

WE RESIST, WE RISE

The Pentagon Papers Then and Now

Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock
Newsletter 2018

GREETINGS

Carole Alexander,
Chair of the Board of
Governors

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Executive Director



We See Heroes

In the 1960's, the country was in turmoil. Our military was engaged overseas and the death toll was rising daily. At home, tension was growing between the government, the media, and the people, who were demanding that our leader tell the truth. We were in crisis. But when a moment of courage changed the direction of our nation, it restored, at least for a time, our faith in the values of democracy: that moment was the publication of the Pentagon Papers.

In 1971, the Pentagon Papers revealed the ruthless machinations of the political and military wings of multiple administrations blindly devoted to aggression in Vietnam, regardless of the toll it would exact on the world. The Papers revealed a failure of both strategy and moral responsibility, which resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of innocent lives, and the steep diminishment of democratic principles here at home, and across the globe.

From last year's feature film, *The Post*, to countless books and articles, the Pentagon Papers have been discussed at length. Far less known was the determination of the UU Senator from Alaska, Mike Gravel, to get the leaked documents widely published, and of Beacon Press to leverage \$400,000 in funding from the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program to publish them in book form -- all 5 volumes. Efforts to intimidate Beacon -- including unwarranted visits to local bank branches by the FBI, subpoenas, and calls from the President himself -- only increased their resolve. Not until the summer of 1972 would the attacks against Beacon Press be sidelined by the distraction of the Watergate break-in.

Veatch believed then, as we do today, that Beacon's decision was a rallying cry for transparency, a triumphant reminder of the power of the written word, and a warning to the promoters of tyranny that when moved to put UU principles into action, we will not be silenced.

At Veatch, we don't look at Beacon's bravery as if through a rear-view mirror. The cast of characters may be different, but the reservoir of courage required to promote -- and live -- UU Principles, remains the same today. We are twinned with 1971. Every day, we see evidence of leaders leveraging fear to gain power; of division and unrest; and of targeting young immigrants, LGBTQ people and women.

But we also see heroes. And if the crisis looks familiar so, too, should the courage.

In these pages, in addition to Beacon Press, you'll read about a woman standing up for workers in New Jersey and across the country. About a young transgender man, who, while fighting the behemoth insurance industry, still has the energy to advocate for his fellow Oregonians. About a sophisticated communications team that helped transform a young woman's moment into a movement that centers the stories of women of color. About a youth organizer in Brooklyn who became a leader in the work of the same organization that fostered his development as a teenager. And about a farm in Minnesota that demonstrates, literally, the power of organizing from the ground up.

At their core, each of the grantees featured in this newsletter share something in common: courage in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. As it was in 1971, today and every day, courageous people across the country stand up against systemic racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and misogyny. They stand for love, democracy and the dignity of every person. They shine a light in the darkness, to find, expose, and defend truth and justice.

Courage on the Frontlines:

Beacon Press: A Tradition of Integrity

A mission-driven non-profit publishing house, and Veatch grantee for 40 years, Beacon Press has a well-deserved and storied history of fearlessly demanding that this country actively reflect upon the actions of its leaders. Through the publication of peerless analysis, research, and artistry, Beacon shines an unrelenting light into all the cracks and crevices of our nation's rich and frequently challenging history.

Beacon's publication of the Pentagon Papers – a moment of extraordinary courage almost half-a-century ago – was, in fact, just one example of a *tradition* of integrity in publishing. At an infamously tragic time for America and her democratic values, Beacon decided to publish in the face of intimidation, criminal investigation, and financial ruin. The availability of these documents did nothing short of saving the soul of this country. Grand as that may sound, it is true. It was an unprecedented global moment from which this country emerged forever changed.

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But Beacon never changed. Since then, they have continued to be a shining light of conscience and compassion in increasingly anxious times. In the nearly 18 months of the new administration, Beacon Press has amplified, through blog posts, opinion pieces, and social



Beacon Press author Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz's book "An Indigenous People's History of the United States" is a popular title.



Rev. William Barber's book "The Third Reconstruction" is an example of the social justice literature that Beacon Press publishes today.

media, their intelligent and often ferocious response to the rapidly escalating issues of white supremacy, gun violence, xenophobia, and sexual harassment. Stoic and confident, they named and shamed the perpetrators pushing our country away from the democratic values we strive to safeguard and replicate.

In 2017 they shipped a record of nearly one-million books, including older titles from Dr. Martin Luther King and newer ones from Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, author of *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* and Rev. William Barber, author of *The Third Reconstruction*. Perhaps most movingly, one recent publication – *Bullets into Bells: Poets & Citizens Respond to Gun Violence* – was read on the floor of Congress on the anniversary of the Newtown shootings.

A connection to both the past and the present marks Beacon's ongoing legacy as not just a publisher, but a curator of social justice literature. An incredible responsibility then and now. Veatch is proud to have been a part of that legacy for many decades, and we are proud today.

Annual Site Visit

Veatch on the Ground in Minnesota



The Veatch delegation meets with leaders of grantee Land Stewardship Project at Waxwing Farm in Minnesota.

In early May, as we do every year, members of the Veatch staff, UUCSR Board of Trustees, Veatch Board of Governors, and the Rev. Natalie Fenimore traveled to Minnesota to visit Veatch grantees firsthand. There is no substitute for meeting organizers and community leaders in person, and seeing the direct impact of their work on the ground.

We met with eight of our grantees and started our visit in rural Minnesota with the Land Stewardship Project – one of the country's leading sustainable agricultural organizations and a Veatch grantee for more than 20 years. Deeply invested in community organizing, policy change, and the promotion of local democracy, their work is changing governmental and corporate policies that consolidate wealth and power into fewer hands that can endanger the health and well-being of people, communities, and the environment.

Our guides, and two of the highlights of our trip, were Anna Racer and Pete Skold. They are Land Stewardship Project members, owners and operators of Waxwing Farm, and activists. Anna and Pete came to this work by way of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program. They quickly found connections between what they were learning in their public health classes at the University of Minnesota and the work they were doing on a student organic farm. Pete remembered the eureka moment when he decided, "I didn't want to write a grant for a program that would increase someone's healthy serving of food. What I really wanted was to produce that healthy food for people." All we could say was, "delicious."

Anna and Pete interned at A to Z Produce and Bakery in Stockholm, WI, where they learned the basics of producing Community Supported Agriculture Shares

(or CSAs) along with the lifestyle of operating a diverse agricultural enterprise. From there, with some more help from the Land Stewardship Project and other student-farmers, the creation of Waxwing Farm was as inevitable as a spring harvest. Today, Pete and Anna are raising their two young children on Waxwing Farm. They sell CSA shares to 40 members a year and they are looking to grow to 100 members – which would allow their operation to be self-sufficient. The combination of the skills they've learned from the Land Stewardship Project, the land itself, and their natural drive to share what the earth has to offer responsibly, has made Waxwing a shining example of the benefits of sustainable agriculture.

The day we met Anna and Pete, she was still fired up from her role as a public speaker at a Land Stewardship Project candidate's forum the night before. Coming into a pivotal election of a new governor, Anna questioned the candidates about their commitment to ensuring that Minnesotans have access to affordable health care – one



Pete Skold and Anna Racer are leaders at Veatch grantee Land Stewardship Project.

of the most important issues confronting family farmers. Navigating between farming, parenting, and holding elected officials accountable, Anna and Pete brought to life, for us, how the Veatch Program is on the ground with longtime grantees, in new and compelling ways.

Blackbird: From Moment to Movement



Left: Actress Michelle Williams with Tarana Burke, creator of the #Me Too movement, at the Golden Globes Awards. / Right: Veatch grantee Blackbird's work to promote the story of Tarana Burke contributed to her being named as one of Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People.



a way to prevent violence before it happens, and as a way to organize around it afterwards, Blackbird builds communications capacity, from behind-the-scenes, for the larger Movement for Black Lives network. Thoughtful and engaging, Chelsea trained us on how we can improve our communications around implementing the seven UU Principles through social justice work. As an invaluable exercise, she challenged us to envision what a world driven by those principles would look like. She then encouraged us to stand up and talk about that vision in front of our peers.

Recognizing and honoring the dignity of every human, a UU principle, is demonstrated in both thought and deed by Veatch Program grantee, Blackbird.

We learned that first hand, when Senior Communications Manager at Blackbird, Chelsea Fuller, attended the September 2017 Veatch Board of Governors Policy Retreat. She conducted an exciting and expert-level seminar on the importance of values-based communications strategies to achieve progressive social change.

Blackbird came into formation in 2014 as a direct response to the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Focused on strengthening the resistance as

But Blackbird is more than just talk. They demonstrate a fearless, sophisticated discipline when rapidly responding to emerging crises. And they are peerless in reframing social and political narratives to reflect the values of empowerment and equality. Recently, when all eyes were on Harvey Weinstein and the sexual assault stories being told by predominantly well-known white women, they were critically important in centering the story of Tarana Burke – creator of #MeToo – as well as other survivors of-color. Their approach was compassionate, critical, and media-savvy, and successfully brought to the forefront the stories of survivors too-often overlooked. The #MeToo moment, is now a movement. A movement that prioritizes the “empowerment of empathy” and one in which Blackbird has played a critical role.

Basic Rights Education Fund: The Frontline of Defense



Basic Rights Education Fund leader Kaden Merrill and his mother, Angelina

In this political time, Veatch is doubling down on its legacy of supporting grantees dedicated to the protection of our most marginalized populations. Accordingly, it is with great pride that we support the work of the Basic Rights Education Fund in Oregon. Basic Rights has been, and continues to be, one of Oregon's first lines of defense against trans discrimination.

For more than two decades, Basic Rights has strengthened Oregon's nondiscrimination laws, created safer schools, increased access to transgender-inclusive health care, banned conversion therapy, and won the freedom to marry. In 2017, they passed a new law simplifying the process

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in which Oregonians change name and gender for birth certificates; passed protections requiring state contractors to have policies and practices prohibiting discrimination; and pressed for, and won, a practice shift at the DMV, which now offers a third gender marker on state ID cards.

Kaden's story, like so many from the frontlines fighting discrimination, is both inspiring and dire.

Kaden Merrill, like so many transgender Oregonians, wants to end health care discrimination and is standing with Basic Rights in opposition to a well-funded national effort to reverse existing protections. Kaden's story, like so many from the front lines fighting discrimination, is both inspiring and dire. Identifying as transgender at age 10, Kaden and his mother Angelina have met, and overcome, too many obstacles to his health care to name. However, after moving to Oregon, Kaden was confronted with a new challenge – the ignorance of health care providers as to the specific needs of trans men. Kaden's unwavering determination to receive the health care he requires

– in this case, a Pap screening – led to the discovery of pre-cancerous cells. Even though a hysterectomy was recommended by his new, qualified, physician, his insurance provider denied the treatment. As he waited for approval for the procedure, he, along with Basic Rights and other allied organizations, worked diligently to change discriminatory policies that impact all Oregonians. He testified before the state legislature, advocating for a new bill, that among other protections will prohibit the denial of benefits to an employee based on their gender identity.



Veatch grantee Basic Rights Education Fund promotes and protects the rights of LGBTQ people in Oregon.

OUR (Organization United for Respect): Beyond the Bottom Line

Veatch Program grantee, Organization United for Respect, or OUR, is the largest workplace-based organization in the country.

Formed within Walmart in 2010, they have grown to a network of more than 100,000 current and former employees of the national retailer. As such, they have successfully leveraged significant wins for all working people by challenging restrictive, unjust, and oppressive policies at Walmart, which have resulted in similar workplace changes across other chain stores nationwide.

The power of standing up to injustice, of standing up for others, is poison to systemic oppression. Donna Fotiadis – a Walmart employee who risked her job in service to another – is emblematic of that power. Just this past March, Donna spoke at the Veatch Board of Governors Policy Retreat. She shared a heart-wrenching story of standing up for a pregnant co-worker, who, having worked a long day as a cashier, began showing clear signs of a miscarriage. After asking to be excused from her register, her manager, following strict Walmart policies about bathroom breaks, refused to let her co-worker leave her station. As her distress worsened and the line of shoppers at her register doubled, Donna stepped in and called 911. The threat of serious reprimands and jeopardizing her job security didn't stop Donna from doing what was right.



Donna Fotiadis, a Walmart employee and leader at Veatch grantee Organization United for Respect (OUR)

Donna's story shocked everyone present; but it also reminded us of the unyielding power of an organized workforce and deeply investing in the development of worker-leadership. Nobody gave Donna the courage to stand up for a co-worker – she had that from the get-go – what OUR did was give her the support to become a leader within the organization. Donna still works at Walmart, but she also speaks on behalf of workers across the country advocating for fundamental, humane employee practices. Unlike her corporate employers, Donna looks beyond the bottom line to the employee benefits that really matter – like justice and equality.

Make the Road New York: Leading By Example



Jose Lopez of Veatch grantee Make the Road New York says “Nobody... is growing up saying I want to be a community organizer, because this isn’t a field that’s going to make you rich. So you just gotta really have the love and passion to be able to do this.”

A 15-year grantee of the Veatch Program, Make the Road New York is a member-run organization that organizes with people in low-income and immigrant communities to win local and state-level policies that advance dignity and justice.

Unique among political empowerment organizations, Make the Road also provides critical services to community members. Running counter to the notion that service provision and advocacy don’t mix, Make the Road believes solving real-world problems – through legal aid, for example – begins much-needed conversations about the root causes of inequity plaguing low-income and immigrant neighborhoods across the New York area.

Meet Jose Lopez, Make the Road’s Co-Director of Organizing, and our guide last November, when more than 40 congregants and Veatch staff visited their offices in Bushwick, Brooklyn. Jose led our delegation through a series of in-depth conversations about affordable housing and how rezoning, and subsequent gentrification, is pushing community members out of their neighborhoods.

Jose’s story is moving. He was involved in Make the Road as a teenager and, through training and mentoring in the Youth Power Project, is now not only a staff member, but

Unique among political empowerment organizations, Make the Road also provides critical services to community members.

a key leader within the organization. Jose’s personal story and hands-on approach to organizing is a testament to the sophisticated, highly impactful work happening at Make the Road. As were the first-hand accounts from Make the Road members of the challenges of living without basic services – like heat and hot water – the result of illegal practices by landlords eager to clear the way for wealthier residents. Jose is an example of strong, community-developed leadership.

As an organizer he invests in his community and supports members in developing their leadership and building power.

Veatch Weekend January 2018



Veatch grantee Movement Strategy Center’s Executive Director Taj James gave an inspiring sermon on how our values give us strength in difficult political times.

Taj James of the Movement Strategy Center gave the Sermon on Veatch Sunday, on the theme: We Resist, We Rise. He described how our country is in transition, socially, economically and politically, and how the future will be determined by the actions we take now. Reflecting on the rise of social movements at this time, Taj urged us, each and as a community, to be bold, and to act based firmly in our values. Veatch grantees Maria Rodriguez from the **Florida Immigrant Coalition**, Kris Hayashi from the **Transgender Law Center** and Christine Neumann-Ortiz from **Voces de la Frontera** also joined us. We learned more from Christine and Maria about the impact of mass deportation on immigrants and their families, with people being arrested, held and deported without warning. Kris talked about the targeting of transgender people, particularly transgender immigrants and people of color, for violence and discrimination. He spoke to the importance of the Veatch Program supporting and standing with the transgender community when very few other funders are doing so.



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Veatch staff: Faron McLurkin, Denise Centkowski, Eileen Jamison, Joan Minieri, and Marjona Jones (Jan Fellenbaum not shown)

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The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock is the national philanthropic giving program of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock, located in Manhasset, N.Y. The Veatch Program provides long term, core support for social justice organizing throughout the United States. A program of faith in action, Veatch has been a leader in progressive philanthropy since 1959.

The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock provides support for efforts within the religious and spiritual mission of the congregation where their purposes are best served by outside agencies action under the Veatch Program and the Congregation.

Unitarian Universalist Principles

The inherent worth and dignity
of every person

■ ■ ■

Justice, equity and compassion
in human relations

■ ■ ■

Acceptance of one another and
encouragement to spiritual growth
in our congregations

■ ■ ■

A free and responsible search
for truth and meaning

■ ■ ■

The right of conscience
and the use of the
democratic process
within our congregations
and in society at large

■ ■ ■

The goal of world community
with peace, liberty and
justice for all

■ ■ ■

Respect for the interdependent
web of all existence of which
we are a part

■ ■ ■



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