

...fostering universal justice and community action...

Volume 1, Issue 1

April 2020



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We may be sheltering-in-place, but we can continue our universal justice work! The three UJ teams established this spring will share news and actions you can take through the **Vineyard UU Voice**, the UUSMV Facebook page, the UUSMV website, and this special newsletter that will be published once a month or when we have breaking news!

The three teams are:

- ◆ **Restoring Democracy:** Rita Brown, Ann Charnley, Dorie Godfrey, Donna McElroy, Peter Meleney, Leigh Smith, and Nancy Wood;
- ◆ **Climate Justice:** Barbara Caseau, Rev. Bill Clark, and Stephanie Michalczyk;
- ◆ **Criminal Justice Reform:** Leigh Smith and Mimi Davisson.

News on Staying Informed and Taking Action Brought to you by the Restoring Democracy Team

If you have information to share or ideas for taking action, contact Dorie Godfrey or Rita Brown. We welcome anyone who would like to get involved!

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Unitarian Universalist Society of MV

Taking Action



Take action for

Voting by Mail: Voting by mail provides the easiest, safest way to increase voter turnout. The opportunity to vote by mail is critical during this pandemic. Please contact your Representative to demand that they support no-excuse absentee vote by mail in all states. Sens. Ron Wyden of Oregon and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota introduced a bill in March that would have added

\$500 million in federal money to prepare state election systems for the Coronavirus. And House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has said she wants money dedicated to vote-by-mail to be part of the next Coronavirus bill. Five states currently conduct all elections entirely by mail: Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington and Utah. At least 21 other states have laws that allow certain smaller elections, such as school board contests, to be conducted

by mail. While “all-mail elections” means that every registered voter receives a ballot by mail, this does not preclude in-person voting opportunities on and/or before Election Day. For example, despite the fact that all registered voters in Colorado are mailed a ballot, voters can choose to cast a ballot at an in-person vote center during the early voting period or on Election Day (or drop off, or mail, their ballot back).



Take Action to bring Election Day Registration to Massachusetts.

Go to the website to sign a petition. <https://www.commoncause.org/massachusetts/our-work/expand-voting-rights-election-integrity/election-day-registration/>
In American democracy, our vote is our voice—voting is the best way to hold our representatives in government accountable and make ourselves heard. In order to make sure our electoral systems are as fair, accessible, and efficient as possible, we need to make commonsense updates to modernize them. One of these practical updates is Election Day Registration (EDR).

Currently, to cast a ballot in Massachusetts, citizens must register to

vote at least 20 days before an election. This arbitrary restriction keeps thousands of otherwise qualified Bay State residents from participating in our democracy. Plus, it forces voters with errors – typos or out of date addresses, for example – in their registration to cast provisional ballots. These create additional work for elections officials and often, they go uncounted.

Take action. Visit Vote Forward to send letters to



unlikely or unregistered voters. <https://votefwd.org/>
Go to this website to sign up to send letters to voters in different states to get out the vote. Vote Forward is focusing on a new effort, a set of campaigns designed to accumulate a very large volume of “Please Vote!” letters to be sent on October 27th, 2020. Please let Dorie Godfrey know how many letters you are sending. If you can print and write the letters and would like the Restoring Democracy team to mail them for you, let Dorie know.

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Stay informed and Take action with IssueVoter <https://issuevoter.org/misc/about>



When we vote, we're hiring our elected officials. We pay their salaries with our tax dollars. Imagine hiring an employee, paying and promoting them, yet never seeing any of their work. That's essentially what we're all doing when we vote and re-elect. And incumbents are re-elected over 90% of the time.

Issue Voter works to increase voter participation. By keeping voters informed throughout the year on issues that matter most to them, more people will see how legislation affects those issues and recognize the importance of voting and engaging with their representative year-round. Voters will have a more informed view of their representatives during election season.

You can track your representative's activity. The website tells you how your representative voted, how often your representative agrees with you, and whether they've attended a vote. Encourage open discussion. You can share an issue on your favorite social network, without revealing your personal opinion. Act on issues that don't make headlines. Issue Voter not only tells you about what is breaking the news; they check for updates every hour to make sure you have the latest information. Become an informed voter. Using IssueVoter year-

round informs you before elections and keeps money's influence out of your opinion. Only re-elect representatives who truly represented you.

Stay informed with UU the

Vote: One of the fundamental principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is the use of the democratic process. As an expression of our faith, many Unitarian Universalist congregations engage in voter registration, election reform, protecting voting rights and democracy, and Get-Out-the-Vote drives. **UU the Vote** supports congregations and UU organizations in activating thousands of UUs in 2020 to mobilize voters, counter voter suppression, and engage in spiritually grounded, values-based issue conversations with voters in their communities.



This is a grassroots campaign that relies on grassroots support. Together we're going to #VoteLove and bring our passion to the polls. Go to the website <https://www.uua.org/justice/vote2020> or join the UU the Vote Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/509770206273429/> to stay informed.

Stay Informed. Watch Kill Chain: The Cyber

War on America's Elections. In advance of the 2020 Presidential Election, *Kill Chain: The Cyber War on America's Elections* takes a deep dive into the weaknesses of today's election technology, an issue that is little understood by the public or even lawmakers. *Kill Chain: The Cyber War on American Elections* debuted last week on HBO. *Kill Chain* follows Finnish hacker and cybersecurity expert Harri Hursti as he travels

around the world and across the U.S. to show how our election systems remain dangerously vulnerable. <https://www.hbo.com/documentaries/kill-chain-the-cyber-war-on-americas-elections>



Stay informed!

You can sign up for informational emails at Ballotpedia: <https://ballotpedia.org> Ballotpedia is the digital encyclopedia of American politics and elections. Its goal is to inform people about politics by providing accurate and objective information about politics at all levels of government. They are firmly committed to neutrality in our content; here's why.

"As a nonprofit, our mission is to educate. We're here for you when:

- You're considering a run for office.
- You're making decisions about how you'll vote in an election.
- You need the latest political news and analysis from a reliable, nonpartisan source.

"Ballotpedia's articles are 100 per-



cent written by our professional staff of more than 50 writers and researchers. Although we have an office in Middleton, Wisconsin, the majority of our staff work from home offices across the United States."

Criminal Justice Reform

Criminal Justice



Reform

The Criminal Justice Reform interest group is learning about several national organizations that work to combat injustice in the legal system.

Innocence Project, founded in 1992, works to have exonerated the wrongly convicted through DNA testing and works to reform the criminal justice system to prevent future injustice.

The Equal Justice Initiative, founded in 1989, provides legal representation to prisoners who may have been wrongly convicted of crimes, poor prisoners without effective representation, and others who may have been denied a fair trial. It guarantees the defense of anyone in Alabama in a death penalty case. We anticipate that we will propose sending a donation

from UUSMV to one or both of these organizations later in the year.

In the second half of 2020, we will be researching the criminal justice system in Dukes County to learn if there are specific actions that a congregation could take to assist prisoners at the local level.

We will share more information as the year progresses.

See the movie: *Just Mercy*: If you did not get



to see the film *Just Mercy* at the MV Film Center, you can watch it on Prime Video now. *Just Mercy: A Story*

of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson was our UU Common Read in 2015. It is now a motion picture. Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn't commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinkmanship, and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever. *Just Mercy* is at once an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer's coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice.



The Social Action Mob (S.A.M.), led by Chris Seidel, encourage you to pick up trash on your social distance walks and send a picture of your collection to the MV Conservation Society and UUSMV via email!