

Environmental Justice Task Force

published October 19, 2024

Environmental Justice matters to Unitarian Universalists

Environmental justice aims to ensure that everyone has access to a healthy environment and that the burdens of pollution are not borne by certain—often Black, Brown, and poor—communities. Environmental justice seeks to protect people from disproportionate environmental and health hazards, including those related to climate change.

We live out our UU values of **interdependence** and **justice** by supporting legislation that honors the interconnected web of life and that protects underserved communities from exploitation.

Our Work

Clean Energy

New Jersey can be a Clean Energy leader. With a goal of 100% clean energy by 2035, ours is an ambitious goal—and one worth striving for.

We oppose new fossil fuel projects, testify for/against many legislative bills, attend rallies, testify at public hearings, sign on to coalition letters, join meetings with coalition partners, and meet with legislators about specific legislation.

Green Amendment

The NJ Green Amendment would enshrine in our state constitution that *every person* has the *right* to a clean and healthy environment.

We are leading UU education and advocacy on the Green Amendment, most notably with our recent postcard campaign to NJ legislators.

Agriculture and Food Security

Regenerative Farming recognizes the importance of healthy soil for growing healthy food while also reducing greenhouse gases by sequestering carbon.

We partner with the Northeast Organic Farming Association to support positive bills and policies.



Forestry

Pro-forestation honors the interconnected web of life by prioritizing nature managed forests over those managed by people.

We served on the NJ Forest Stewardship Task Force to make recommendations for forestry legislation. We are preparing to testify when a Forestry bill is brought to public hearing.

Education

We are working to strengthen New Jersey's Environmental Education Commission and update the Education Standards for 1.6 million students to include climate change and sustainability.

In Coalition With

Our enduring partners in this work include: Empower NJ, NJ Shines, GreenFaith, NJ Highlands Coalition, NJ Wind Works, Pinelands Preservation Alliance, Ironbound Community Corporation, NJ Environmental Justice Alliance, and the Northeast Organic Farmers Association.



Words to Inspire

We encourage you to remember our shared commitment to environmental justice in your chalice lightings, Sunday Services, and small groups.

- “We honor the interdependent web of all existence. With reverence for the great web of life and with humility, we acknowledge our place in it. We covenant to protect Earth and all beings from exploitation. We will create and nurture sustainable relationships of care and respect, mutuality and justice. We will work to repair harm and damaged relationships.” — ***“Shared Unitarian Universalist Values,” UUA Bylaws***
- “Environmental Justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.” — ***“The Principles of Environmental Justice,” First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit***
- “Why am I an activist? Because I’m in love. With salmon, with trees outside my window, with baby lampreys living in sandy stream bottoms, with slender salamanders crawling through the duff. And if you love, you act to defend your beloved. Of course results matter to you, but they don’t determine whether or not you make the effort. You don’t simply hope your beloved survives and thrives. You do what it takes.” — ***Derrick Jensen, author and ecophilosopher***

Get Involved

- Invite Rev. Charles or one of our coalition partners to speak at your congregation!
- Subscribe to receive timely **Action Alerts** when your representatives are making critical decisions on key environmental legislation. Subscribe at: bit.ly/join-uufanj
- Read the *Environmental Justice Task Force Newsletter* for a comprehensive monthly review of recent activities and upcoming events: uufaithaction.org/environment
- Attend our monthly **First Friday Action Hour**, 12-1 p.m. the first Friday of every month, to take real-time action on intersecting justice issues: bit.ly/1st-fridays
- **Join our Task Force!** The Environmental Justice Task Force meets every third Wednesday, 3-5 p.m. Contact Chair Peggy Middaugh at environment@uufaithaction.org



Immigration Justice Task Force

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Immigration Justice matters to Unitarian Universalists

Immigration justice seeks to enable people who are immigrants of any status to participate in our society equally, and to seek legal immigration status in a just and compassionate manner, consistent with our Country's claim to be a generous, welcoming nation of immigrants.

Working for immigration justice is an expression of our UU values. We celebrate **pluralism** and embrace **transformation** in New Jersey toward diverse multicultural communities where all thrive. We partner with immigrant-led coalition partners to dismantle systemic oppressions, promote **equity**, and nurture relationships of mutuality and **justice**.



"We envision a just New Jersey that is fair and welcoming to all regardless of their immigration status... My values tell me that every single person is worthy, and dignified, and should be entitled to full respect. And I believe that most people in New Jersey believe that, too."

Rev. Charles Loflin, Immigrant Trust Act Press Conference, October 9, 2024



Our Work

Currently, our top priority is passage of the **New Jersey Immigrant Trust Act** (bill S3672). The Immigrant Trust Act is priority legislation for our *New Jersey Immigrant Justice Alliance*, the largest immigration coalition in our state.

The Immigrant Trust Act provides critical privacy protections for immigrants. These protections promote equity and empower New Jerseyans to seek public services, stand up for their rights, and participate fully in their communities without fear of deportation.

New Jersey already has taken first steps through the Immigrant Trust Directive, but the protections are not permanent. The Immigrant Trust Act strengthens those provisions, creates additional safeguards, and ensures sensitive information is not shared or collected at places like:

- Public schools
- Healthcare facilities
- Public libraries
- Shelters & more

In Coalition With

Our enduring partners in this work include: NJ Alliance for Immigrant Justice, First Friends of New Jersey and New York; American Friends Service Committee, The Jewish Center/Interfaith Refugee Settlement Committee, Interfaith- RISE, Faith in New Jersey, ACLU of New Jersey, New Labor



**American
Friends
Service
Committee**



TJC/IRRC



REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT SERVICES
AND EMPOWERMENT



ACLU
New Jersey



Words to Inspire

We encourage you to remember our shared commitment to immigration justice in your chalice lightings, Sunday Services, and small groups.

- “We declare that every person is inherently worthy and has the right to flourish with dignity, love, and compassion. We covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.” — **“Shared Unitarian Universalist Values,” UUA Bylaws**
- “As a matter of theology—as a simple way of affirming and promoting the very first of our Unitarian Universalist principles—we need to do what we can to humanize the immigrants in our community, to understand them as our neighbors... to work so that their inherent worth and dignity is respected by all in our society. And on this issue, our theology runs smack up against a brick wall of politics.” — **“A Knock at the Door,” Rev. Michael J. Tino**
- “Professor Miguel De La Torre writes, ‘Perhaps it might be more accurate to speak of the responsibility of restitution rather than the virtue of hospitality. It erases the history that would have us remember that those who cross the border today, those choosing to brave the harsh conditions of the desert, those who face the possibility of death, imprisonment, deportation, criminalization are doing so because the U.S. once crossed their borders to extract their resources and...labor.’ It is, for them, a matter of survival. It is, for the U.S., a matter of restitution... What would right relationship look like?” — **“We Are Not Guests,” Rev. Alicia R. Forde**

Get Involved

- Invite Rev. Charles or one of our coalition partners to speak at your congregation!
- Subscribe to receive timely **Action Alerts** when your representatives are making critical decisions on key immigration legislation. Subscribe at: bit.ly/join-uufanj
- Attend our monthly **First Friday Action Hour**, 12-1 p.m. the first Friday of every month, to take real-time action on intersecting justice issues: bit.ly/1st-fridays
- **Join our Task Force!** The Immigration Justice Task Force meets every first Thursday, 8-9 p.m. Contact Chair Marty Rothfelder at immigration@uufaithaction.org



Criminal Justice Reform Task Force

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Criminal Justice Reform matters to Unitarian Universalists

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe the American criminal justice system uses mechanisms of racial and social control that conflict with our UU principles, including **justice, equity,** and compassion in human relations; the inherent worth and dignity of every person; and the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all. The criminal legal system in its current state cannot be called a criminal justice system. **Transformation** is necessary at every turn.

Our work for criminal justice reform seeks to move against the present system of mass incarceration by various means: supporting legislation to reduce prison and jail populations, improving the conditions incarcerated people face, and other efforts advanced by directly-impacted advocates. We are monitoring local policing for abuse and working toward alternatives to incarceration through methods of restorative justice.

Our Work

End Solitary Confinement

In 2019 New Jersey passed a groundbreaking bill to end solitary confinement. That bill has not been adequately implemented to date; in fact, there is scarcely any evidence that the bill passed at all.

Our alliance, *NJ Prison Justice Watch*, works to monitor the implementation of the Isolated Confinement Restriction Act, to call out the failures to implement it, and to demand that steps be taken to implement the bill.

Rehabilitative Release for Seniors

NJ prisons house more than 1000 people who are 60+ and have served more than 20 years. These individuals represent essentially zero probability of recidivism.

Our task force is working in support of legislation that would give these individuals an opportunity for a resentencing hearing before a judge with the presumption that, if their record is exemplary, they will be released from prison.

Free Phone Calls

At present, people incarcerated in NJ prisons and jails are charged high rates for phone calls and emails to their friends and families. The prices are so high that the vendors providing this service make a significant profit.

Our task force is working in coalition with the nonprofit *Worth Rises* to move a bill through the legislature making phone calls free in both prisons and jails and making email available at very reduced costs.

Community & Corrections Summit

UU FaithAction NJ is a core member and sponsor of the *New Jersey Community and Corrections Working Summit 2025*, to be held at Monmouth University on January 7th–8th. The Summit will bring together key state agencies that operate and maintain the criminal legal system. Sessions will be led by returning citizens (persons who have “served time”). The Summit aims to set a reform agenda for New Jersey prisons and jails for the next 20 years.

In Coalition With

Our enduring partners in this work include: New Jersey Prison Justice Watch, Abolish Life Imprisonment, Salvation and Social Justice, Latino Action Network, Worth Rises: Connecting Families Campaign, Newark/New Jersey Communities for Accountable Policing, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, America Friends Service Committee



Words to Inspire

We encourage you to remember our shared commitment to criminal justice reform in your chalice lightings, Sunday Services, and small groups.

- “Justice is the ongoing, never-ending journey to remake community by strengthening relationships.” — **Marvin M. Ellison, Ethicist**
- “In order to achieve equity in our society we must replace the wholesale incarceration of individuals. We must work toward healthy communities. Our ally, Antonne Hatcher, who runs a returning citizens support group in the Camden area, has stated that ‘only healthy communities are safe communities.’” — **Tom Moran, Criminal Justice Reform Task Force Chair**
- “The legal or criminal justice system centers around offenders and deserts—making sure offenders get what they deserve. Restorative justice is more focused on needs: those of victims, of communities, of offenders.” — **“The Little Book of Restorative Justice,” Howard Zehr**
- “The faith of free persons must tangibly make them free in a community of human dignity and equal justice.” — **“A Faith For the Free,” James Luther Adams**

Get Involved

- Invite our task force, a coalition partner, or Rev. Charles to **speak at your congregation!**
- **Save the Date** for the *New Jersey Community and Corrections Working Summit 2025*, January 7th-8th at Monmouth University in West Long Branch.
- Subscribe to receive timely **Action Alerts** when your representatives are making decisions on key legislation impacting our criminal legal system. Subscribe at: bit.ly/join-uufanj
- Attend our monthly **First Friday Action Hour**, 12-1 p.m. the first Friday of every month, to take real-time action on intersecting justice issues: bit.ly/1st-fridays
- **Join our Task Force!** The Criminal Justice Reform Task Force meets every third Monday, 7-8 p.m. Contact Chair Tom Moran at criminaljustice@uufaithaction.org



Reproductive Justice Task Force

published October 19, 2024

Reproductive Justice matters to Unitarian Universalists

Reproductive justice, a concept put forth by coalitions of women of color, promotes the right of all people to have children, to not have children, and to raise their children in safe and healthy environments. People also have a right to health and self-determination regarding their bodies and sexuality, free from oppression and shame.

All of our work for reproductive justice is grounded in the values of reproductive **justice** and **equity**. We work to address systemic inequities that negatively impact BIPOC people, our children and youth, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Our Work

Abortion Access

We are advocating for the passage of the *Reproductive Freedom and Health Equity* bill package introduced in the NJ legislature in June 2024. This legislation would increase access to abortion care and enhance protections for providers and patients.

In addition, our *Post Abortion Care Kit* project aims to provide tangible support to abortion seekers. And working with Thrive NJ, we are circulating a *Clergy Letter of Support for Abortion Access in NJ*.



Maternal Health

We are working with the Thrive NJ coalition to advocate for legislation and organizations that address the inequities in our health system that adversely affect Black women, specifically maternal mortality. We are also presenting screenings of the film "Birthing Justice."

Sexuality Education

We are compiling a contact list of OWL teams and supporters in our NJ congregations. Attacks on comprehensive sexuality education typically take place at the hyper-local level (school boards) and without much notice; our goal is to identify UU advocates who could respond rapidly if needed. We also collaborate with the Thrive NJ coalition.

Menstrual Equity

We continue to work to ensure that the recent legislation that provides menstrual products in NJ schools is implemented. The committee also continues to work to promote menstrual product availability in *all restrooms* in our UU congregational spaces.

LGBTQ+ Justice

Our task force has been meeting with members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies to create a space for emergent LGBTQ+ justice work within our task force. Many of the issues we face (e.g. book bans, sex ed, and support for trans youth) are inherently intersectional.

In Coalition With

Our enduring partners in this work include: Thrive NJ, NCJW Essex, NCJW Bergen



Words to Inspire

We encourage you to remember our shared commitment to reproductive justice in your chalice lightings, Sunday Services, and small groups.

- “To achieve Reproductive Justice, we must... (1.) **Analyze power systems...** (2.) **Address intersecting oppressions.** Audre Lorde said, “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”... (3.) **Center the most marginalized.** Our society will not be free until the most vulnerable people are able to access the resources and full human rights to live self-determined lives without fear, discrimination, or retaliation... and (4.) **Join together across issues and identities...** The intersectionality of RJ is both an opportunity and a call to come together as one movement with the power to win freedom for all oppressed people.” — ***SisterSong: Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective***
- “Our collective experience has shown that when women have the power to make their own choices, good things happen.” — ***Madeleine Albright, Former United States Secretary of State***
- “The chalice is lit / And in the flames the memory of / Our trans and non-binary ancestors / Do a dance of freedom and liberation / Reminding us that / We are whole and holy / We are loved beyond all measure / And in our refusal to accept anything less / May we know we are rooted / In the infinite divinity / Not relegated to the outskirts / Of the web of all existence / But enshrined at its core / Enfleshed with stardust and fairy dust / An intentional creation of space where our many Gods live” — ***“The Infinite Divinity,” Rev. Jami A. Yandle***

Get Involved

- Invite Rev. Charles or one of our coalition partners to speak at your congregation!
- Subscribe to receive timely **Action Alerts** when your representatives are making critical decisions on key reproductive health legislation. Subscribe at: **bit.ly/join-uufanj**
- Attend our monthly **First Friday Action Hour**, 12-1 p.m. the first Friday of every month, to take real-time action on intersecting justice issues: **bit.ly/1st-fridays**
- **Join our Task Force!** The Reproductive Justice Task Force meets every fourth Monday, 7-8 p.m. Contact Co-Chairs Carol Loscalzo and Jami Thall at **reprojustice@uufaction.org**

