



**muusja.org**

**Minnesota  
United  
University  
Social  
Alliance**

# Social Justice

The state in a society in which all people and communities have access to the resources and freedoms necessary to survive and flourish, regardless of identity or background.

# Social Service vs. Social Justice

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Provides direct services for people/ communities impacted by social problems (shelter, food, clothing) | Seeks to change the systems, structures and institutions responsible for social problems (racism, sexism, poverty) |
| Primarily concerned with helping people affected by problems (catching babies downstream)              | Primarily concerned with addressing root causes of problems (stopping babies from being thrown in river)           |
| Private, individual acts   | Public, collective actions   |
| Responds to immediate needs  | Responds to long-term needs  |
| e.g.: homeless shelters, soup kitchens, clothes drives, tutoring projects                              | e.g.: legislative advocacy, grassroots community organizing, direct action   |

# Forms of Social Justice Work

Protests, rallies, marches

Issue-based legislative campaigns

Doorknocking/conversation campaigns

Media campaigns (TV, blogs, social media, film)

Lobbying elected officials & policy makers

Public art & performance

Coalition building with allied individuals, organizations

Popular education & other training

Writing letters, petitions, editorials

Community forums

**How is Social Justice  
linked to our  
Unitarian Universalist  
faith?**

# Collective Liberation

The idea that none of us is free until all of us are free, and that an injustice to one is an injustice to all. When we see each other as united partners in a common struggle for the well-being of all people, we move away from charity and toward solidarity.

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

--The Maori People of New Zealand,  
as expressed by Lilla Watson

“We covenant to affirm and promote... respect for the interconnected web of existence of which we are a part.”

--Unitarian Universalist Principles & Sources





# UU Voices of Justice

Looking to our past  
to inspire our future





# Abolition

# Henry David Thoreau

In July of 1846, Henry David Thoreau was jailed for refusal to pay his taxes. Although he spent only one night in prison, this experience was the motivation for Thoreau to write one of his most influential works, "Civil Disobedience."

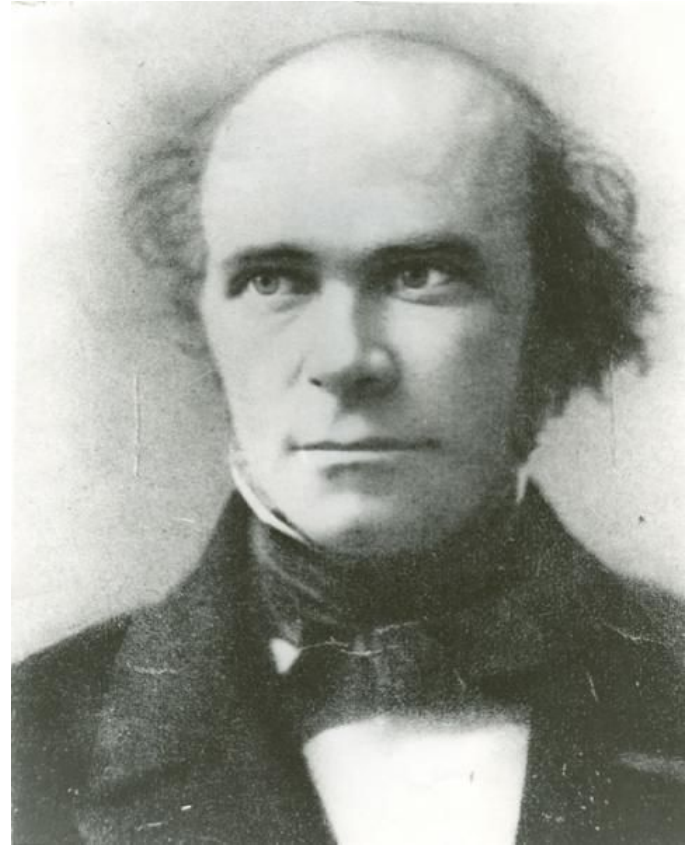
In "Civil Disobedience," Thoreau outlined a rationale for resistance to a corrupt state, a rationale that profoundly influenced figures such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, as well as many others who sought a non-violent response to governmental oppression.



# Theodore Parker

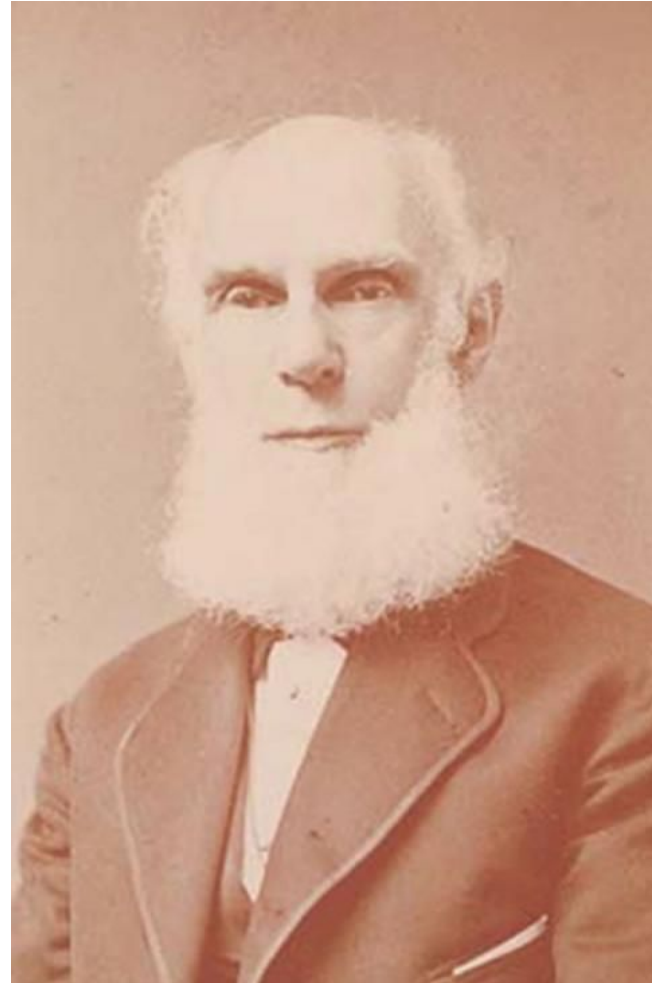
One of the most prominent opponents to the Fugitive Slave Law was the minister Theodore Parker (1810-1860). Parker was a Transcendentalist and one of Boston's leading social reformers.

He began his career as a Unitarian minister, but his radical theological views caused many of his Unitarian ministerial colleagues to ostracize him by refusing to exchange pulpits with him.



# Ezra Stiles Gannett

Gannett reluctantly supported the Fugitive Slave Law because he felt it was necessary to preserve the Union. Perhaps more importantly, many of the officials charged with enforcing the law were members of his congregation. According to the abolitionist Samuel J. May, Gannett had stated, "he should feel it to be his duty to turn away from his door a fugitive slave, —unfed, unaided in any way, rather than set at naught the law of the land."





# Suffrage

# Elizabeth Cady Stanton

After the American Civil War, Stanton's commitment to female suffrage caused a schism in the women's rights movement when she, together with Susan B. Anthony, declined to support passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. She opposed giving added legal protection and voting rights to African American men while women, black and white, were denied those same rights.



# Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Harper spoke up for the empowerment of women and worked with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to secure votes for women. Unlike Anthony and Stanton, Harper supported the Fourteenth Amendment, which, together with the Fifteenth, granted the vote to black men but not to women. Recognizing the ever-present danger of lynching, she reasoned that the African-American community needed an immediate political voice. With that would come the possibility of securing further legal and civil rights.







# Pacifism

# Rev. Olympia Brown

Rev. Olympia Brown (1835-1926) was a Universalist minister, and in 1863 became the first woman ordained within an organized denomination in the United States. Toward the end of her career, she preached for peace during World War I.



# John Haynes Holmes

Holmes remained a steadfast pacifist and an outspoken critic of the United States government. In addition to playing a central role in the founding of the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People, and the War Resisters League, he is remembered for his part in introducing Mohandas Gandhi widely in the United States. After his retirement from ministry, Holmes resumed fellowship with the American Unitarian Association.



# William Howard Taft

After hearing the Report of the Council, the president of the conference, former United States President William Howard Taft, was outraged. He expected Unitarians to line up firmly behind the war effort.

Taft's motion was carried by a vote of 236 in favor to 9 opposed. Over the next few months the Board of the American Unitarian Association (AUA) voted to deny aid to congregations with ministers that did not support the war. As a result most of the Unitarian ministers who had taken pacifist positions in opposition to the war lost their pulpits. In protest, Holmes resigned his fellowship with the American Unitarian Association and convinced his congregation to rename itself the Community Church of New York.





Black Lives Matter

