, deserves consideration by full assembly.
- D. Change Title to read (Line 1) “Advancing Equity and Erasing Inequity”
Deserves consideration by full assembly. Changes CSAI title.
- E. Eliminate Lines 87-117 and 124-198.
Substantive change, deserves consideration by full assembly.
- F. Lines 199-200: Change to read “to counter fear of change with courage, strength, and truth to manifest...”
Narrows statement, change is not the only thing to fear.
- G. Line 14 -- Add "An example of the gender and age inequality is that ___ % of people living under the poverty line are women and children."
Narrows statement: only shows part of the story
- 199 H. After line 151, add point: “Avoid products and businesses that use profits to promote unethical systems.
Lacks clarity.
- I. Line 138 add “ecologically and” before “ethically”
Redundant, covered in above point.
- J. Line 42 add the word "gender" in front of the words “gender identity”.
Redundant.
- K. Line 176: add to the end of the sentence: “By supporting legislative advocacy at the state, regional, and/or national level.”
Limits scope, does not include local.
- L. Lines 77-78: Delete “or a measure of success”
Changes meaning of statement: mini assembly group was not in consensus about change.

- M. Line 166: Delete “affordable housing and other”
Makes statement vaguer and less concrete.
- N. Move Lines 84-86 to after line 72.
Would eliminate bridge between sections.
- O. Line 191, add: “including establishing an ongoing UUA presence in Washington, DC”
This would commit the UUA, which GAs may not do.
- P. Line 190, add new point: “Offer to all interested Unitarian Universalists the opportunity to invest personal funds alongside our denomination's socially responsible investments”
This could present liability issues for the UUA.
- Q. Line 9-10, after 99% add "of the U.S. population"
Changed by another amendment.
- R. Line 37, Replace with: “Lower wealth; conversely, one’s financial financial...”
Text reference deleted.
- S. Line 37, Replace “lower” with “less.”
Text reference deleted.
- T. Lines 2–22: Define “ethically/ethical/ethics”
No definition provided. Later section defines Moral Economic System.
- U. Line 149: Do one of the following: Eliminate 1st clause OR eliminate entire point OR Keep as is.
Mini-assembly did not reach consensus.
- V. Lines 8-9, could you clarify who has experienced decreased support for growth and innovation? Is this describing a certain group?
This is a question not an amendment, answer: all groups, other amendments cover this.
- W. Line 31, Remove "is unionized" and replace it with "has adequate protection from employer abuse"
Could not find language in SOC.
- X. Line 40, "decline of worker and labor protections" to replace "decline of unions"
Sentence replaced by another amendment.
- Y. Line 49, Propose changing "Latino" to "Latinx"
The word Latino was removed from SOC.
- Z. Line 120-121, Change to "By speaking, acting, and spending in concert with one another and with our shared values, we can create better and more just economies."
Sentence was changed by another amendment.