



**Julia Cochran**

## **Legislative Connections: Northwest UU Justice Network & Washington UU Voices for Justice**

My plan will strengthen justice building by connecting people to each other through the NW UU Justice Network, increasing legislative advocacy through WA UU Voices and showing people how to plan strategically to fundamentally change the way the system works so that we can all live in a more just and sustainable world.

### **Project Goal**

By June 30, 2017, increase UU justice engagement and effectiveness in working for systemic change by personally visiting with the social justice leadership in 22 of the 30 UU Congregations in Washington State (plus two covenanted groups and CLF members). After building interest in and engagement with statewide and regional justice organizations, we will work to make sure that 1) all 10 congressional districts and 90% of the 42 legislative districts are connected for systemic advocacy (27+ congregations), and 2) 90% of congregations have at least 5% of their congregants engaged in and serviced by North West UU Justice Network (NWuuJN) for their systemic justice work.

### **Personal Reflection**

Even though I would have loved for my project to have started this spring, I now am grateful for the extra time for personal growth. As I have talked about this project with friends, family, fellow UUs and all the activists in my life, I have become more comfortable saying that I am a “faith based organizer.” And when people look at me askance, I talk about the things that The Prophetic Witness highlights. My organizing – both as a JBI, and in the rest of my life – has become more visibly grounded in basic motivating principles. For example, my belief in the inherent worth and dignity of all people (beings) has shaped many conversations about war, prisons, policing, resource grabs, etc. I find that when I get down to that level of conversation, it is in fact very NVC (nonviolent communication), and that we are talking about shared needs, because most people share these basic principles and ethics. I am also finding A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation, by Lisa VeneKlasen with Valerie Miller, to be very validating of my experiences and useful to frame things in a way that leads to some “Aha” moments.

The fact that I can do faith based organizing as a queer radical environmentalist is the motivation for spreading Unitarian Universalism; it's a motivation when I do interfaith work

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spreading tolerance; and it's the motivation for strengthening social justice work within UU congregations. Being a JBI has increased my confidence as a communicator, instigator, and organizer because I am learning the language and concepts of social justice change that is deep and lasting.

## **Project Update**

My project is just beginning due to funding issues. I had to request, and was glad to receive, a grant from UUSC through the NWuuJN. In August I am using my time to update my work plan, continue researching the congregations I am going to visit, and collate the contacts/members of the 2 organizations I represent with the congregations - as a way to develop a more personal outreach methodology. In June I did a forum at the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship, where I presented information about UU Voices with my sponsor, DD Hilke, who also talked about the Justice (Building?) Network. A personal benefit of this was watching how my sponsor engaged people and generated information that is useful for the work of the Justice Network.

Throughout my I travels I will be keep a blog: <https://justicebuilding.wordpress.com/>