



# PRAIRIE FIRE

"As the prairie stretches out until it becomes one with the sky, let us reach out to touch and be one with the natural world and with one another." (from Bond of Union)

**December 24, 2004**

*Prairie Fire is the semi-monthly newsletter of Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. The two most recent issues may be seen at [www.prairie.madison.uua.org](http://www.prairie.madison.uua.org)*

President: Mike Briggs (608) 835-0914

Editor: Dan Proud, prairieu@execpc.com; (608) 661-0776

## PRAIRIE CALENDAR

### Sunday, December 26

☞ 10:00 a.m. "A Morning of Games and Laughter During a Busy Season," led by the Converse family.

### Tuesday, December 28

2:00 p.m. Prairie Elders meet.

### Sunday, January 2

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

10:00 a.m. "Singing Out Our UU History," led by Mary Mullen and Patty Stockdale.

### Sunday, January 9

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

☞ 10 a.m. "Music, What Soothes the Soul," presented by Sarah Lord.

### Sunday, January 16

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

☞ 10:00 a.m. "Is Tolerance Always a Virtue?" presented by Rev. Sarah Oelberg.

☞ 11:30 a.m. Book Club discusses *A Piano Tuner* at Prairie.

### Saturday, January 22

☞ 7:30 p.m. Playreaders at Bob and Barb Park's.

☞ = Details follow in this issue.

## DETAILS OF COMING EVENTS

### Sunday, December 26

The weekend of a major holiday can be tiring for all even if *you* are not celebrating the holiday. Too many cars on the road, crabby drivers, no parking, long lines, stressed out sales people, full restaurants. ...Come join us for a morning of sitting with friends, talking and playing some games. Research has shown that being with friends and laughter relieve stress. All ages welcome. Please bring along some comfort foods for snacks as we play. Also feel free to bring your favorite games, but *please* label them with your name. See you there.

### Sunday, January 2

"Singing Out Our UU History," led by Mary Mullen and Patty Stockdale, is a sing-along service covering our UU history in hymns and songs from 1776 to the late 1970's. Learn how Unitarian Universalists expressed their vision regarding abolition, temperance, women's suffrage, child labor, sexual orientation rights, and other important issues through music. This video from a 2003 General Assembly service in Boston puts the words we sing right on the screen, and words will also be provided on paper at the service. Come prepared to sing and listen.

### Sunday, January 9

"Music, What Soothes the Soul" is a program presented by Sarah Lord. She will be reflecting on the ways in which music has long been used as a healing art. Why does music have this power to

## **NEXT PRAIRIE FIRE DEADLINE: JANUARY 2**



soothe the soul? How has music helped groups of people get beyond difficult times? How does it help individuals? More specifically, Sarah Lord will be sharing some examples of music that has helped her through difficult periods of her life. She invites people to come prepared to share stories about specific pieces of music that have been particularly meaningful to them during challenging periods in their lives, and looks forward to learning from everyone's experiences.

### **Sunday, January 16**

Freedom, Reason, and Tolerance have long been considered fundamental to UUism. As we celebrate MLK's birthday and the civil rights movement, it may be time to ask whether tolerance is enough.

## **OUR SOCIETY**

### **PRAIRIE BOOK CLUB MEETS JANUARY 16**

Sunday, January 16, the Book Club will discuss *THE PIANO TUNER* by Daniel Mason. The story is set in Burma in the late 1800's. A shy piano tuner from London sets out with an unusual commission from the British War Office to tune a piano in the middle of the jungle in what is now Thailand. This is a fascinating setting and intriguing story of political adventure and unforgettable characters, says Barbara Chatterton.

Book Club selections are available at many branches of the Madison Public Library, including Sequoya & Monroe St., in book form and also on CD. You can purchase this book at Borders Book Store, 3750 University Avenue, for a 20% discount if you mention it is a "Prairie Book Club" selection. If you have forgotten the name of the book, just ask at the information desk, and they will look up our current selection.

Meetings are held at Prairie after the Sunday service, around 11:30 a.m. Bring food to share to the Sunday book club meeting (but come even if you forgot food). This is an open book club—anyone may attend on a drop-in basis.

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*Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race.*  
—H. G. Wells

### **IHN BEGINS THE NEW YEAR**

During the week of November 21–28, Prairie UU, a "buddy church", assisted Midvale Community Lutheran Church, a "host church", as it once again opened its doors to housing homeless families who are participating in the Madison area Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) program. Over the course of the week, four families found comfortable shelter, delicious food, and kind hospitality within the friendly confines of the church. The guests were very appreciative of all the hospitality they received from the volunteers and the volunteers were enriched by the experience.

Prairie volunteers will have four more opportunities for helping with this worthwhile social ministry next year. Midvale Lutheran's next host week is **January 23–30**. Prairie members and friends can help with unloading families' belongings, setting up the rooms, preparing the meals, serving the meals, playing with the children, staying overnight, doing the laundry, cleaning up after the guests' rooms are cleared, loading the truck with the families' belongings at the end of the week, transportation, and food shopping.

Please consider volunteering at that time. No previous experience is necessary, though new volunteers are expected to read the manual that Midvale Lutheran has thoughtfully put together, and to attend a two-hour training session at some time during the year. Children may also participate. They and their parents can share a meal and play with the guest children afterwards.

Please contact Paula Pachciarz (273–4806, [pachwack@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pachwack@sbcglobal.net)) if you are interested in volunteering or would like more information.

### **PRAIRIE WEB SITES**

*Prairie UU Society:*

[prairie.madison.uua.org](http://prairie.madison.uua.org)

*Prairie News Group:*

[groups.yahoo.com/group/prairienews/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairienews/)

*Prairie Views Group:*

[groups.yahoo.com/group/prairieviews/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairieviews/)

*Social Action:*

[socialaction.homestead.htm](http://socialaction.homestead.htm)

*Long Range Planning Committee (new):*

[www.execpc.com/~prairieu/ planning](http://www.execpc.com/~prairieu/ planning) (no space)

(To keep the above address from becoming a public site, type it directly into the browser. Omit space before "planning" - Ed.)

## REVISED PRAIRIE PLAYREADERS 2005 SCHEDULE

Prairie Playreaders is a group of Prairie members that get together monthly to read plays. No skill is necessary, just a willingness to read and enjoy.

Our 2005 schedule has been slightly revised, with starting times at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise indicated:

January 22—Bob & Barb Park with Donna Murdoch

February 19 (2:00 p.m.)—Group outing to see “Signs of Intelligent life in the Universe” at the Bartell Theatre

March 19—Susan Hagstrom

April 23—Dan & Robin Proud

May 14—Nancy Graham

June 17—Fish fry

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**Nifty Gifty** went very smoothly this year, thanks to the fabulous planning by Kathy Converse, all of the great donations by Prairie members for craft projects, and the following wonderful volunteers:

Kathy, Randy, Tara, and Mei-Lien Converse; Rachel Long and Reuben and Madeline Arnold; Susan and Rachel Herr-Hoyman; Paula Pachciarz and Carl and Judy Wacker; Maggie Siegfried; Kerry Beheler; Patty Stockdale; Leif Gjestvang-Lucky; Kim Truog; Ritika Batajoo; Judy Skog; Norma Briggs; Erin Bosch; Brian Kuzdas; Marie Nahlik; and Orange Schroeder!

Thanks so much for all of your help!

On **Friday, December 18**, four of our high school youth went to a joint overnight between James Reeb and Prairie that was hosted by the folks at Reeb. A special thanks to Rick Ruecking for staying overnight with them and to Paula Pachciarz for all of her help with planning the event!

A letter was sent out by the RE Committee in the last few weeks which contained a section requesting a response from Prairie members and friends. **We are still awaiting the return of many of the forms!** Please drop them downstairs in the box outside the office or mail them to me at Prairie. Thanks in advance for your help with this!

You may have noticed a lot more preschoolers at Prairie in recent weeks. **We are now in need of a teacher for preschoolers!** If you are available to teach some Sundays, please let me know! We have a fantastic curriculum available to use, designed by our own Randy Converse.

In Peace,  
*Melissa Gjestvang-Lucky, DRE*

## DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS

### CALL FOR PRESENTERS FOR DISTRICT ASSEMBLY

If you might be interested in presenting a workshop at the 2005 District Assembly in April, you must submit a workshop presenter proposal form by Wednesday, January 5.

The theme for the 2005 District Assembly, to be held in Arlington Heights, IL is **Creating Beloved Community: The Challenge and The Promise**

The form is posted on the small, portable bulletin board near the entrance to the fellowship hall. Or you can contact Carol Hosmer at 708-236-0831 or [chosmer@cmwd-uua.org](mailto:chosmer@cmwd-uua.org) and she will send a form immediately either by e-mail or USPS.

If you have any questions, please contact Dori Davenport: [DoriDuure@aol.com](mailto:DoriDuure@aol.com)

### UU PLAYGROUP FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

FUS member Julie Shinefield is coordinating a UU playgroup for area congregations. This newly formed group is open to all 3 Madison UU congregations and meets the first Wednesday of each month. Please let Julie Shinefield know if you plan on attending: 834-0680 or [jshine@charter.net](mailto:jshine@charter.net).

- Weekday UU Playgroup—Meets 1-2x/month for families with children 5 and under. Contact Teresa Nicholas, [nicholasteresa@hotmail.com](mailto:nicholasteresa@hotmail.com) or 833-4652
- Weekend UU Playgroup—Meets 1-2x/month. Contact Erin Chudacoff, [erinhchud@hotmail.com](mailto:erinhchud@hotmail.com) or 848-2405

## **UNITY TEMPLE LYCEUM SPEECH BY THE REV. FORREST CHURCH ON JANUARY 21**

Before the Civil War, Americans of all stripes gathered together in local lyceums, taking part in a compelling experiment in community education. While noted speakers, including Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, addressed the great moral, political, and scientific issues of the day, audiences listened, argued, and hatched their own ideas.

Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist Congregation, housed in Frank Lloyd Wright's landmark Unity Temple, 875 Lake Street, Oak Park, Illinois, is reviving this tradition. On Friday evening, January 21, the new Unity Temple Lyceum Series begins with a lecture by the Rev. Forrest Church, senior minister of the Unitarian Church of All Souls in New York City.

The son of the late Senator Frank Church of Idaho, Forrest Church is the author of many acclaimed books, including *God and Other Religious Liberals*, *The American Creed*, and *The Separation of Church and State*. He is a leading figure in the Unitarian Universalist movement, a provocative speaker, and an important thinker about the role of faith in American political life.

You'll want to join us on January 21—just after Inauguration Day—for this powerful evening of talk about religion, politics, and finding our national way forward.

The Lyceum begins at 7:30 and will be held in the sanctuary of Unity Temple. Free child care will be available. There is no admission fee, but a suggested donation of \$10 would be appreciated.

For more information call Greg Nosan at (708) 660-9587 or the Unity Temple office at (708) 848-6225.

## **UUSC GUEST AT YOUR TABLE BOXES**

This annual UUSC fundraiser is underway. Share your bounty with a guest at your dinner table by depositing a coin in the Guest at Your Table box. Contributions from individuals exceeding \$50 are matched and UUSC contributions over \$25 automatically entitle you to membership. Dan Proud is collecting the Guest at Your Tables boxes or checks.

## **WOMEN'S WINTER CONFERENCE**

WomanSpirit 2005 Winter Conference, "Choosing with Purpose—Living with Conscience—Women in Community," will take place on Friday, January 21, through Sunday, January 23, at the Springfield Hilton in Springfield, Illinois. Anna Blythe Lappe, coauthor of *Hope's Edge: the Next Diet for a Small Planet*, is the keynote speaker.

This conference is presented by the Women and Religion Committee, Central Midwest District, and Women of the Central Illinois Planning Committee. Check the Web site: [www.womenandreligion.org](http://www.womenandreligion.org).

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Please note these updates:

Barb Bailly  
BrbbL9 (at) aol.com

Richard and Julia Bonser  
6666 Odana Rd. #124  
Madison, WI 53711

Barbara Chatterton  
bchatter10 (at) sbcglobal.net

Kim Truog  
kim\_truog (at) hotmail.com

*(Note: change "(at)" to @ and omit the spaces. We're showing these addresses like this to avoid spammers who might pick them up online from this newsletter. —Ed.)*

## **PRAIRIE OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR HOURS**

*Mondays 8–10 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.–12 noon*

## **SHAAREI SHAMAYIM CALENDAR**

*Saturdays 8:45 a.m.–1:15 p.m.*

*Prairie Liaison: Celeste Robins 249–5933*

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*When ideology and theology couple, their offspring are not always bad but they are always blind."*

*—Bill Moyers*

*(From his acceptance speech on receiving the Global Environment Citizen Award from the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School. Read his entire speech at <http://gristmill.grist.org/story/2004/12/3/164121/297> )*

## OTHER NEWS

### MADISON CAMPAIGN FOR FREE SPEECH ON CABLE TELEVISION

*Every day and night, hard-working people come home from their jobs and turn on their TV sets. Never before have they had so many channels to choose from, yet never before have their choices been so limited....Americans want a channel that is dedicated to asking the hard questions about the issues affecting their kids' future. They want a channel that's not afraid to confront abuses of power that rob them of jobs, health care, a meaningful education, a clean environment, civil rights for all, and a government by, for and of the people....Free Speech TV stands alone in the industry in its dedication to creating such a channel.*

— *Michael Moore. Director, Bowling for Columbine, Fahrenheit 9/11*

In a study of CNN, Fox, and MSNBC, the Project for Excellence in Journalism (<http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org>) found that in 16 hours of watching these cable news channels you would have seen:

- 2 minutes on education
- 1 minute on the environment
- 1 minute on healthcare
- 4 minutes on arts and culture
- 2.5 minutes about science
- 0.5 minutes on medical research

In contrast, during those 16 hours you'd have seen:

- Over an hour of crime news
- 1 hour of accidents and disasters
- 53 minutes of lifestyle coverage
- 41 minutes of celebrity and entertainment news
- And two hours and 17 minutes about Iraq.

On Free Speech TV today, some of what you could have seen includes:

- **Point of Attack:** Chronicles the post-911 racial profiling, large-scale round-ups, detentions and mass deportations of Arab, Muslim and South Asian men.
- **Tlalnepantla: The Price of Democracy:** A town in Mexico declares itself autonomous after a fraudulent election, and resists armed intervention.
- **Dyke TV:** Produced by lesbians for lesbians, Dyke TV mixes news, political commentary, the arts, health sports, etc.
- **Janine Benyus & Paul Stamets:** Nature as Mentor, Nature as Ally: Speeches by Janine Benyus and Paul Stamets

- **Rich Media, Poor Democracy:** Media conglomerates produce news system high on sensationalism and low on information.

Free Speech TV is the first national progressive television network. FSTV broadcasts independently-produced documentaries dealing with social, political, cultural, and environmental issues; commissions and produces original programming; develops programming partnerships and collaborations with social justice organizations; provides special live broadcasts from remote locations; and maintains an adjunct Web site that hosts one of the Internet's largest collections of progressive audio and video content at <http://www.freespeech.org>.

Free Speech TV was founded in 1995. From 1995 to 2000, the network provided weekly programming via videotape to a network of 50 community cable channels including Madison's WYOU. In 2000, FSTV realized its goal of launching the first national progressive television network when it was awarded a full-time satellite channel on DISH Network as a result of an FCC policy to set aside 4-7% of satellite channels for public interest channels.

Currently, FSTV is available on the DISH Network, channel 9415, and part-time on over 100 community television stations across the country, including WYOU channel 4, <http://www.wyou.org>.

Madison residents are organizing to add FSTV to local cable's full-time offerings through Charter Communications. For more information on the "Madison Campaign for Free Speech on Cable Television", contact FSTV's Jill Hopke at 608-225-6567 or [jhopke@freespeech.org](mailto:jhopke@freespeech.org).

*Jill Hopke*  
*Free Speech TV*

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Saturday, December 25, western Christian churches celebrate the birth of Jesus. In 325 CE (common era), the Council of Nicea adopted the Julian calendar as the official calendar of the Christian church. However, because the solar year is actually 365.2422 days long, 11.25 minutes shorter than the Julian calendar, by the 16th century the Julian calendar was 10 days behind the solar year. On March 1, 1582, Pope Gregory XIII corrected the calendar, which became known as the Gregorian calendar. Many Eastern Churches still adhere to the Julian calendar, and celebrate Christmas 13 days later.

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## UUSC NEWS BULLETIN

*The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC): advancing human rights and social justice in the United States and throughout the world.*

### BOYCOTT OF TACO BELL

Farmworkers picking tomatoes for Florida-based growers receive 40–45 cents for every 32-pound bucket of tomatoes picked and earn, on average, \$7,500 a year according to the Department of Labor. Their wages have remained unchanged in more than 20 years. In the past five years there have been three cases of debt-bondage slavery in the tomato fields that have been prosecuted by the U.S. Department of Justice and for which convictions and prison sentences have been handed down to crew leaders. Two more cases were uncovered in the fall of 2003.

In 1996 farmworkers formed the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and engaged in hunger strikes, work stoppages, and appeals to government leaders to address the exploitation in the fields. But there was no significant movement from the growers to raise wages or to dialogue with the workers. In 1999, *The Packer*, a grower's journal, published an article describing the long-term contractual relationship between Taco Bell and one of the lowest paying growers in Florida, the Six-L's Packing Company.

So in 2000, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers sought the help of an important client of Florida growers, Taco Bell. When Taco Bell did not respond to multiple letters and phone calls requesting that they address exploitation among their tomato suppliers, the workers called for a consumer boycott of Taco Bell in 2001. Boycott supporters are asking Taco Bell and its parent company Yum Brands to:

- Participate in three-way talks between the company, tomato suppliers, and representatives of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers
- Contribute to an immediate increase in farm worker wages through an increase in the per pound rate Taco Bell/Yum pays for its tomatoes and require its suppliers to pass this increase along to the workers
- Work with Taco Bell's/Yum's tomato suppliers and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to strengthen the company's code of conduct to include core labor rights and enforcement.

This consumer boycott was endorsed by many national religious bodies, including the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the American Friends Service Committee, Alliance of Baptist Churches, Pax Christi International and US affiliates,

and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the (U.S.A.), whose membership comprises 36 Protestant and Orthodox communions with a constituent membership of over 50 million Christians in the United States.

Church leaders and local congregations have been actively letter-writing and boycotting the restaurant and its products.

In February and March of 2004, the CIW embarked on a nationwide truth tour with key rallies in Louisville, Ky., where Taco Bell's parent company, Yum! Brands, is located, and a three-day march from Los Angeles to Irvine, Calif., where Taco Bell's world headquarters is located.

In March 2004, Oxfam America joined Mary Robinson, former High Commissioner of Human Rights for the United Nations, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and other religious leaders at a press conference in Immokalee calling for Yum! Brands to dialogue with its tomato suppliers and the CIW and to become a leader in establishing human rights.

At its annual meeting on May 20, 2004, Yum Brands made a statement to the press and to its shareholders that it would be willing to participate in a surcharge on tomatoes if its competitors did likewise. Subsequently, it breached a confidentiality agreement established by Yum, CIW, the PC(USA) and The Carter Center and spoke publicly on aspects of proposals under material discussion by the parties, in an attempt gain advantage for Yum. As disappointing as this was, the PC(USA) continues to urge Yum Brands to return to the table in good faith and with renewed commitment to seeking a solution in partnership with the CIW.

For more details, visit: [www.pcusa.org/boycott/](http://www.pcusa.org/boycott/)

### SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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#### **Action alert: Urge Congress to reject anti-terror legislation that permits torture**

The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives are currently considering legislation to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. Thanks to an outpouring of concerns from human rights activists, some of the more severe restrictions on civil liberties that were in the original House bill were removed by joint conference committee. However, it is important that activists continue to exert pressure during this lame-duck session of Congress to make sure the most harmful provisions do not re-emerge in the final bill.

Contact your members of Congress now. For more info, visit: [www.uusc.org/news/alert110504.html](http://www.uusc.org/news/alert110504.html)

Learn more about UUSC's STOP (Stop Torture Permanently) Campaign. Read a new interview with STOP director Jennifer Harbury. Visit: <http://www.uusc.org/info/article113004.html>.

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**Action alert: Tell Congress U.S. must respect Geneva Conventions in Fallujah**

United States forces invaded Fallujah in Iraq amid a storm of international criticism about severe violations of human rights and the Geneva Conventions. The reports are grim. Please contact your U.S. representative and senators and insist that our forces comply with the basic humanitarian requirements of international law. Our policy-makers need to know that the voters firmly support human rights for all people, not just for U.S. Citizens.

For an action alert, visit: [www.uusc.org/news/alert111804.html](http://www.uusc.org/news/alert111804.html).

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**Activists gain victory in campaign for rights of migrant farm workers**

A five-year boycott of the Mt. Olive Pickle Co. has ended in victory for both migrant farmer workers in North Carolina and social justice advocates who supported their campaign to gain the right to unionize. UUSC was among more than 300 organizations to endorse the boycott, which also was the focus of UUSC workcamps in 2002 and 2003 in Greenville, N.C.

To learn more about this victory, visit: <http://www.uusc.org/info/article120104.html>.

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**Action alert: Urge U.S. and U.N to help restore peace, justice and human rights to Haiti**

On Oct. 13, 2004, Haitian police forcibly entered St. Clare's Catholic Church in the nation's capital of Port-au-Prince and arrested the pastor, Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, without a warrant. Father Jean-Juste is a prominent activist for peace, justice and the rights of immigrants in Haiti and the United States.

Act now to help stop the attacks on civil society and restore the rule of law and functioning of democracy. Visit: [www.uusc.org/news/alert111604.html](http://www.uusc.org/news/alert111604.html)

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**Action alert: Urge supermarkets to carry fair trade products**

Join UUSC and other groups working to make supermarket shelves full of fairly traded products. Urging your supermarket to carry products that are Fair

Trade Certified such as coffee, tea and cocoa is one way you can help your community make a difference in the struggle for basic human rights. For more information, visit: <http://www.uusc.org/news/alert111904.html>.

Give fair trade coffee for the holidays! To buy fair trade coffee, tea, cocoa and chocolate now, visit [www.uusc.org/coffeeproject](http://www.uusc.org/coffeeproject).

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**UUSC steps up shareholder advocacy work to get HIV/AIDS drugs to the poor**

In recognition of World AIDS Day on Dec. 1, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and other faith-based organizations are expanding their shareholder advocacy efforts to make HIV/AIDS drugs available in the poorest countries of Africa and Asia. For more information, visit: <http://www.uusc.org/info/article112904.html>.

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**Second annual civil rights journey set for historic southern cities**

The second annual civil rights journey is set for historic southern cities. Visit <http://www.uusc.org> or click here [www.uusc.org/info/article121004.html](http://www.uusc.org/info/article121004.html) to read a full article on the upcoming Freedom Summer workcamp. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is excited to announce the second annual civil rights journey that will travel to several southern cities to learn firsthand about the struggles of the 1960s. The intergenerational trip will bring people together from around the country to travel by bus to historical sites that were significant during the civil rights movement. The inspirational journey will begin in Atlanta and move to Selma, Montgomery and Birmingham, Ala.

The Freedom Summer workcamp: A civil rights journey is scheduled for July 9-16, 2005. Participants also will hear the stories of civil rights activists will bring to life the struggles of those who risked their lives to register black voters and to demand other rights guaranteed by the Constitution. It will conclude with a service component assisting our Atlanta-based community partner, Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger.

At the inaugural Freedom Summer workcamp last year, 15 young people heard the messages of many civil rights warriors who were on the front lines of the struggles of the 1960s. They said the stories inspired them to become electoral activists last year and to make social justice a part of their everyday lives.

"The workcamp was one of those life-changing experiences that you only get once, and I'm very grateful to have been a part of it," said Chloe Silva, 17, of Athens, Ga.

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## **Voice your concerns about nomination of Alberto Gonzales for attorney general**

On Nov. 10, 2005 President Bush nominated Alberto Gonzales to the position of the United States Attorney General. Mr. Gonzales has been serving as the White House legal counsel, and would replace John Ashcroft if the nomination is approved.

This nomination has raised numerous concerns throughout the international human rights community. These concerns are based on the various legal memoranda authored by Mr. Gonzales during the ongoing war against terror, which advised Mr. Bush that as president and commander in chief of the armed forces, he was not bound by the Geneva Conventions or other humanitarian limitations on the conduct of war. In short, the documents placed Mr. Bush above the law. The memoranda also set forth highly distorted interpretations of the Convention Against Torture and similar treaties banning the use of torture. These interpretations de facto authorized the torture and abuse of detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Iraq and Afghanistan.

We believe that this history makes Mr. Gonzales an extremely poor choice for attorney general of the United States. His distorted interpretations reflect disrespect for the law itself, and his willingness to support and even encourage torture in our view make him an inappropriate government leader.

Please call or e-mail the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and voice your opinions about this nomination. Two key Senators would be Sen. Orrin Hatch, chairman of the committee, and Sen. Patrick Leahy, the ranking Democratic member. Other members are Republicans Charles Grassley (IA), Arlen Specter (PA), Jon Kyl (AZ), Mike DeWine (OH), Jeff Sessions (AL), Lindsey Graham (SC), Larry Craig (ID), and John Cornyn (TX). Also, Democrats Edward Kennedy (MA), Joseph Biden (DE), Herbert Kohl (WI), Dianne Feinstein (CA), Russell Feingold (WI), Charles Schumer (NY), Richard Durbin (IL), and John Edwards (NC).

The congressional switchboard number is 202-224-3121; and e-mails may be sent through our online Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/uusc/home>

You can use this message:

*We are calling to voice our grave concerns about the nomination of Alberto Gonzales for the position of attorney*

*general of the United States.*

*We believe that the White House memos authored by Mr. Gonzales show a willingness to distort and evade the law, poor qualities for any attorney general in this country.*

*Torture has been abhorrent to our system of national values since the framers of the Constitution. It has also been rejected again and again by our judiciary, and in numerous treaties ratified by our government.*

*Because Mr. Gonzales' memos certainly encouraged the use of torture with regards to detainees in the war against terror, we believe that he is poorly qualified indeed to serve as our attorney general.*

*The use of torture and other abuses is not only unethical and illegal, it puts our own servicemen and women at risk. Such harsh measures do not protect us, but rather endanger us.*

After the Sept. 11 attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., President Bush declared a global war on terror. This led to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the detention of numerous suspects in both countries, as well as at Guantanamo Bay. As is now well known, these detainees were subjected to shocking abuses, including torture, unfit prison conditions, and the deprivation of all reasonable due process rights.

After the outcry following the release of the photographs of the abuses at Abu Ghraib, investigations led to the disclosure of a number of memoranda authored by White House counsel as well as the Justice Department and certain Defense Department leaders.

These documents specifically addressed questions about the rights of all detainees under the Geneva Conventions, the Convention Against Torture, and U.S. domestic laws prohibiting torture. Mr. Gonzales, in his memo, specifically referred to the Geneva Conventions as " quaint " and " obsolete, " and suggested that President Bush might not be bound by those and other humanitarian provisions.

He also set forth a highly distorted interpretation of the applicable laws and treaties in order to de facto permit the abuses later seen at Abu Ghraib. Although Colin Powell and other military advisors strongly protested, the positions set forth by Gonzales and others in the end prevailed, with disastrous results.

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*For last year's words belong to last year's language. And next year's words await another voice.*

—T.S. Eliot