

# the communicator

THE NEWSLETTER OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN'S FEDERATION

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This issue of the Communicator is dedicated to the memory of Natalie Gulbrandsen, past UUWF president, past UUA moderator, and so much more to so many of us (see page 5).

## Receive the Communicator via E-mail

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## Rise Up & Call Her Name Reissued

A new edition of *Rise Up* – originally published by UUWF – is now available from author Liz Fisher. The new edition of this adult religious education curriculum contains updated formats for all of its components. The content is the same as the original but much easier to use and facilitate. The final package is priced at \$100 for the complete kit (Leader's Guide, DVD, Music CD, Sourcebook in PDF format), which includes shipping and handling in the continental United States. To order, call Liz at 510-236-9131 or e-mail her at [lizfisher@RiseUpAndCallHerName.com](mailto:lizfisher@RiseUpAndCallHerName.com).

## UUWF Sponsors Community Ministry

UUWF is one the first UU organizations (apart from congregations) to formally covenant and sponsor Community Ministry. We have entered into this relationship with Rev. Dorothy May Emerson and Rev. Jade Anjelica with the hope and expectation of a mutually rewarding experience for all. Rev. Meg Barnhouse and Linda Lu Burciaga will serve as UUWF liaisons to Dorothy and Jade during the year our covenant with them covers.

## UUWF Grant Funds in Action: Lucia's Story

By Rev. Meg Barnhouse  
UU Church of Spartanburg, SC

**H**ere is what your generous contributions to UUWF can do:

Lucia came to the States from Central America. Dr. Genelle Grant, a member of the UU Church of Ft. Myers, FL, met Lucia when she was looking around her neighborhood for someone who spoke one of the Mayan languages. Genelle was working on a project that your UUWF dollars helped fund: recording several public service announcements for radio, informing people from Mexico and South and Central America about their rights as migrants in the United States, and warning them about human trafficking.

As Genelle spoke to Lucia about the project, Lucia began to cry. She began to tell a story she had never told her mother or her husband. She, at age 15, and her little sister, 12, had suffered at the hands of the "coyote" her parents had paid to bring the girls across the border into the States. Genelle encouraged Lucia to tell the story, then to write a letter to her mother letting her know what had happened. Here are excerpts from that letter:

*"Mama, listen to me. This is a letter for you, Mama, and for my little sisters.*

*Mama, I am going to tell you the story of my life since I crossed the frontier to arrive in the States (U.S.). While [where?] you thought that I was going to work to earn money and escape poverty.*

*Do you remember, Mama, when I left the house, I was only 15? I left with a blouse, pants and a pair of sneakers, and no sweater, because you could not*



Funding through the UUWF Grants Program has raised awareness of the dangers of human trafficking, helping protect potential migrant workers, like these Guatemalan school girls, from sometimes fatal abuse and exploitation.

*buy me one? I took my leave from you as if it was for a short trip. While we said goodbye, I thought "Why did I have to go so far away from you, from the house of my little sisters?"*

*In that moment I felt much sadness, much fear, because I was already with strange people. For me, they provoked fear. Every moment that we moved further away caused me more fear and sadness. Mama, you were so far from me and no one could protect me.*

*As the days passed, they told me that I had to obey their orders. And the first thing that happened was that the women had to sleep in the same small room as the men. But I was so afraid, Mama, and I was so far away from you.*

*We continued our journey in train and on bus, now without food and without water. Days passed without food and only a little bit of water. Then we went in a large truck, all as if we were animals. With much heat, we went a long distance. And there they put us in a house without light or electricity.*

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## Growing Up with the UUWomen's Federation



The UUWF board and staff at their August meeting, left to right: Barbara Prairie, Rev. Meg Barnhouse, Linda Lu Burciaga, Ellen Spencer, Luz Bravo-Gleicher, and Catherine Onyemelukwe.

It isn't often anyone gets to celebrate 30 years working for one organization. We UUs are often not very good at acknowledging those who have toiled for years on our behalf. The time came, this October, to say a huge "thank you" to our Executive Administrator, Ellen Spencer, for 30 years of devoted service to the UUWF. Ellen grew up at the UUWF and UUA offices and we have loved witnessing the maturing of this "girl" into an accomplished, competent and caring woman.

UUWF President Linda Lu Burciaga recently sat down with Ellen and asked her to share some of her thoughts concerning this 30 year history. Below is a glimpse of their conversation. And, again Ellen, many, many thanks.

**Linda Lu:** A little more than 30 years ago, you, a young "20 something," commenced your work at the UU Women's Federation. How did you come to us?

**Ellen:** I had just turned 26, and for the five years since I had graduated from Boston University I'd been working in sales and promotion for a plastic advertising specialty company (shades of *The Graduate*). That birthday was significant because that evening a friend of my late partner, Paul Petschke, called to say she'd heard of a job opening for a publications editor at the UU Women's Federation (I had a degree in journalism). I had no idea what "UU" was, but since anything had to be an improvement over selling plastic advertising gizmos, I called the number she gave me. I was interviewed by the executive director, Nancy Prichard, was hired a week or so later and began working at UUWF the day after Columbus Day 1977.

It may or may not be a coincidence that a week or so before my birthday, I had pinned a dollar on St. Anthony's statue during his festival in the North End of Boston and prayed for a new job. Coincidence or not, I still have the little color image of St. Anthony that I was handed when I parted with the dollar.

**Linda Lu:** In this 30-year period, you have seen many changes within the UUWF. What have been two of the most significant?

**Ellen:** The two that leap to mind are closely related, as the second couldn't have happened without the first: the UUWF board's decision, in the early 1980s, to set up a separate corporation to manage the Clara Barton Camp and Birthplace Museum. Operating these service projects took up a large piece of UUWF's human and financial resources. And although a very worthy enterprise, the camp had very little relevance to the majority of UU women.

The second was the shift in direction UUWF took beginning in 2004, redefining our mission as advancing justice for women and girls through education and advocacy and implementing that mission by founding the UUWF Grants Program. It seems appropriate that part of the impetus for this shift came from UUWF's donation to the UUA to found the UUWF Clara Barton Internship for Women's Issues – a donation that came from proceeds of the sale of the North Oxford property where the camp is located. In helping the UUA raise the the endowment for the internship, we discovered that UU women have an abiding passion for social justice issues.

**Linda Lu:** You've worked alongside UUWF leaders over three decades. What qualities or attributes of leadership have been easiest for you to work with and which most difficult?

**Ellen:** The easiest quality is dedication to the bottom line belief that there was and is a need for a strong, independent organization of women in our UU community. All the women I've worked with who reached UUWF leadership positions have shared it. They may have different ideas of just what UUWF is or should be, but that in itself underscores one of the strengths of our organization: the willingness of the women involved to really listen

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# Introducing the New UUWF Clara Barton Intern

By Grace Garner  
UUWF Clara Barton Legislative Assistant  
for Women's Issues

*Editor's Note: In 2002 UUWF donated \$250,000 to the UUA to create an internship position dedicated to women's issues in the UUA Washington Office. Since then, two remarkable young women, Kirstin Homblette and Meredith Schonfeld-Hicks, have served in this position – now known as the UUWF Clara Barton Legislative Assistant for Women's Issues. This fall, a third young woman has followed their footsteps to Washington. Here's how she came to be there.*

**M**y involvement with social justice began at a very young age, so I am particularly happy to start my life after college with a job that deals with issues I am truly passionate about.

When I was eight years old, I asked my mother why so many bad things were happening in the world and how I could make it better. She encouraged me to speak out against injustice and go to college. She explained the political system and grassroots politics to me and gave me a variety of options for what I could do.

What grasped my attention most was the idea of being a politician, working for justice and eventually becoming President of the United States. Since that moment I've been dedicated to pursuing that dream and, along the way, speaking out against injustice and standing up for those who may not have a voice.

I have been a UU since I was eight years old and have participated extensively in YRUU

## Ellen Spencer, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

to each other. This process of trying to come to a consensus on what UUWF should be doing has often produced ideas that no single woman would have come up with by herself.

The attribute that I find hardest to deal with is the reluctance of leadership to take actions that might possibly hurt the feelings of others, or make them feel disrespected. This makes accountability a major issue to contend with.

**Linda Lu:** To come full circle, I started by asking, "How did you come to us?" My closing question is "What keeps you with us?"

events, including work as youth dean for Camp deBenneville Pines in California and as Youth Council Representative for the Pacific Southwest District. I also recently ended a two-year position as a member of the board of trustees for the UU Legislative Ministry in California.

I graduated from Pitzer College last May with a B.A. in Political Studies and an emphasis on minority politics. I spent four months in Ecuador in 2005 where I volunteered at a women's shelter in the capital city of Quito. During my summers off from college, I worked as a camp counselor for the YMCA and City of Palm Springs and as a summer school theater teacher for fifth graders.

In the last few years I have produced, directed and acted in the annual production of *The Vagina Monologues* at the Claremont Colleges and I am thrilled to be continuing my work to end all forms of violence against women while working at the Washington Office for Advocacy.

As the new Clara Barton Intern I am fortunate to have had amazing predecessors who have left me with a great foundation to begin

my work. I look forward to continuing their work on comprehensive sex education, protecting the right to choose and organizing the 4th annual Sexuality Education Advocacy Training. I will also take on issues of bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender rights, including the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, the Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Act, and repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell.



Grace Garner, UUWF Clara Barton  
Legislative Assistant for Women's Issues

While I continue this work, I plan to approach the issues with an anti-racist and anti-oppressionist lens. Throughout my life I have been dedicated to social justice and have particularly focused on the struggles women and people of color face in the United States. My experiences as a biracial,

Mexican-American woman have allowed me to see issues from many different perspectives. The struggles of people of color and women of color specifically are near to my heart.

In my work I hope to bring to light how the legislation I am working on affects women of color and what we as UUs can do to be inclusive of women from all walks of life.

If you are interested in hearing more about my work with the Washington Office for Advocacy, visit [www.uua.org/socialjustice](http://www.uua.org/socialjustice). Please also feel free to contact me directly at [ggarner@uua.org](mailto:ggarner@uua.org). I would be more than happy to speak with individuals or groups.

**Ellen:** There are three pieces to my answer. The first is the belief that the UU community needs a strong, independent women's organization. The second is that, on a personal level, I need to feel that what I am doing with my life is somehow helping make some small part or parts of the world "better." By better, I mean closer to a place where the innate worth and dignity of every person is not only recognized and celebrated, but nurtured and helped to flourish.

I can't wave a magic wand and make that happen, but I can choose to work in partner-

ship with those who are trying – and often succeeding – in making some pieces of it happen.

And that's the third factor that keeps me with UUWF – working in a community where people believe in something greater than themselves and feel the need for a connection to it. UUs in general and UU women in particular have a lot of different ideas of what that greater something is and what connecting with it means. That's why I think of our faith as a journey rather than a destination. And working alongside people on that journey is where I find energy and inspiration.



# New Edition of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven* Now Available from UU Women & Religion

By Rev. Dorothy May Emerson, past  
Co-Convener UU Women & Religion

The newly revised version of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven: In Ancient Times* is the first part of the popular feminist theology curriculum, developed originally by Shirley Ranck and published by the UUA in 1986. The new edition was partially supported by funds from the UUWF Grants Program and focuses on female images of the divine from prehistory through early patriarchy, relating this information to central issues in women's lives. The five-session program includes Guidelines for Facilitators and a CD-ROM with slide shows and resources for distribution to participants. Price: \$40.

*Cakes for the Queen of Heaven: An Exploration of Women's Power Past, Present, and Future*, by Shirley Ranck, provides in book format the powerful lessons of the life-transforming curriculum by the same author. The book version, first published



## Unitarian Universalist Women and Religion

ten years ago, makes this material accessible for women today. It can be used by individuals or small groups to explore key issues women still struggle with today. UU Women & Religion republished this book in 2006, with a new introduction, as part of our celebration of the 20th anniversary of the curriculum. The Fund for Unitarian Universalism provided funding for the republication. Price: \$16.95.

*Unraveling the Gender Knot: Challenging the System that Binds Us* is another resource partially supported by UUWF through its Margaret Fuller Grants Program. This

course is for adults and youths. Topics in the seven two-hour sessions include gender, religion, feminism, economics, invisibility and denial, and how to challenge the patriarchal system. Materials include a 100-page detailed course guide for co-leaders with handouts for participants (\$30), and two documentary films, priced separately: *Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies and Global Economics* and *The Gods of Our Fathers*.

*Revolution by Resolution: Celebrating Thirty Years of Women & Religion* is the script for a worship service created for the 2007 General Assembly. The service is part of UUW&R's effort to preserve and share the herstory of the resolution and its continuing impact on the Unitarian Universalist movement. You can view the live version of the GA service at [www.uua.org/ga](http://www.uua.org/ga). Price for the script is \$5.

All of these resources, and many more, are available at [www.uuwr.org](http://www.uuwr.org).

## Lucia's Story, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

*That night I was so afraid and so sad and on that night the coyote called me. He told me not to make noise or he would leave me there alone and would not take me with the group. I, in my fear, obeyed him.*

*He led me far from the house and told me that I had to please him sexually and if not, he would leave me there, lost and without money, or he would turn me in to Immigration. He said that Immigration (la Migra) would put me in prison and never let me leave. That I would never see my family again.*

*I was afraid. I didn't want him to leave me alone or in prison. So I accepted everything that he wanted of me and so he raped me.*

*I was just a girl, Mama.*

*Afterwards he told me that if one of the men that went with him also wanted to be with me, that I had to accept. If I thought about complaining or disobeying him, I knew what would happen to me.*

*That is how I suffered on the journey through Mexico until arriving at the U.S. border. I thought that my suffering would end there, but it wasn't so. There we went into the desert to walk. There they left us with another coyote and told us that we had to obey his orders.*

*Then they asked us for more money. I had no money. They told the women that if we didn't have money they would leave us in the desert. But then they said that if we did what the men wanted, they would not leave us in the desert.*

*The women that we came with said "no." But they forced us to have sex with them and with any of the other men who traveled with us. I felt so destroyed and lost, Mama.*

*Those men were bad. They gave us some pills to make us stronger, that afterwards we got nauseous and couldn't feel what was happening. They gave us the drug so we would be able to walk as fast as the men.*

*We were three young women. One had a son and she didn't obey the coyote. They left her in the desert with her son, without water and without food. That scared me so much that I wanted to die.*

*Still we continued with hunger, thirst and exhaustion from walking. Raped and wounded as if we were animals.*

*That was the suffering that I experienced in the desert. Doing things because of fear and threats, until we arrived at a village in Florida called Immokalee. There the coyote told me that I had to live with him in his house.*

*To me and my friend, Ana, the coyote said that we could not tell anyone where we lived and what we saw on the way, because no one would believe us because we didn't have papers. And if we did say something to anyone that he would call the police and they would put us in prison. And that we would never get out of the prison.*

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# Remembering Natalie Gulbrandsen

Unitarian Universalists lost a beloved member of our religious community on October 17 with the death of Natalie Gulbrandsen, age 88, at her home in Auburndale, MA.

A Life Member of UUWF, Nat served as a member of our board (1971-75), as treasurer (1975-77) and as president (1977-81). She went on to serve as fourth moderator of the Unitarian Universalist Association (1985-93).

Her other accomplishments within our UU community are many. She served as a member of the Council on Ministerial Finance, the Channing Bicentennial Birthday Celebration Committee, the American Unitarian Association Bicentennial Committee, the Emerson Centennial Committee, the Commission on Appraisal and the UU Peace Network. She was also president (1993-96) of the International Association for Religious Freedom; a member of the board and chair (1996-98) of the Church of the Larger Fellowship; and chair of the UU Women's Heritage Society. In 2002 she received the Award for Distinguished Service to the Cause of Unitarian Universalism.

Nat was also a long-time member (since 1946) of the Unitarian Church (now Unitarian Universalist Society) of Wellesley Hills, MA. She

and her husband of 48 years, Dr. Melvin Gulbrandsen, who died in 1991, were active in both their church and community and in 1981 were honored by the Town of Wellesley with the Community Award for Distinguished Service.

But her interests and concerns reached far beyond Wellesley. She and her family hosted more than 50 international students; she was active in many environmental causes, recycling and composting in the 1950s long before these were common pursuits; being arrested in 1988 at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site in protest of ongoing U.S. testing of nuclear weapons; and traveling overseas frequently in the interests of liberal religion and religious freedom. For her remarkable contributions to a myriad of causes Natalie was awarded honorary doctoral degrees by both her alma mater, Bates College, and by Meadville/Lombard Theological School.

Well known for both her sense of fairness and common sense, Nat embodied a uniquely selfless leadership style. "It was never about her," said Rev. William Schulz, a past UUA president. "More than any leader I have ever known, she was uninterested in her own glorification. It was always about the cause, the faith, the matter at hand, the religion she loved."

She was also known for her sense of humor and her ability to "think on her feet". At one point during her UUWF presidency, Nat was lobbying for reproductive rights on Capital Hill in Washington. Upon entering one congressional office, the male representative greeted her by saying there was no point in talking to him, he was anti-abortion and always would be. "After all," he said, "I'm the father of four!"

To which Nat replied, "And I'm the mother of five!"

Nat is survived by those five children – Karen, Linda, Eric, Ellen and Kristin – twelve grandchildren, her brother, John Webber, and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. A celebration of her life was held at the UU Society of Wellesley Hills on November 10. Cards and letters to the family may be addressed c/o Ms. Karen Bean, 489 North Road, Bethel, ME 04217.

Memorial donations can be made to UUWF's In Memoriam, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108 and will be used to support the UUWF Grants Program.

*Editor's Note: Our thanks to Rev. Bill Schulz, for permission to excerpt portions of his own memorial notice.*

## Lucia's Story, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

*He left me in his house with his family and told me to look for work to pay what I owed him. And if not, he would sell me to some men he knew that wanted a woman. That they would pay for me. To my friend he said that she would be his woman and live with him and his wife in one room.*

*All of this, Mama, when you had already given them everything they had asked.*

*This is how I arrived in this county.*

*I survive, but my soul is in pieces.*

*I love you Mama.*

*I am your daughter, always, Lucia*

Lucia recorded this letter in three languages and it was aired by radio stations in Central America and Florida. Telephone calls to the stations revealed the depth of interest in this topic. We will never know how many young women heard this information, how many mothers and fathers decided against sending their daughters alone with coyotes across the border. Who knows how much suffering the money from the UUWF grant has helped to prevent? Dr. Grant is now hoping to make more copies of this CD for wider distribution so this story can be told.

In Africa, in South America, in the United States, money from UUWF supporters is making life better for women. Thank you for being part of it. As we gather more financial power, we will help women change the world in ever-expanding ways.

## International Convocation: Correction & Update

Our apologies for the misleading headline over the article about the International UU Women's Convocation that ran in the June issue of *the Communicator*. Southwest UU Women, with its proven history of successful meeting planning, has taken the lead in organizing the convocation (not UU Women & Religion).

Update: UUWF has now joined UUW&R and the Partner Church Council in co-sponsoring this event. And in response to a number of requests, the Convocation date has been changed to Feb. 26-March 1, 2009. This Thursday-Sunday schedule will mean that working women will not have to take time off from work during two different weeks.

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## AUW Quilt

Reproductive freedom is the theme of the quilt pieced together by members of the Association of Universalist Women – the UUWF-affiliate at the First UU Church of Minneapolis.

Also an affiliate of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, the AUW auctioned their handiwork at Minnesota RCRC's fall banquet, with the proceeds going to RCRC.

Pictured with the quilt, from left to right, are Polly Peterson, from the First Unitarian Society, Minneapolis; and AUW members Betsy Allis, president; Jody Beresford; and Connie Diercks.