

# SPEAKING OF JUSTICE

faith in action

# WOMXN'S JUSTICE



March-April 2019

Portland Womxn's March 2019

# Dear Friends,

Thank you for exploring the topic of Women's Justice with us at First Unitarian Portland. It goes without saying that this subject is vast. This edition is our first attempt to isolate the impact of patriarchy on women in the context of our social justice work and in our church.

Generally defined, patriarchy is a societal system in which power is violently allocated to those who can oppress, specifically by gender. The gender binary under patriarchy is especially oppressive to people who do not reflect the socially-defined roles of "male" and "female." The binary is brutally enforced by the exclusion of and violence toward transgender, gender non-conforming, gender-fluid people, cisgender women and men who do not adhere to the "rules" of gender expression. [Read "Why Gender Pronouns Matter" by Intern Minister Mira Mickiewicz on the next page to learn more about gender terms.] As we focus on women's justice specifically, we recognize the unique, and yet unifying, impacts patriarchy has on womxn around the world. The liberation of women is essential to the liberation of all people.

Women's Justice is an issue of gender and oppression, and while we acknowledge gender diversity and inclusion, this edition of *Speaking of Justice* does not address all gender justice issues. We also acknowledge that our editorial team is made up of cisgender women and therefore our perspective is inherently narrow.\* We are also majority white women. For that reason, we especially welcome the comments and feedback from readers who identify as transgender, gender non-binary, genderqueer, and women/femmes of color. Please feel free to write us at [speakingofjustice@firstunitarianportland.org](mailto:speakingofjustice@firstunitarianportland.org).

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women (CEDAW) has been ratified by 187 of the 193 party states to the United Nations. The **United States of America** is one of only six countries that have not ratified CEDAW. (The others are Tonga, Palau, Iran, Somalia and Sudan.) CEDAW was developed because of the particular inequalities that women face under systems of patriarchy globally. In creating this issue of *Speaking of Justice*, we noticed that First Unitarian does not have an action group that focuses specifically on women's justice. However, each of our justice groups are fighting for social change in areas that disproportionately and/or unequally affect women: gun violence, poverty, homelessness, police violence, incarceration, sexual harassment and violence, economic inequality, immigration, environmental destruction, climate disruption and the treatment of all species, war, domestic violence, health care and mental health. These are all women's justice issues, and women are essential to the achievement of holistic change.

In the coming pages, you'll learn about the history of women and justice work at First Unitarian Church, get a glimpse of the thought and work that went into creating the "I Believe You" service and follow-up pastoral care, read poetry, prayers and testimony of Unitarian Universalists, and hear from our Social Justice Action Groups (SJAG) about how the injustices they address particularly and disproportionately impact women. We are grateful to be on this journey for justice together.

## The Speaking of Justice Editorial Team

Nikki Beezley (she/her), Social Justice Program Assistant

Dana Buhl (she/her), Director of Social Justice

Mindy Clark (she/her)

Ethel Gullette (she/her)

Alisa Joaquin (she/her)

Jamie Marucha (she/her)

\*A special thank you to Del Likins for guiding a deeper analysis of patriarchy and the relationship between womxn's justice and gender justice.

# WHY PRONOUNS MATTER

By Intern Minister Mira Mickiewicz

---

At church and elsewhere, it's becoming more common for people to introduce themselves with the pronouns they use, and to ask, "What pronouns do you use?" Though this may be an unfamiliar question for you, becoming comfortable with it is a way to live our UU principles. Here's why:

**Gender** is a primary way our creative identities interact with the world. Many people feel comfortable with the gender assigned to them at birth based on their genitals -- assigned male or female -- and are called **cisgender**. (Cis means "on the same side of," so for these people, gender and sex-at-birth align). For many others, their assigned gender is not a true or comfortable identity. They may identify as **transgender or trans** ("on the other side of" gender: gender identity/expression does not conform with the sex assigned at birth), or as another gender, including **nonbinary/genderqueer** (not identifying with male or female gender exclusively), **genderfluid** (with an ever-changing gender identity), or **agender** (not experiencing gender as an essential aspect of identity).

**Pronouns** are the words we use to describe people in the 3rd person. Typically, cisgender and transgender women and girls use **she/her/hers**, and cisgender and transgender men and boys use **he/him/his**. Many nonbinary, genderfluid, and agender people choose to use alternative pronouns or a combination of pronouns to express this identity, including **they/them/theirs**, **ze/zir/zirs**, or just using the **person's name**.

At First Unitarian, we want people of all gender identities to feel welcome in our beloved community. Making a standard practice of including pronouns in our introductions and on name tags allows space for everyone to self-identify. Otherwise, incorrect, appearance-based assumptions can cause significant pain for people of gender minorities.

If you get someone's pronouns wrong, or forget them, apologize, fix the mistake, *and move on*. Just like someone's name, gender is an important part of our identities, but it's not the only part -- over-focusing on a mistake can just amplify the harm by making someone feel like they don't belong.

So, what pronouns do you use? Let's get used to including our pronouns on our name tags, letting people know what we use, and asking this of one another, in service of seeing more of the heart of each of our divine selves!

*Thank you to those who helped contribute to and improve this piece:  
Rev. DL Helfer, Tobias Gurl, Laura Gorrin, and Kerry Heintze.*

# CONTENT || TITLES

Welcome Letter	02
Why Pronouns Matter	03
Women and the Journey Toward Justice at First Unitarian	05-07
Neverland Poetry	08
A Pastoral Response to the #MeToo Movement	09
Homilies	10
#Metoo & Me, Too Poetry & Adaptation	11
Carolyn Buhl Testimony	12
Guadalupe Silva, Out of the Shadows	13
Women & the Criminal Justice System From Ending Mass Incarceration/Advancing Racial Justice	14
Building a More Nurturing World Community For Earth - CFE	15
The Connection Between Speciesism & Feminism UU Animal Ministry	15
Women & Homelessness Committee on Housing & Homelessness - COHHO	16
Economic Realities for Women Economic Justice Action Group - EJAG	17
Women & Gun Violence in the United States Peace Action Group - PAG	17
Gun Violence & Woman	18
International Women's Day 2019	18
Women's Rights are Human Rights in Palestine & Everywhere UU's for Justice in the Middle East	19
How Africa Connections Impacts Women Africa Connections	20
Family Forward Oregon Plate Recipient	20
Legislation & Policies That Will Help	21
Upcoming Events	22
Connect with First Unitarian Portland	23
Social Justice Action Groups Contacts	24



Rev. Marilyn Sewell, Rev. Kate Lore and Rev. Tom Disrud at Michael Moore rally at PSU

# WOMEN & THE JOURNEY TOWARD JUSTICE AT FIRST UNITARIAN

By Cindy Cumfer

This article is based in large part on Cindy Cumfer, *Toward the Beloved Community: The First Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon 1865-2015*, available in the church bookstore.

In December 1865, seven women organized the Ladies' Sewing Society to "promote the cause of liberal Christianity in Portland." The Ladies Sewing Society, composed mostly of Unitarians and a few Universalists, joined with interested men to found First Unitarian Church in 1866. The initiative of these women presaged the critical role that women would have in First Unitarian's institutional life and its community and justice work.

Most early church members were educated, upper and middle class white people who held dominant, Christian, Euro-American beliefs. A fundamental belief during this era of "[Manifest Destiny](#)" that human societies were in various stages of development. In their view, the stages progressed from "savage" to "pastoral" to "civilized" in which farmers converted land to private property, and finally to advanced civilization, characterized by commerce, arts, education, and Christian religion. Unitarians identified themselves and their liberal religion as superior, at the apex of this imagined pyramid. The role of middle and upper class white women was to nurture civilized and moral values in their families and churches and to promote civilization in their community work by "uplifting" those seen as lower on the civilization ladder.

The church's first minister, Reverend Thomas Lamb Eliot, and the founding women believed in the importance of the church in creating "a city set on a hill" for the benefit of the larger society. The dedicated women of the Ladies Sewing Society (now the Alliance) ran most of the non-pastoral church operations. In 1886, three women challenged the three men nominated by the Board of Trustees for three open Board seats. Two of the women won, becoming the first women on the Board. With rare exception, at least one woman has served on the Board ever since.

After the church's founding, church women (and some men) brought their values into the community by supporting numerous projects to "uplift" the lower white classes to a "more civilized" life. These included foster care, charity work, temperance, kindergartens for poor and working class children, museums, and a public library. In these projects, Eliot and the women largely ignored the substantial Portland Chinese community and a smaller African-American community as the dominant racist view saw them as unable to be civilized.

Modernity in the early twentieth century brought more women into the workplace and into public spheres. At the turn of the century, one of the major reforms was women's suffrage. The all-male Oregon electorate approved the right to vote for women of U.S. citizenry in 1912, and the national movement succeeded in 1920. [Note: Due to a variety of discriminatory laws, the right to vote continued to be denied to many women of color until the Voting Rights Act of 1965.] Though some prominent church women opposed suffrage, others, along with Thomas Lamb Eliot, were strong supporters of the Oregon suffrage movement.

By the 1920s, some women in the Alliance began advocating for a stronger role for women's leadership in the church. In her 1923 Alliance report, Alliance President Mary Barlow Wilkins proposed that women should be in positions of leadership and in the pulpit. In 1927, the church hired a feminist minister, Rev. Julia Budlong, but her feminism and her working class sympathies clashed with the ideas of the Board and of Rev. William Eliot, and she resigned a few months later.

Modernity also produced the "science" of eugenics, the belief that by careful breeding human society would become more advanced. One aspect of the eugenics program was to promote [birth control to prevent reproduction by people deemed less desirable, a cause championed by many Universalists](#). By the mid-1930s, the idea of purifying human society resulted in violent anti-Semitism in Germany. He preached that anyone who had implicit feelings of racial superiority slowed the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The church lost half of its members by 1942. After the United States entered World War II, church membership grew sharply. The war and growing knowledge of the Holocaust caused many white liberals to reassess their ideas about racial superiority and Steiner's strong message against white superiority persuaded many to join the church.

Much of the church's activism after the war centered on ending racial discrimination and preventing future wars. For the first time, many in the church moved away from a stance of "uplifting" those below them and worked in concert with the NAACP, the Urban League, and the

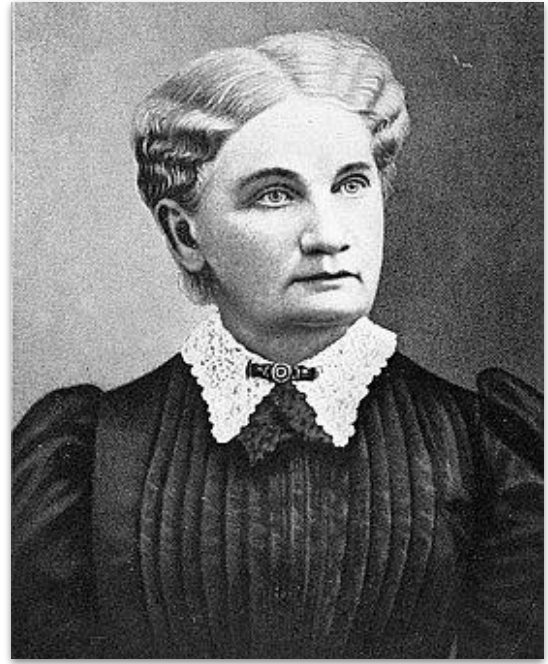
Japanese community to end legal segregation. The Women's Alliance engaged in interracial work with black churchwomen's groups. The Church School created an interracial curriculum. With the advent of nuclear weapons, church women also worked for peace, the creation of the United Nations, and disarmament.

As the church became more liberal in its justice work, attitudes about women in power in the church shifted. In 1950, the Board elected its first female Moderator. By 1977, a majority of its Board members were women, and all were white.

The 1960s was a time of significant cultural change. The black civil rights movement became a model for other people experiencing discrimination. One such cause was women's economic equality and reproductive health rights. In 1970, church member Eleanor Davis initiated a statewide Oregon Women's Conference held at First Unitarian that led to the creation of the Oregon Council for Women's Equality. OCWE was the leader in much feminist legislation. Women in the church, including Ardis Hitchcock and Mabsie Walters, were prominent in the campaigns to adopt Oregon's abortion law, the first in the nation, and to protect a women's right to reproductive choices.

The call of Rev. Marilyn Sewell as the church's first female senior minister in 1992 marked an important turning point for women in justice work at First Unitarian. Her first act was to publicly oppose an anti-gay ballot measure. She institutionalized the church's social justice program by creating a staff position for the program and hired Kate Lore. Together Marilyn and Kate initiated the Economic Justice Action Group to tackle issues of economic inequality, while also developing a strong relationship with Portland Homeless Family Solutions to provide safe temporary housing for families.

In 2012, the church finally elected its first Board trustee of color, Ameena Amdahl-Mason, who also served as its Moderator. Her leadership helped guide the board to examine patterns of privilege and power that often undermine the very principles that guide our denomination.



Dr. Mary Thompson, Portland's first suffragist and first female doctor; raised working-class, she was woman active in much of the church's charitable and activist work.

Women continue to be strong leaders in many of the church's committees and social justice programs. In addition, with the leadership of Rev. Mary Gear, the church turned attention to women's issues with the "I Believe You" service in December 2017. [You can read more about this in this issue.]

Now, as throughout our history, women are critical to the church's justice work, both within and beyond the church walls. The approach to that work is shifting as we are called to examine deeply-rooted cultural ideas of white "superiority," "saviorism," patriarchy, and a rigid gender binary. We are learning that to listen to multiple perspectives, to amplify the voices of those most impacted by oppression, and to follow their lead advances the inherent worth and dignity of all people and moves us toward mutual liberation.

# Neverland

By Melissa Bennet

JM Barrie

You can keep your Tiger Lily  
This figment of your imagination  
This what you think Indian women ought to be

Savage, Redskin, Fodder for men

At the mercy of lost boys and pirates  
Your Picaninny Princess  
Bears a knife between her teeth  
Teaching white men what Native women are not  
Being drowned and rescued by colonizers  
A play toy for their amusement

No thank you  
I reject you  
Your story has already taken too many of our women  
I kick your version out

Keep your Tiger Lily  
She is not me or my sisters  
She is not me or my aunts  
She is not me or my mothers  
She is not me or my daughters  
She is not me or my grandmas  
She is not me or my lovers

I reject your Tiger Lily and give you instead  
Real Indian women who have better things to do  
Than play with lost boys and pirates

We have better things to do than be defined by white men

Especially white men with pens  
Your character is flat, one-dimensional, barely human  
Our women are complex, dynamic, fierce, and resilient

We are busy being mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmas  
We are busy being friends, confidants, counselors, and clergy

We are busy advocating and empowering, creating and transforming

We are writing our own stories  
Creating our own art  
Dancing our own dances  
Singing our own songs  
Making our own magic

We are too busy healing our people  
And ourselves  
To keep your definition at the center

You, JM Barrie, with your Hook and Peter Pan  
Can stay in Neverland

*Melissa Bennett (Umatilla/Nez Perce/Sac & Fox/Anishinaabe), M.Div.  
is a writer, educator, and spiritual care provider interested in the intersections of faith,  
social justice, and creativity. She is on the Leadership Team of First Unitarian's Social Justice Council.*



# A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO THE #METOO MOVEMENT

By Reverend Mary Gear

## In the Fall of 2017,

it was all over the news: #MeToo. The New Yorker published allegations against Harvey Weinstein from many female-identified actors that ultimately led to his downfall. Many more women in the movie industry came forward to tell their stories of harassment and sexual violence. Then more women from all walks of life came forward to tell their stories. So many stories, so many women, so many tears, so much rage.

In our Unitarian Universalist religious tradition, we work for justice on many fronts and against oppression of all kinds, including patriarchy and misogyny. Church is also a place where we come to connect with community and get help making sense of what is happening in the world. As I watched events unfold, I knew these issues should be addressed from our pulpit. Our Senior and Associate ministers, along with our Director of Music, agreed and worked to reschedule services, giving us two weeks to plan a service focused on the #MeToo movement. In the end, the [“I Believe You”](#) service of December 10, 2017 was an amazing collaboration of the women staff, with much support from our co-workers.

The team started with Crystal Zerfoss, our intern minister, Dana Buhl, our Director of Social Justice, and me. Crystal’s wisdom was to expand the team to include any women on staff who wanted to participate in the service, women who have never been in the pulpit and who are not often seen. Many said yes. We met as a team to plan the service and talk about how to best deliver our message. We created a working environment to reflect what we were seeing among women in this moment: supportive of each other, making room for all voices, believing each other. We met, talked, listened, and collaborated. We rehearsed so everyone could feel comfortable on the chancel and in the pulpit. We deliberately chose to wear the #MeToo signature color of black. We borrowed choir stoles so that we all would be in “vestments,” reflecting the religious leadership that each of us brought to the process and the day.

Pianist Signe Lusk rehearsed and directed music chosen specially for the event, sung by a volunteer women’s choir of 60 voices, drawn from all of our choirs and the congregation.

The day was powerful. We heard many women’s voices singing and speaking the truth of our experiences. Many people spoke to us afterward about how meaningful the service was for them. People are still telling us that a year later.

As we planned, we knew the topic might be hard for many, those who had experienced sexual violence and those who had perhaps perpetrated it. We were also mindful that the gender binary we spoke of would not include everyone’s experience of gender. In order to be as supportive as we could to all, we arranged discussion groups after each service for three groups: those who identify as women, those who identify as men, and those who did not feel they belonged in the other two. The services and groups were supported by ministers and Lay Ministers.

As follow-up to the service, 6 congregants and I worked through the Spring and Summer to develop a curriculum for Women’s Reflection Circles. I am grateful to Linda Fitzgerald, Maxine Lathrop, Leslie Combs, Ronnie-Gail Emden, Ellen Howard and Alice Ringquist for their dedication and commitment. We held three circles last Fall and shared our curriculum with the UUA. We have received gratitude from women for the opportunity to share their experiences, to be heard and supported, and to support others.

We were not perfect. I heard from men who had been sexually victimized by men and women, from women who had been sexually victimized by women, and from those who do not see themselves in the gender binary. I also heard from and about men who felt attacked in the service. There are things that I learned and things I would do differently. In the end, I am grateful to all of the women who came together to offer a meaningful worship experience and pastoral response, and for all who supported us in the effort.

# HOMILIES

Excerpts from the [“I Believe You” Service](#).  
December 10, 2017

## Crystal Zerfoss

I am a woman.

I am not weak or inferior or less than or subservient to.  
I'm not too delicate or *just not man enough* or someone who *doesn't have the balls* to do something.  
I am strong.  
I am capable.  
I am competent.  
I am intelligent.  
I am equal.  
I am a leader.

....

I am a woman.  
I have a voice.  
What I have to say is valid.  
What I tell you about my experience is true.  
When I speak, I deserve to be heard.  
When I speak, I deserve to be believed.  
When I speak, I tell the truth, and I will not be silenced anymore.

## Mary Gear

We must listen to women. We know that a majority of incidents of sexual harassment and assault are not reported, and that most reports are found to be true. Estimates are that 93% or more of allegations are found to be credible. 93%. The debate about whether allegations are true is just another way to discredit women and discount our reality.

My sisters, we must listen to each other. It is the patriarchy that makes us believe that we have to choose between supporting a sister and having a job. It is the patriarchy that makes us believe that our best option is to say, “Yes, he’s a jerk, but he’s our jerk,” as a sister is sacrificed. Let’s dismantle patriarchy, not each other.

## Dana Buhl

I would not speak of it again for many years, and it took a long time to call it what it was.

Rape.

...More women are speaking about our experiences...No woman I know is surprised by this flood of stories. We understand the courage it takes to tell them. We know what we risk by speaking up. It is the water we navigate every day.

The disbelief, denial and shock among men is much like the response that those of us who are white have in trying to get our minds around how pervasive racism is and how deep our patterns of dominance are.

Denial, guilt and shame only function to keep things as they are.

On the other hand, change requires us to listen, let go of certainty, withstand discomfort, and commit to the daily work of disrupting oppressive systems.

This is a time of reckoning.

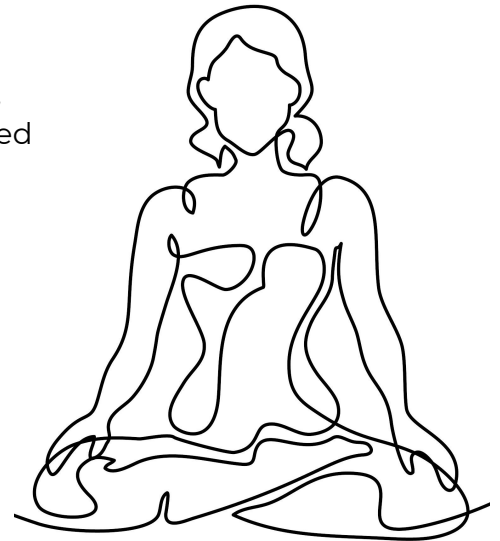


# #metoo

By Ethel Gullette  
12-13-17

Raw feelings  
pervasive in the room  
as women share their stories  
of violation,  
violence,  
of trivialization,  
disrespect,  
disbelief,  
blame,  
shame,  
of post-traumatic stress.  
Women proclaiming  
brave recovery,  
reclaiming agency,  
recording memory,  
affirming sanity.

Holding each other  
in shared experience,  
promising strength  
of resistance  
of truth  
of struggle.  
A sisterhood  
of recalled diminishment,  
fragmentation transformed  
into fearless solidarity  
of will  
to believe  
to defend  
to assist  
to recover  
the whole.



## Adapted from A Prayer for “Me, Too”

By Molly Brewer

Spirit, comfort us.  
Descend around us as a cloud of peace and compassion,  
Abide with us in our mourning.  
Help us to gather ourselves,  
To face each day with bravery, or equanimity, or even just to face it at all.  
Help make each movement lighter, less leaden.  
Give us the grace to once again give thanks,  
And the strength to be kind to ourselves over and over.  
One day, may our cries of shared sorrow give way to songs of joy.  
May we sing, “I too am healing my broken heart.  
I too see the faces of justice and mercy.  
I too am filled with light, love, and compassion.  
“Me, too.”

Blessed be and amen.

# CAROLYN'S TESTIMONY

By Carolyn Buhl

**It was 1969.** The decision was easy. I couldn't go through the debilitating depression again. Nor subject my family to it.

But implementing the decision was terrifying. Abortion was illegal. Harvard Health Services reluctantly sent me to Planned Parenthood who suggested that Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion in Boston might help.

My fear was dissolving into rage. I knew what was best for me, for my family, so why all the probing questions? It was hard to "be nice" and remember that the pastor was trying to help me. It was humiliating to lie in order to borrow \$300 from a friend. At Customs I lied again, saying the reason for my trip was vacation.

In Montreal we found the parking strip. There was the name on the door, but the door was locked and inside it was dark. We retreated to a coffee shop where we kept an eye on that door.

A woman arrived, tried the door, then sat on the curb. Then another arrived, and another. Eventually the door opened. I was called first. I never was sure that the man was a doctor, nor the woman in the white dress a nurse. The pain was excruciating. After we were done, the six of us wedged into a cab, went to a motel and recovered, two to a bed. Once one of the other women stopped bleeding, we went to get food, then went our separate ways.

I was fortunate. I had the support of my husband, the only other person who knew. We were able to borrow money. I did not have to jeopardize a job to travel. We had access to transportation, and, for the most part, I trusted the sources that sent me to Canada. I did not have complications.

Eventually I rebounded from the shame, secrecy and indignity, but I didn't forget. Those feelings became mobilizers for me. I spent the next 31 years in the reproductive rights movement. My hope was that no woman would have to suffer the indignities that I did; that every woman would be respected to make choices for her own life.

Times have changed since the late '60's. More people have access to safe abortion services. What has not changed is the desperation, the determination to find a way, the guilt of betraying family and friends. Inequities in safe, affordable reproductive care and choices remain, and in many cases are worsening. States are adding restrictions, and the impact of those restrictions weigh far heavier on women of color, poor women, and the queer and trans communities.



Photo Credit, Keith Iding  
Portland Womxn's March 2019

As a Unitarian Universalist, I am heartened by the 2015 [Statement of Conscience](#). It calls on us all to take action for reproductive justice, a term created by women of color "to center the experience of the most vulnerable, and to bridge the gap between reproductive rights and other social justice movements." And it pleases me to know that our Senior Minister represents a UU perspective on the [Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice](#).

## GUADALUPE SILVA OUT OF THE SHADOWS

By Sarah Kay Moll



*Photo Credit, Holy Adres*

When Guadalupe Silva was 17, doctors delivered an ultimatum to her family. Without proper treatment, her brother, then only 12 years old, would be blind within three years.

Together, she and her brother left their native Puebla, Mexico, and set out for the United States to find the care he desperately needed. It was just the two of them, traveling together, and Guadalupe had to be strong and resourceful enough to take care of them both.

In the United States, they moved into an apartment provided by local affordable housing developer Bienestar but struggled to find other resources to help them orient themselves in their new country.

Guadalupe's brother was treated at Pacific University's eye clinic, and still checks in there once a year to make sure his condition is under control. Now an adult, he lives in Hillsboro, and still has a close relationship with his sister.

As a participant in Bienestar's Promotores Leadership Program, Guadalupe learned to confront her fears head on and to overcome her shyness. Now she is an outspoken leader for her community, and a source of strength for those in need. She continues to challenge herself and grow into her leadership role.

Guadalupe has spent much of her life as a caretaker, first for her brother, and now for one of her daughters, who has a disability that results in serious health problems and frequent trips to the hospital.

But she doesn't see her role as a burden. As a Promotora and a mother of a child with a disability, she believes her calling is to help others. Her dream is to become a caretaker for children with disabilities and provide help to those in need, but she also has another, more personal dream.

"I want to see my daughter be healthy," she said.

The Immigrant Justice Action Group (IJAG) has a relationship with Bienestar and shares this story for greater understanding.

# WOMEN & THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

From Ending Mass Incarceration/Advancing Racial Justice  
(formerly Ending the New Jim Crow - ENJC)

Based on a survey undertaken at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF) in 2017-18, the Oregon Justice Resource Center (OJRC) has released the first in a series of reports from the [Women's Justice Project](#). The report underlines shocking realities regarding incarcerated women: of the two-thirds reporting that they were in a relationship at the time of their arrest, almost half said they were afraid of their partners and that their relationship contributed to their conviction; more than half reported experiencing emotional and/or sexual/physical abuse as a child. These findings just begin to highlight the special challenges facing women in our criminal justice system.

Women's interactions with the criminal justice system are different from men's: women are less likely than men to commit violent crime; the majority of crimes for which women are imprisoned are drug crimes or property crimes; personal relationships play a larger role in women's crimes and in the way women respond to plea bargaining offers; crimes committed by women are more often than men's crimes to be related to mental health issues or drug use. There is an overrepresentation of poor and of black, brown and Indigenous women (as well as men) in the prison population. Nationally, the number of incarcerated women is growing steeply. The number in Oregon is three times higher than twenty years ago. Oregon's Measure 11 and mandatory minimum sentences have also contributed to the increase in the number of women in prison.

**Consequences for women.** Most women returning from jail or prison have personal and practical problems made worse by imprisonment. Over half those convicted of crimes are mothers, often sole caregivers, of one or more children under 18. Mothers with long sentences often lose custody of their children. Visitation can be difficult if the family lives far from the prison.

**Consequences for children.** Losing any parent for an extended period is difficult and has behavioral, cognitive and emotional consequences. Children of incarcerated mothers are more likely to have school problems, physical and mental health problems, and to experience unstable living situations than children who do not have an incarcerated parent.

**Consequences for communities and citizens.** Former prisoners are returned to our neighborhoods shouldering many requirements (find a job, a home, report regularly to parole officer and so on), but having few or no resources. Meanwhile, the cost to citizens of maintaining more women in incarceration means more dollars going to the corrections system and less funding going to other services.

There are other alternatives to incarceration, such as allowing mothers who have committed nonviolent crimes to serve their sentences under house arrest in the community where they can continue to care for their children and receive services to help them rebuild their lives. But most importantly, we need to reduce the number of people in our criminal justice system.

# BUILDING A MORE NURTURING WORLD

By Leslie Pohl-Kosbau,  
Community For Earth

The sight of elected women in Congress wearing white dresses at the State of the Union Address hit home with me. There is a resurgence in the demand for equitable women's representation. My grandmother marched with women in what was called "Women's Suffrage" before women got the right to vote in the USA in 1920\*. Her activism, along with that of so many others, made it so that today I can vote. She was a leader and caregiver who practiced acts of kindness.

There is a long lineage in the world's families of female decision makers and healers, women who hold families together during hardships, who, though often revered, are also often abused and dismissed.

How often have we been referred to as the "weaker sex" or as property, even while fighting for the well-being of our families, communities and our Earth home?

Healing the planet requires that all of us realign and commit our attitudes and practices to a nurturing approach. This means acting for the health of all creatures and elements that support life. All of us can embody the beauty, strength and respect that are required to sustain the interdependent web of all existence.

\*Note: Due to a variety of discriminatory laws, the right to vote continued to be denied to many women of color until the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

## The Connection Between Speciesism & Feminism

By Sabrina Louise,  
UU Animal Ministry

"Women's Justice" is relevant to our Animal Ministry's passion for defending animal rights. We recognize that apathy towards violence should never be fostered in any social justice movement, therefore we offer a critical examination of how "Women's Justice" relates directly to our UUAM advocacy for animals:

- Animal bodies are "objectified," meaning that one's body and life exist for the pleasure or benefit of someone else. Objectified bodies are seen as things that serve some specific purpose, ignoring the needs of individuals.
- Female animals are forcibly impregnated, their offspring taken from them for human use. This interferes with the sacred bond between mother and child. We exploit the feminine further by taking breast milk meant to nourish their babies. For female animals, their capacity to breed dictates how their bodies will be controlled.
- There's a clear correlation between hurting non-human animals and the abuse of women and children. The American Humane Association states that in 88% of homes where child abuse was present, animal abuse was occurring too.
- The language that surrounds non-human animals suggests certain bodies are more valuable than others, implying that the plights of certain groups are more important than others. Intersectionality is one path that helps us deal with such attitudes and see connections between systems of oppression.

Intersectional feminist, Aph Ko, states it clearly:

"We must seriously consider non-human animals in our intersectional analyses as feminists. We can't have liberation when people 'don't care' about the exploitation of an extremely vulnerable group of beings."

# WOMEN & HOMELESSNESS

By Donna Richards,  
Committee on Hunger and Homelessness (COHHO)

First Unitarian Portland works closely with [Portland Homeless Family Solutions](#) (PHFS), the primary organization serving unsheltered families. PHFS statistics show that homelessness disproportionately affects women. Of the people they serve, 60% are women and 62% of these women are from communities of color, 40% of the women served are single mothers and 30% have experienced domestic violence. A woman who has been abused will often have little or no money and very few friends or family members to whom they can turn. An ACLU report shows that 28% of landlords would not rent to victims of domestic violence.

Women on the streets are as likely as men to suffer from a disability, mental illness and/or drug and alcohol addiction. Often when a woman loses her job or becomes ill, it is a recipe for disaster, especially if she is already poor. In 2017 the Point of Time Count found that 38% of the unhoused in Multnomah County lived with disabling conditions, 26% had chronic health conditions and 7.6% were adults with developmental disabilities. Women are also more vulnerable to sexual and physical assault on the street.

Homelessness is worsening. Recent counts indicate that 4,000 men and women sleep on the streets or in shelters every night in Multnomah County.

PHFS operates the 13 Salmon Family Center/Family Winter Shelter at First Unitarian and has opened the Lents Family Shelter. Many mothers have found housing with their help over the years with a program to help with rent, bills and other needs before they become homeless.

Soon the Lents shelter will offer a life skills class specifically for women. TREM (Trauma Recovery and Empowerment Model) is an intervention for trauma recovery from adverse experiences such as sexual and physical abuse and homelessness. It addresses short- and long-term consequences of violent victimization, including mental health symptoms such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and substance abuse. TREM will serve 40 women annually.

First Unitarian's Committee on Hunger and Homelessness (COHHO) continues to help stem the suffering with our ongoing relationship with PHFS by contributing volunteer hours, food, necessities and financial support.



# ECONOMIC REALITIES FOR WOMEN

By Connie Yost  
Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG)

Year after year, data show that men typically earn more than women — and women are more likely to live in poverty. Single mothers, women of color, and elderly women living alone are at particularly high risk of living in poverty.

Women in Oregon working full time, year round continue to be paid far less than white men. White and Asian women earn 82 cents for every dollar a white man earns; Black women earn 66 cents, and Latina women earn just 51 cents.

Women are overrepresented in low-wage jobs despite having better educational credentials than ever. Women make up 69 percent of workers in low-wage jobs that typically pay less than \$10 per hour, and a disproportionate number of women in low-wage jobs are women of color.

The vast majority of women in low-wage jobs are adults with high school diplomas. Most don't have a spouse's income to rely on, and many are supporting children.

Women in low-wage jobs work hard; harvesting and serving food, cleaning homes and offices, caring for children and elderly adults, and more.

At First Unitarian, we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all and that all people should be treated fairly and equitably. The Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG) advocates for justice for women through our partnerships with Farm Worker Ministry Northwest, Family Forward Oregon, Portland Jobs with Justice, The Interfaith Alliance on Poverty, and Oregon UU Voices for Justice.

## Women in Oregon

14.7% of working age women live in poverty; 15.9% of children live in poverty

34.4% of female-headed households live in poverty

9.9% of women 65 and older live in poverty

Visit [www.Talkpoverty.org](http://www.Talkpoverty.org) to learn more

# WOMEN & GUN VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

Peace Action Group

We celebrate women for the special role they play in the family. At the same time, we pause to pay attention to a grim truth: women in the United States are at particular risk for death and injury through gun violence.

Statistics documented by the [National Partnership for Women and Families](#) are revealing and frightening. "The United States leads the world in private gun ownership despite clear evidence that ownership increases the likelihood of homicide as well as suicide." Women in the U.S. are 11 times more likely to be the victim of gun violence than their counterparts in other high income countries.

The biggest contributor and greatest risk for women is domestic violence by intimate partners. Every month, 50 women are fatally shot by an intimate partner, most often a current or former husband, boyfriend or stalker. According to an [article in the Huffington Post](#), women are five times more likely to be killed in a domestic violence incident

when a gun is present. Approximately 4.5 million women report being threatened with a gun by their intimate partner. 41 states do not require those prohibited from purchasing a firearm due to domestic violence to relinquish firearms they already own.

Now is the time to advocate for stronger gun laws in the United States. Now is the time to focus on the root causes of such violence. Throughout history, women have been advocates for change. On March 8th, International Women's Day, we recommit to changing the deadly relationship between gun violence and women in our country.

Stop by the Peace Action Table any Sunday morning to learn how you can get involved to end gun violence. Get updated on pending Oregon and federal legislation and on the next steps for the [Soul Box Project](#), highlighting the epidemic of gun violence in our nation.

# GUN VIOLENCE & WOMEN

By Penny Okamoto, Executive Director  
Ceasefire Oregon

When I think about how gun violence affects women, I think about Laura Whitson and her three little girls, Sarah (6), Rachel (3), and April (6 months) who were shot to death by Laura's estranged husband-- the girls' own father. The baby, April, was shot to death as she was being held in her grandmother's arms.

I think of Mary Reed who put her body in front of her daughter in Tucson, Arizona shooting and took three bullets. She and her daughter lived but Mary still bears the scars and the pain.

I think of Aleaka Tate whose teenage son was brutally shot to death on a street in Anchorage. She has devoted her life to her surviving children and to making her community a better place.

I think about women who are intimidated at gunpoint and the women who grieve for their children. I think about the women who are frightened every single day they send their kids to school--in the United States.

And then I begin to think about the numbers in a broader sense: the risk of intimate partner homicide increases fivefold in relationships where violent partners have access to a gun.

I think of how the gun industry peddles guns as "a great equalizer" and a way for women to prevent abuse but gun threats in the home against women by their intimate partners are far more prevalent than women using guns as self-defense.

I think about the burden borne by women in the US from gun violence. Even though U.S. women are a third of the developed world's female population, we account for 90% of all female firearm deaths in 2010, an increase from 84% in 1999.

But at the end of the day, when I think about gun violence and women, I think about how women are changing the laws, the culture, and the mores regarding guns and create a future free from gun violence.

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2019

By Mindy Clark

Every year on March 8 we honor International Women's Day. With roots in the Socialist Party of America which first organized a Women's Day march in 1909, International Women's Day was adopted by the United Nations in 1975. Its purpose was to advocate for women's rights and women's suffrage. We note that this advocacy was from a predominantly white, middle and working class perspective. Today it is recognized in many different ways: in some countries it is a holiday while in others it is ignored; in some places it celebrates womanhood and in others it is a day of protest against gender discrimination.

In recent years the theme of the day has stressed "Planet 50-50" with a focus on gender equality and workplace equality.

The 2019 [Portland Womxn's March and Rally for Action](#) on March 3rd coincided with International Women's Day. The adoption of the term "Womxn" reflects an expanding understanding of gender to include cis-gender women as well as transgender, gender nonbinary, gender queer and gender fluid people. (See Mira's article on gender pronouns).

# Women's Rights Are Human Rights in Palestine & Everywhere

By Curtis Bell,  
UU's for Justice in the Middle East

Every human being has multiple identities that include gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation. Identity is also strongly affected by systems of power and oppression. Intersectional organizing for justice is thus much more than a transactional strategy for advancing a particular issue. For example, when a human group is oppressed because of race, about half of the oppressed people are women. So racism is a women's issue, as are poverty, militarism, colonialism, etc. When women's lives are crippled by patriarchal structures and beliefs, everyone in society suffers from being denied the full participation and essential contributions of half the people. Women's rights are human rights.

The government of Israel denies the human rights of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and in Israel proper, and in so doing, violates women's rights. The situation is worst in Gaza where a blockade denies adequate access to food and medicine, and where successive Israeli wars have destroyed homes and infrastructure - infrastructure needed for sanitation, healthcare, education, electricity and clean water. Palestinians in the West Bank suffer from home demolitions, arbitrary arrest, the arrest and mistreatment of

children, denial of water, and a military legal system separate from the legal system for Israeli settlers.

Palestinians in Israel proper have the vote but suffer from discriminatory laws, prejudice and denial of resources for roads, education and healthcare.

The wars and the general climate of conflict, fear and uncertainty in Gaza and the West Bank are especially hard on women. Girls are more likely to be kept out of school and maternal mortality is higher under such conditions. Women's ability to nourish and sustain their families is deeply compromised.

Although many Palestinian women such as Hanan Ashrawi, Haneen Zoabi and Ahed Tamimi are leaders in the struggle against Israeli oppression, patriarchy remains a force in Palestinian life and its force is exacerbated in a situation of oppression, conflict and fear. Sexual and gender-based violence become more prevalent under such conditions and the lessening of male domination less likely. The voices of women in leadership are needed by all of us, in Palestine and around the globe.

For more information: [Women Peace Security](#)

...none of us ever really walks in another's shoes or knows the innermost rooms of a person's heart. None of us truly knows the lonely places of another's journey. Therefore, let us be gentle with one another. Let us listen more than we speak and accept more than we judge. Let our open outstretched hands reach and touch that we may walk along together for a little while in friendship and in trust.

**Adapted from "The Unaccompanied Mile" by Elizabeth Tarbox**

# HOW AFRICA CONNECTIONS IMPACTS WOMEN

Africa Connections

The mission of Africa Connections is to engage the congregation of First Unitarian in deepening relations with the communities and especially the women of the Imani Project and Quilts for Empowerment in Kenya and Zimbabwe Artists Project in Zimbabwe. Through supporting these three remarkable organizations, we support women's health, education and self-sufficiency, and have an opportunity to learn from the women the projects serve.

[THE IMANI PROJECT](#)'s work in Kenya started at the height of the AIDS epidemic. Villagers were dying, they lacked knowledge of how to prevent infection and lacked access to treatment. Founder Marlene Anderson, a First Unitarian Portland congregant, worked with the local community to form a Kenyan non-profit organization that focuses on issues impacting women and children, and a parallel organization in Portland to support their work. Together they now support about 90 orphans, their caregivers and their village communities. Starting with AIDS prevention classes in villages, they expanded to form food co-ops to improve food production. These and many other projects have enabled women to become self-sufficient and therefore supports the community as a whole.

[QUILTS FOR EMPOWERMENT](#) started in 2015 in Eldoret in West Kenya and has already had impressive success. They help women who have undergone obstetric fistula surgery to transition back into the community, gain self-confidence and develop skills. They are also starting to help women and girls recover from sexual assault.

[ZIMBABWE ARTISTS PROJECT](#) provides a market for women artists in Weya, a rural area in Zimbabwe. ZAP also provides help with medical care, including access to treatment for HIV, and support for education. By including a picture of the artist and some of their life history, ZAP helps develop a relationship between the women in Zimbabwe and the eventual owner of the picture in the US.

## FAMILY FORWARD OREGON

Family Forward Oregon is First Unitarian's shared plate recipient in March. Their mission is to create a family-forward Oregon where all families can be economically secure and have the time it takes to care for a family. Family Forward believes that caring for children, aging populations, and others in need is a principle of a civilized society. They envision an Oregon where:

- Parents can choose to care for their children and keep their job.
- The disabled and aging can get the care they need when they need it most.
- Our children are healthy, well cared for and thriving.
- Workers get guaranteed time off to recover when they're sick.

- Businesses offer modern workplace standards that improve worker productivity and health.
- All families, regardless of their configuration, are treated equally.
- Mothers and family caregivers are just as financially stable as others.

Family Forward advocates for policies like paid family leave, mandatory paid sick days, state disability insurance, workplace flexibility, affordable child care, protection from discrimination for family caregiving responsibilities, job protection under family leave laws and more. They partner with parents, employers and policy makers to create innovative, forward-thinking approaches to work and family.

# LEGISLATION & POLICIES

## THAT WILL HELP WOMEN IN OREGON

What follows is a list of current legislation that our social justice groups believe will help women achieve fundamental human rights.

Providing Paid Family Leave and Sick Days (FAMLI Equity Act [HB 3031](#))

Helping Families through a Fair Tax Code

- [SB 212](#), an earned income tax credit (EITC) bill, increases the Oregon EITC from 8% or 11% of the federal EITC to 15% and doubling the standard deduction
- [HB 3038](#) is an Earned Income Tax Credit bill, supported by League of Women Voters.
- [HB 3028](#) has other provisions to provide tax refunds for families with infants and toddlers while raising the tax credit rate somewhat comparable to other states

The Oregon Workplace Fairness Act ([SB 726](#))

Increasing Families' Access to Affordable, High-Quality Child Care and Early Education

- Department of Human Services Budget
- [HB 5026](#) Employment Related Day Care for working or training parents

Expanding Affordable Housing (see [League of Women Voters Legislative Report](#))

Access to Driver's Licenses for All Oregonians through the Equal Access to Roads Act ([HB 2015](#))

Providing Free Legal Services to Incarcerated Women ([HB 2631](#))

Raising the Minimum Wage

Promoting Fair Work Schedules

Ensuring Pregnant Workers Are Treated Fairly

Expanding Access to Affordable, Comprehensive Health Insurance Coverage

Ending Discriminatory Pay Practices

Stopping and Preventing Sexual Harassment

To follow Oregon legislation, go to the [Oregon Legislative Information System](#).

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## BLACK GIRL IN SUBURBIA

Sunday April 7, 2019

Black Girl In Suburbia is a 55 minute feature documentary that looks into the experiences of black girls growing up in predominantly White communities. This is a different look into suburbia from the perspective of women of color. This film explores through professional and personal interviews the conflict and issues black girls have relating to both white and black communities. There are many girls out there who have stories to tell about struggle and triumph, but have never had an outlet to share. That's why this film is so important! Black Girl In Suburbia intends to spark an open dialogue about race, identity, and perspective among all people. In hopes that these discussions will allow us to look at perceptions of ourselves, others and the community we live in as a whole.

**After the film, director Melissa Lowery, will lead a lively conversation.** We are fortunate that Melissa will also moderate the discussion following the Sewell Lecture on April 16 with Julie Lythcott-Haims.

**About the Filmmaker: Melissa Lowery** was born in Portland Oregon and raised in West Linn Oregon from the time she was 3 years old. Black Girl In Suburbia is her first feature documentary, based off her own experiences growing up as one of few African Americans in a predominately white suburb. Melissa is currently the Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Jesuit High School Portland.

**Details:** Sun., Apr. 7, 1-3 p.m. Buchan Reception Hall. Childcare provided. Free.

For previews, visit [blackgirlinsuburbia.com](http://blackgirlinsuburbia.com)

## 10TH ANNUAL SEWELL LECTURE

Sunday April 17, 2019

**“On learning to love my black self in a country where black lives were never meant to matter.”**

**Speaker: Julie Lythcott-Haims** roots for humans. Humans need agency in order to make their way forward; Julie is deeply interested in what impedes us. She is the New York Times bestselling author of How to Raise an Adult, an anti-helicopter parenting manifesto which gave rise to one of the top TED Talks of 2016, and now has over 3 million views. Her second book is the critically-acclaimed prose poetry memoir Real American, which illustrates her experience with racism and her journey toward self-acceptance. A third book on how to be an adult, for young adults, is forthcoming. She is a former corporate lawyer and Stanford dean, and she holds a BA from Stanford, a JD from Harvard, and an MFA in Writing from California College of the Arts. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her partner of thirty years, their teenagers, and her mother. Books will be available for purchase. Reception and book signing to follow in Fuller Hall.

**Details:** Tues., Apr. 16, 7 p.m. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

Adult tickets, a suggested donation of \$5-\$20 (no one turned away).

Youth under 21 are free. Drop-ins welcome.

[PURCHASE TICKETS HERE](#) || [FACEBOOK](#)

# CONNECT WITH FIRST UNITARIAN PORTLAND

---

## THE SOCIAL JUSTICE OFFICE

Dana Buhl, Director of Social Justice  
dbuhl@firstunitarianportland.org  
Office #: 503.228.6389 ext. 442

Nikki Beezley, Program Assistant for Family Ministries & Social Justice  
nbeezley@firstunitarianportland.org  
Office #: 503.228.6389 ext. 152

## MINISTERS

Rev. Bill Sinkford, Senior Minister  
bsinkford@firstunitarianportland.org

Rev. Thomas Disrud, Associate Minister  
tdisrud@firstunitarianportland.org

Rev. Mary Gear, Acting Assistant Minister  
mgear@firstunitarianportland.org

Mira Mickiewicz, Intern Minister  
mmickiewicz@firstunitarianportland.org





# SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTION GROUPS

At First Unitarian Church of Portland

## **Africa Connections**

Contact: Anne Pickar  
apickar@cs.com

## **Ending Mass Incarceration/ Advancing Racial Justice**

Contact: Ethel Gullette  
effieg47@gmail.com

## **Peace Action Group (PAG)**

Contact: Tess Beistel  
tesslovesgreen7@gmail.com

## **Committee on Hunger & Homelessness (COHHO)**

Contact: Lois Heinlein  
matlein@gmail.com

## **Immigrant Justice Action Group (IJAG)**

Contact: Wendy Rankin  
wendyjrankin@gmail.com

## **UU Animal Ministry (UUAM)**

Contact: Keith Iding  
torturgamigo@gmail.com

## **Community for Earth (CFE)**

Contact: Bryan Brumley  
bebrumley@yahoo.com

## **LGBTQIA Pride**

Contact: Lonnie Martinez  
nomoredrama0711@gmail.com

## **UU's for Justice in the Middle East (UUJME)**

Contact: Curt Bell  
curt.c.bell@gmail.com

## **Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG)**

Contact: Michael Wade  
wade.michael@comcast.net

## **Mental Health Action Group (MHAG)**

Contact: Rosebud  
Kirwin-Alvord  
rbka1@frontier.com

*Sign up to get this directly to your inbox!  
Scan the QR code or [click here!](#)*

*\*Contacts are updated as of 3/10/2018  
& are subject to change.*

