Editor's Preface

Welcome to the Spring, 2012 issue of the Journal of Religious Humanism – the Justice GA issue. When delegates to the UUA's General Assembly decided to turn aside the Board's recommendation to boycott Phoenix as a future site, over the passage and implementation of Arizona's anti-immigrant SB1070, in favor of an "on the ground presence" witnessing to our opposition to such oppressive legislation and the attitudes that spawned it, a long and complicated process of just how to "do it" began. This RH issue is just one small outcome – dedicated to the GA themes of immigration reform, economic justice and inclusion, it represents some of the wide range of opinions in the humanist community and beyond, over what are almost always contentious issues. When the HUUmanists Board decided to participate fully in this Justice GA, it initiated a new phase of humanist action and active cooperation with the broader UU community. And now, on to the articles ...

Occupy! Really? Isn't that sooo last year?

We'll see. As you read this, around the time of the UUA's late June Justice General Assembly in Phoenix, the Occupy movement may truly be yesterday's news. As I write this in April, the movement that, last fall, almost singlehandedly changed the national economic conversation from "deficit reduction" to "income inequality," is waking from a winter's hibernation – hundreds of Midwest activists occupied the park under the St. Louis Arch in March, dozens of local groups debated (wiggling fingers) whether to re-establish encampments or move on to other tactics, and there are plans to join the mid May NATO protests in Chicago. A successful, low-key winter tactic across the country was "Occupy Against Foreclosures," providing direct support (food, legal advice, witnesses, company and a protective wall of bodies) to bank-evicted homeowners electing to stay in their houses, and resist corporate or legal attempts to dislodge them.

If, as my generation always has, you rely on newspaper headlines and evening TV news minutes of coverage, for proof that a social phenomenon still exists, you might think that Occupy has had its day – one of the few national print stories lately was a New York Times piece on how Occupy wasn't getting much news coverage anymore – the news is: they're not news! But if you hang out on, and get your news from social media and the blogosphere (and my generation's adopted vehicle of choice, the email chat line) then Occupy is clearly alive and well, with dozens of local live feeds, Twitter threads, Facebook pages, alternative news aggregator coverage and You Tube postings. Many local groups still conduct weekly or even daily General Assemblies – those hyper-democratic gatherings that allow a leaderless group to set and reset policy and tactics. The right issue, the right focus, the right opportunity in the mistakes of the 1%, and it could all blossom again in a blaze of color with the spring.

That's why two of our seven articles in this issue for the Justice GA, Kristen Lawler's "Fear of a Slacker Revolution," and Paul Langston-Daly's "Occupy Everywhere," feature a movement which rivaled the Tea Party in its ability to introduce a new message into the national discussion, but then faded fairly quickly from the front page. While I do not assume that every UU or every humanist is on the Occupy side of that divide, I do think we're heavily bent that way. To understand what motivates Occupiers and their supporters in the general populace, is to understand much of what it means to be progressive and not traditional, to be other-interested as a counter to being only self-interested, and to be open and diverse, over being fixed and centered, in ethics, in religion, in politics and in activism. It is one way to begin to answer the question – what is Humanist social action? Both Kristen and Paul make it clear, writing from the wider perspectives of academia and liberal religion, that the question itself takes us out of our comfort zones – to new social understandings (though rich with antecedents) and to new responses to those understandings.

What is the most popular fast food in Germany today? It's not any kind of sausage or schnitzel, but Döner - a Turkish cousin to what most Americans know as Gyros. It's gone from being an ethnic specialty to a widespread sidewalk snack to a restaurant staple. A beef rotisserie passing continuously by an open flame, it is the spear point of Teutonic acceptance of the children and the grandchildren of the Gastarbeiter, as a national presence, as part of the citizenry, as Germans. The question is whether the spear penetrates at all beyond the tip: if Döner is thought of as German fast food now, are those whose culture it symbolizes, thought of as German? We might also ask whether the widespread popularity among non-Hispanics in the US of so-called Mexican food, is in any way related to whether Mexican Americans are seen as being "as American" as the "rest of us," or whether they are still "the other?" The proliferation of state laws in the last two years, almost exclusively aimed at undocumented arrivals from Mexico, but in practice impacting all Hispanics, would suggest that cultural familiarity doesn't extend easily to personal acceptance. Far

more homogeneous Germany faced a large labor related influx of foreigners well before the issue found the spotlight in the US, and has been dealing for years with the status, legal and cultural, of the subsequent German-born generations. Michael Leonard's case studies of three German-born Turkish-identified youth are slightly more than a decade old, but many of the issues seem to parallel those currently bedeviling US society. Where does self-identity arise? Do "we" get to determine whether "they" are American? And do the human rights we take for granted for ourselves and our children apply equally to every human being, regardless of residency status?

It is pretty much coincidental that our other immigration themed paper has a German title – Dennis McCarty's "Ich bin ein Illegal" is of course, a play on JFK's "I am a Jelly Donut" speech in Berlin, but it also deals with the perception of "the other." In this case the setting is Korea, and it is the Americans – one assumes of all ethnicities – who are the "aliens," the intruders, the ones expected to adapt, and to find ways to survive. Dennis draws a compelling parallel to "outsiders" everywhere, based not just on the facts of exclusion, but the feelings that experience generates. One subtle lesson woven through his article is the difference in frames of reference – the adult immigrant, or in his case, the "guest-worker," assumes that status largely through initial choice and constant action of remaining. Native born citizens came by their status purely by accident, and need take no ongoing action to maintain it. In Dennis' hands, this difference is not a judgment, but a powerful observation. And since he begins with the case of Josselyn, the child of border crossers who died, at first unidentified, in the dessert, we adults are all reminded how much such children who do survive are caught between these two frames – with deep personal ties to another culture and nation, reinforced (often negatively) by the attitudes of the native-born towards them, but with no control over the decisions that made them immigrants.

Economic Justice was the theme selected by HUUmanists to center our presentations (workshops and exhibit hall booth) at the Justice GA – our board felt there was a rough consensus within the membership and wider UU humanist community on the basic issues of compassion, fairness and opportunity within our economic society (as I said earlier, we're bent that way), and by comparison, HUUmanists (not unlike perhaps, many UUs) are of several minds on various immigration questions.

Bill Murry sets the table for wider ranging discussion of economic justice with a detailed survey of current economic facts, laced with opinion and hung on a rangy scaffold of humanist values. A few of Bill's speculative claims of the "it works like this" variety, tend (deliberately it seems to me) towards the simplistic, but he's not penning a philosophic dissertation, nor is he building rigorously towards a logical conclusion from a singular premise. Bill's approach is to come at the question of income inequality from several different starting points, each time inviting us to go as far with him as our own agreement with his interpretation (of what are humanist values, and what are the salient facts) will take us, each time urging us to take a step or two beyond where we stood before. It's a pretty good stump speech, from a writer well known for carefully argued prose (Bill's latest book *Becoming More Fully Human*, was recently published by HUUmanists to wide acclaim, and is now in its second printing.) The result is a framework from which to ethically judge our economy – that's what Bill will be constructing when he delivers this speech to the General Assembly under the HUUmanists banner. I suspect quite a few will be climbing up.

How does a congregation take social action effectively, if there is enough consensus on an issue, and/or if a small group are willing to lead in a new direction? A study group within the church? A wider public education campaign? These are tried and true UU starting points, but the question remains, how to move to action – participating in that public hearing, directly assisting an injured party, witnessing on the picket line? Aaron McEmry offers us a case specific primer – organizing support within a church for a local labor union action. And the key to acting in support of others, he suggests, is waiting. Be prepared, be informed, but wait, rather than charge ahead; wait for the request by and the lead of those most directly effected. It's not an easy lesson to learn for those of us used to deciding and leading – it's hard enough that Aaron reminds us several times – these are situations where we can be of great help, but where we are not in charge. The longer version of this article is available in print at the HUUmanists booth, and as an electronic link from the editor.

How do individual UUs and HUUmanists take action effectively? Perhaps by each being offered a simple direct activity to accomplish individually, which then, taken together, make a considerable public impact. Banned Book SmUUggling was designed as such an opportunity. This issue contains a list of just over 150 names of those who were the first to respond to such an offer – to each "smuggle" one "banned" book into Arizona during the Phoenix GA. These folks together will be contributing more than two full sets of the 83 school books removed from Tucson public school classrooms, to community based libraries set up in response to the states' anti-ethnic studies law. By the time you read this, we expect those numbers,

and the impact, to be much higher.

Finally, e-pinions is a new effort for this Journal, utilizing briefer pieces solicited or secured primarily on line, around a single topic, or in this case, group of (GA themed) topics. The contributors are an eclectic bunch, and they trip over one another a bit with both praise and objection, but that reflects the nature of the medium from which they were drawn. E-communications are often in sharper relief, and more boldly assertive than either sermons or academic style papers – the two primary sources for the longer articles we feature, and with which I intend to stick as the Journal's mainstay. Our movements (Humanist and Unitarian Universalist) need deep reflection and carefully considered debate on all the issues which we face, but there is also an energy and drive (not to mention a generational shift) in the passions of the screen, and we would be foolish not to tap it.

Labor organizing, the Doctrine of Discovery, ethnic and national self identity, Occupy, getting enough education and motivation to move from concern to action - all these and more lie within ...

Roger Brewin, editor