



# Social Action Chronicle



An Occasional Publication of the Social Action Committee  
of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, Vermont  
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## IMPORTANT BILLS IN THE LEGISLATURE

There are several important bills coming up in the Legislature in the coming days that bear watching.

On February 18, the Death with Dignity Bill was introduced in the House with 43 legislators as co-sponsors. This bill will give persons who are terminally ill the choice of requesting and taking prescription medicine to control the time and manner of their death. Polls suggest that 64% of Vermonters support this bill while only 26% express opposition. However, this opposition is expected to be very vocal, and it is very possible that the bill will not be sent from the committee during this legislative session. Those who wish to have control at the end of their lives may want to write to their legislators to express their views.

Another important bill was introduced recently by Governor Peter Shumlin. This bill will lead to a single payer health care system that will help Vermonters deal with the rapidly rising costs of health care. The bill is not in its final form, but it is a beginning. It will establish a five member board to oversee health care in our state and create for the first time a unified system rather than a series of competing interests. It will take time and work for this bill to become a reality because federal waivers are needed and insurance companies will fight strenuously to defeat the bill. The Social Action Committee has been concerned with this issue for a long time and has sponsored several forums on single payer health care with Dr. Deb Richter and Dr. Marvin Malek as speakers. Now it seems that our concerns are being seriously addressed by our state leaders.

Another concern this year will be the budget. There will be a lot of wheeling and dealing to make things balance. What do our values say to us about what we want to cut? How do we want to pay for the things we value in our state? How do we keep the weakest members of our society from being harmed? Our UU principles remind us of our belief in the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large. This means keeping track of what is going on in Montpelier and expressing our views to our legislators.

## A SPECIAL DAY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ISLAM



On Sunday, March 20, at 12:30 the Social Action Committee is sponsoring a forum with Muhyedeen Batah, a spokesperson for the Islamic Society of Vermont, as our speaker.

Mr. Batah was born in Nazareth, Israel, and emigrated to Brooklyn, New York, in 1989. He attended Pratt Institute and Parson School of Design and is a worker in wood, having made many beautiful creations, including even an elaborate throne that has been used by the Pope.

He became associated with the Islamic Society of Vermont in 1999 when following a devastating accident and a long recovery, he and his wife moved to Vermont looking for a quieter place that had both Muslims and a Mosque. He became involved with the Islamic Society of Vermont and remains a senior member. After September 11, 2001, when people began to realize how little they knew of Islam and called the Islamic Society asking for someone to come to speak on Islam, he agreed to be that speaker. He has shared his faith journey with many groups since that time.

On the same day SAC is also co-sponsoring with the Anti-Racism Action Committee another opportunity to become better acquainted with Islam. Both the 9:00 o'clock and the 11:00 o'clock services will have as their speaker Maureen Fiedler, editor of *Breaking through the Stained Glass Ceiling: Women Religious*

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*Leaders in Their Own Words.* She will speak on Female Islamic Religious Leaders.

Maureen Fiedler is active in coalitions working for social justice, racial and gender equality, and peace.



Following September 11, 2001, she gathered up a group of people from many religious faiths and presented a call-in radio program reflecting on what the terrorist attacks meant. The three-hour call had jammed phone lines from people who were eager to explore this event in terms of their own religious faith. Thus was born *Interfaith Voices*, an hour-long, award-winning public radio show heard today on 76 public and community radio stations in the U.S. and Canada.

On its website *Interfaith Voices* says, “We believe interreligious understanding is more than hollow jargon. It is integral to being informed and engaged citizens in the most religiously diverse country on earth. Polite society might try to avoid talking about religion and politics, but *Interfaith Voices* believes that we must talk about both – together.”

SAC is happy to be sponsoring both of these speakers on March 20.



### *An Invitation*

*The Social Action Committee meets the first Wednesday of each month at 5:30. Our projects include such diverse things as sponsoring informational forums, feeding the hungry at Food Shelf dinners, sending books to a medical school in \_\_\_\_\_, working toward interfaith understanding, providing people for supervision of parental visits in the prison, sponsoring Socially Responsible Santa, and many other projects.*

*We invite you to attend and become a part of our work in the community and world.*

## SUGGESTED READING

If you are interested in reading more about Islam and the problems many Muslims have been facing since September 11, 2001, here are some suggested readings from the UUSC’s resource: Building Bridges Tool Kit.

- ***We All Are Suspects Now: Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities After 9/11***, by Tram Nguyen  
Explores the lives of people targeted on the basis of immigration status, religion, and nationality, and shows the human cost of the so-called "Global War on Terror" in the United States, through the personal stories of communities facing a climate of fear, detention, and deportation.
- ***How Does It Feel to Be A Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America***, by Moustafa Bayoumi  
Intimate portraits and conversations with a diverse group of seven young Arab Americans attempting to define their identities and grappling with the challenges they face in post-9/11 America.
- ***Homeland Insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American Experience After 9/11***, by Louise Cainkar  
Academic work examining in detail the harsh impact of post-9/11 social, political, and legal changes on Arab and Muslim Americans.
- ***Zeitoun***, by Dave Eggers  
Powerful account of the experiences of a Syrian-American man and his family in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina and the breakdown of justice that leads to his wrongful arrest and detention. Reviewers note that this book "highlights so much about the tragedy of Katrina, post-9/11 life for Arabs and Muslims, and the beautiful nature of American multicultural society," revealing the "demons of xenophobia and racial profiling that converged in the swirling vortex of Hurricane Katrina." This was the February choice for the book groups in our Society and those who read it recommend it highly.

The **Social Action Chronicle** is published by the Social Action Committee of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, Vermont. Its contents do not necessarily represent the entire Society.

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