

CUUPS news

Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans

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Marie Laveau: Queen of the Voodoos

by the Rev. Melanie Morel Sullivan

This article has been adapted from a sermon given by the author for Black History Month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga, TN. The author, who describes herself as a 5th generation white Creole from New Orleans, is a long-time member of CUUPS, a former member of the CUUPS Board and Nominating Committee. She presently serves as parish minister in Chattanooga and is president of the UU Christian Fellowship. She is also a member of the UUA's Jubilee Working Group for Anti-Racism. Her Ministerial Record lists her theology as "pagan-liberal christian-zen-humanist, not always in that order."

"All in all Marie Laveau was a wonderful woman. Doing good for the sake of doing good alone, she obtained no reward, oftentimes meeting with prejudice and loathing; she was nevertheless contented and did not lag in her work. She had the cause of the people at heart and was with them in everything... Marie's name will not be forgotten in New Orleans." [from the obituary of Marie Laveau, New Orleans Daily Picayune, June 18, 1881]

The editors of the Daily Picayune could have had little inkling exactly how prescient those words would prove to be. Like most New Orleanians, black and white, I grew up my whole life knowing her name and some of the stories that circulated about her. Marie Laveau, both famed and reviled in her lifetime as the acknowledged "queen" of Voodoo practice in the

Crescent City in the 19th century, who was born in the at the end of the 18th century, has found lasting renown at the beginning of the 21st century. The worldwide web contains some 40-odd websites devoted to her — and since many people, like myself, view the Internet with its instant, bodiless, long-distance communication



Marie Laveau

with words, voices, and pictures as a kind of magic, I am sure she would be pleased and delighted by this development.

Despite her fame to the present day, much of what passes for knowledge about

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We Are Not Alone

from the prez...

Originally, I sat down to write a short column for this newsletter about the Spirit of Spring and hope for the coming season. I really wanted to write that our nation, our UU congregations, and our CUUPS organization have all weathered the worst of the storm and were pulling out of a time of retrenchment and hibernation and would blossom with the warmth of Spring. I wanted to revel in words of optimism and new energy and describe CUUPS' educational and programming hopes for the rest of 2002.

But then came Mission Anaconda and the wave of Palestinian suicide bombers. Then came news that

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Marie Laveau has been proven false — which should come as no surprise, since most of what has been written about her, from her own day until quite recently, was authored by European-American men with not-so-hidden agendas of white supremacy, racism, and sexism. As has been the case with so many important figures in black history and women’s history, Laveau’s life and work has been distorted and devalued when it was not being denied altogether.

Voodoo, which means “life force” or “spirit of life” in the Fon language of West Africa, has also been misrepresented as black magic or devil worship. It’s a sad and all too familiar story: a strong woman of color fought oppression with the only power available to her — spirituality — and the white men with all the political, social, and religious power called her a witch. It is long past time we set the record straight for this woman and this spiritual tradition.

In the late 1700s, the enslaved people of the French colony of Saint Domingue, under the charismatic leadership of the freed slave (and Voodoo practitioner) Toussaint L’Ouverture, revolted against their oppressors in what has become known as the first Haitian Revolution. During the years before the conflict was finally resolved with L’Ouverture’s victory and Haiti’s declaration of independence in 1804, hundreds of refugees poured into New Orleans, then also a French colony, founded in 1682. The refugees consisted of French planter families and their slaves, as well as a large number of gens libre du couleur, or free people of color, many of whom were of mixed racial heritage, as a result of liaisons between planters and African slaves.

Historians have long conjectured that Voodoo came to New Orleans during this wave of emigres from Saint Domingue, carried not only by the enslaved people, but also by the free black Creoles — and even by some of the French colonialists themselves. But this is not necessarily the whole story. New Orleans was a French colony as well, and the French were notoriously laissez faire in their treatment of enslaved peoples. Historically, France took a more relaxed attitude toward the religious conversion of their slaves, not only tolerating indigenous spiritual and cultural practices, but even subtly encouraging them. In some cases, the French were influenced by their slaves, synergistically adopting some of the customs for themselves, to the great scandal of other European colonial powers. Although it can never be said that there was ever such a thing as “good slavery,” it must also be noted that the French did not institute such punitive legal measures as, for example, the English did in Virginia, where the mere owning of a drum by a slave was a capital offense, or as the Spanish did in the Southwest with their wholesale massacres of native peoples in the name of the Catholic Church.

In any case, Voodoo first appeared in records of the Louisiana colony as early as 1743, and in 1773, a

famous court case, the so-called “Gris Gris Plot,” was uncovered to much alarm and public hysteria. By 1782, the Spanish governor of Louisiana (France had given up the colony to Spain) banned the importation of West Indian slaves, due to the fear of Voodoo, which was quite rightly considered to be an important element in insurrection, as it had proved to be in Haiti. So by the time Marie Laveau was born, Voodoo was already well established in New Orleans.

But whatever their legal standing, we can infer that Christophe loved Marie, for there is evidence in the historical record that he attempted to “pass for black” — an ironic reversal of known racial patterns in our racist society, both then and now.

Scholars debate whether Marie was born in Saint Domingue, on board ship, or in New Orleans; there is also some confusion over the exact year of her birth, which is variously reported as 1794 or 1795. Baptismal records at St. Louis Cathedral say she was the illegitimate daughter of Charles Laveau, a wealthy planter, and Marguerite D’Arcantel, a free woman of color who was part white, part black, and part Indian. (But even this is in dispute: recently discovered records with slightly different spellings of the names seem to show that both of Marie’s parents might have been free people of color.)

We do not know anything about Marie’s early life, although it is possible that she could have been among the young girls of both races educated in schools by the French Ursuline nuns. Marie next appears in historical records at the time of her marriage, in August 1819, when she was in her mid-20s, to either Jacques or Santiago Paris. (New Orleans having changed hands from France to Spain and back again to France may account for the confusion; both names are variants of James.) The two are listed on the marriage contract on

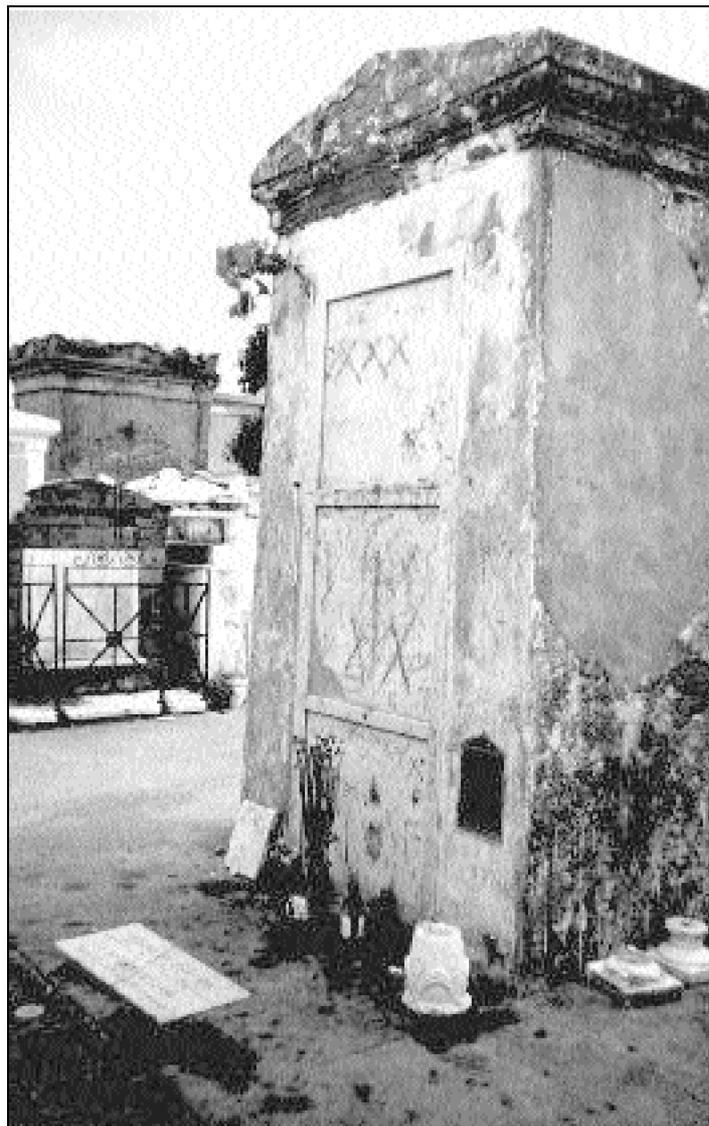
file in the Notarial Archive as free people of color.

It is not clear exactly why or how, but Paris disappeared some time in the early 1800s, and Marie began styling herself as *la Veuve Paris*, the Widow Paris. (Some traditions have it that Paris was a sailor and was lost at sea; others claim he ran off with another woman.) During this period, Marie became romantically involved with Christophe Duminy de Glapion, the white son of a French planter. They never married, mostly because Louisiana law expressly forbade legal unions between whites and free people of color, but their relationship was long and produced children, as did many other similar arrangements between wealthy white men and women of color, called in Louisiana *placage*, which was quasi-legal.

But whatever their legal standing, we can infer that Christophe loved Marie, for there is evidence in the historical record that he attempted to “pass for black” — an ironic reversal of known racial patterns in our racist society, both then and now. Although some books and many tour guides in New Orleans claim that the couple had 15 children together, anthropologist Martha Ward’s research had turned up records for only 5 — 3 girls who grew to maturity and 2 sons who died young.

It is also impossible to know for sure how and when Mam’zelle (as she was and is known to her many followers) became a leader in the New Orleans Voodoo community. It may be, as some have speculated, that she was trained by her mother, or she may have been initiated by someone else, perhaps even by Dr. John himself, the tall African with Senegalese tribal markings on his face who became the co-leader with Marie of the voodooistes of the Crescent City. (And from whom the modern-day musician and voodoo initiate Mack Rebenack took his stage name and persona.) We do know that Marie began her public ministry at the rituals in Congo Square and on Bayou St. John soon after the birth of her first child by Glapion, Marie Heloise, in 1827.

The public worship held every Sunday at Congo Square is another curious artifact of the *laissez faire* (literally, “let them do”) permissive philosophy of the French slaveholders. Nowhere else in the slaveholding South were slaves given leave to practice their ancestral religions or to retain their indigenous language; nowhere else were slaves allowed to roam without a written “pass” from their “owners.” Nowhere else were African slaves permitted to form alliances with Native Americans. But in New Orleans that is exactly what happened: all slaves in the city were given Sunday off by law, and allowed to walk unescorted to Congo Square, which at that time lay just outside the city limits. There, in groups that were said to include Indians as well as blacks, they played drums, sang in their native tongues, danced the *calinda*, the *bamboula*, and the *carabne*, and worshiped in the ways of their ancestors.



Marie Laveau's tomb

Far from being forbidden, these gatherings were considered exotic entertainment by the French, who made it a custom to cruise by Congo Square in their elegant carriages after Sunday Mass at the cathedral. Indeed, the goings-on at Congo Square inspired several 19th century Romantic composers, both white and black, most notably Louis-Marie Gottschalk and Basile Bares.

It is fair to say — and gets said in New Orleans quite regularly — that American music, with its unique blending of African polyrhythms and European structure, was born on those long-ago Sunday afternoons. Many musicologists believe that without Congo Square, there could have been no jazz, no rhythm-and-blues, no rock’n’roll.

In addition to the very public rituals on Sunday afternoons, there were the more secret gatherings on the fringes of the city, around Bayou St. John, where it is said that many whites participated, especially white women. There were also private audiences in which petitioners would come to Mam’zelle for advice, help, and healing both spiritual and physical, purchasing

charms, spells, dolls, candles, oils, and gris gris bags for every malady and condition. Census records show that the Glapion household was close by parish prison, and it is known that Marie, and later her daughter, often visited the prisoners there, bringing food and spiritual solace.

Marie's fame as a spiritual teacher and healer spread, and at the time of her death in 1881, during one of the city's periodic yellow fever epidemics, as she performed her usual office of caring for the sick without thought of danger to herself, all of New Orleans, white and black, high and low, mourned. Her life was memorialized by unusual editorials in both the French and English language newspapers; thousands of people of all stations in life jammed the streets to follow her horse-drawn cortege to the cemetery.

Her ministry was carried on so effectively by her daughter Marie, who was said to resemble her mother, that many disciples were convinced that Mam'zelle had cheated death — that if she had not risen from the dead she had at least reincarnated. (Marie II is also remembered for her compassion and skill at healing, as well as for inheriting her mother's political savvy. By a strange coincidence, the tomb of the two Mariés sits next door to that of another gifted Creole politician, Ernest "Dutch" Morial, first black mayor of the city of New Orleans.)

Voodoo in New Orleans was and is very different from that of Haiti, Brazil, and Cuba. It combines African ancestor worship, Native American veneration of the earth, and French Catholic pietism. The dead are not feared, but respected and honored; they reach out to the living, but their hold on us are bonds of love. Historian Karen McCarthy Brown credits Mam'zelle in an essay entitled "Women's Leadership in Haitian Voodoo":

"In Haiti [Marie Laveau] would have been considered a mediocre priestess, but [in New Orleans] she was a remarkable person, who gave the people what they wanted; she mixed up Voodooism with Christianity, which was in itself a great accomplishment, for it was what no sincere Voodoo priest or priestess of Haiti could have done — or would have done, for that matter. But it was the work of a very clever person."

Whether or not one agrees with Brown — and there is much evidence to suggest that the conflation of French Catholic Christianity with the West African religions of the Fon, Iwe, and Yoruba peoples was



St. Louis Cathedral

already occurring in Haiti by Mam'zelle's time — it is indeed remarkable how Marie Laveau, a woman without much formal education, living in a society that devalued and reviled her sex and her race, used her natural-born gifts for both religion and marketing to publicize, popularize, and codify the practice of Voodoo in New Orleans. Through its rituals, oppressed peoples — slaves, free people of color, Indians, and white women — found strength, purpose, power, and community.

So successful, in fact, was she in this marrying of Catholic saints and rituals with the loa, or spirits, of the Voodoo pantheon, that Marie and other open voodooistes regularly attended Mass and received the sacraments at St. Louis Cathedral. Even today, the Catholic Church in New Orleans is sensitive about the issue of Mam'zelle's "true religion." One All Saints Day several years ago, as my son Stephen and I arrived at her tomb at historic St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 at the edge of the French Quarter, we were roundly berated by an archdiocesan tour guide, who told us in no uncertain terms that Marie Laveau had died "a good Catholic" and that performing rituals at her monument was a "desecration." Stephen and I politely let her finish, and then completed our devotions after she left. It is still true today in New Orleans that many people see no contradiction in being both a voodooist and a Catholic — just as many UUs see no contradiction in being humanist and Buddhist, or pagan and Christian, or, as in my case, all four at once.

There are many versions of the ritual to be performed by petitioners at Marie Laveau's tomb in New Orleans's oldest cemetery. (A few can be found on the Internet, with one site offering to help you go through the rite in the privacy of your own home, via the magic of the

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In Search of the Goddess: A Journey to Crete

by Carole Etzler Eagleheart

swam in the sea, and spent nights laughing in the tavernas, telling our stories. We tasted new foods, and opened ourselves to new experiences.

Each woman had her own reason for coming on the pilgrimage. I had three reasons. First, I had been fascinated by my readings about the Minoans. I wanted to see with my own eyes what kind of culture could be developed by a people who honored the Goddess.

Second, I am a musician and songwriter, and I knew that new songs would come bubbling up when I set foot on this special land.

But most of all, I wanted to feel the presence of the Goddess. Would She speak with a different voice in a land where she had been celebrated for so long?

The first thing I discovered was the importance of geography in the development of Minoan culture. On the Greek mainland, and in the entire region, neolithic people had honored the Goddess, as they quietly went about their agricultural life. Then suddenly a new group of people swept in from the northeast, a warrior people who brought with them their male warrior-like gods. The life and religion of the mainland people were changed forever by this invasion.

But Crete was isolated from the mainland by a great stretch of sea. I found that even our modern high-speed ferry the size of a cruise ship took nine hours to cross that sea. For sailors in simple ancient ships it was a wide barrier. The sea allowed the people of Crete to continue their worship of the Goddess uninterrupted by the havoc of the mainland. It gave us the unusual phenomenon of a sophisticated Bronze Age culture where the Goddess was still revered.

The height of the Minoan civilization, from about 2000 BC to 1400 BC, was a time of incredible architecture, engineering, art, pottery, and jewelry.

Even though I had read about Knossos, the most famous Minoan site, I was not prepared for its size and complexity. No wonder it launched legends of mysterious labyrinths. It was enormous, larger than any building in my town in Vermont. It covered an area of more than 60,000 square feet, with multiple stories and intricate hallways.

Yet it was a graceful, liveable space, constructed with light wells to let light and air into the inner compartments. The architects and engineers had even developed a system of running water for toilets. All this, 2000 years before the rise of Rome, which we often think of as the originator of marvelous water systems.

Deep in the cave, candlelight flickered on the smooth rock of the altar.

I looked at the faces of the women reflected in the light. Thousands of years ago people had descended into the darkness to gather at this same place to honor the Goddess.

We lifted our voices and sang. All around us stalagmites rose in the shadows, shaped like statues of the Great Mother. I understood why ancient people felt this was a holy place.

We had come to Crete on the Goddess Pilgrimage led by Carol Christ. There were 19 of us, ranging in age from 22 to 64, from California and Louisiana and Massachusetts, and many states in between.

Ten of us had known each other before, from Unitarian Universalist events. Two years before, at a UU Womenspirit conference in North Carolina, a group of us had voiced the dream of going together on this pilgrimage. And the dream had become a reality.

For 15 days we followed in the footsteps of the ancient people we call the Minoans. We climbed to mountaintop shrines, scrambled down into sacred caves, and walked through the ruins of ancient towns. We danced to the music of Cretan lyre and lute. We poured libations of milk and honey, water and wine. We



I chuckled to see that the early excavators of Knossos called it a palace, even though there is no evidence of either a king or a queen during Minoan times. They couldn't imagine a place of its size or scope not having a ruler.

Instead of being a palace, it actually appears to have been a combination of agricultural storehouse, social and religious center.

Architecture can give us clues about social organization. For instance, the fact that the granaries were not walled off from the people indicates that there was not a ruling elite controlling access to food, but a more egalitarian society.

The most interesting clues to the Minoan society, though, are the fres-

coes found at Knossos and other sites. Women appear in highly respected positions in these paintings. They are pictured blessing the processions of people carrying tall vases filled with offerings.

Seeing the frescoes of the processions I was struck by the pride and joyfulness of the participants. These were not groveling servants but upright, beautiful people bringing offerings to the Goddess. The frescoes inspired the first song I wrote in Crete:

“Celebrating life, celebrating life, Joyful we come, dancing. Offerings we bring For honoring The Mother of life”

One of the most striking things about the Minoan art and architec-

ture was the lack of militarism. The buildings did not have fortifications. The large double axe that we call a labrys was in evidence, but it was clearly not a weapon but a ritual tool. Unlike other cultures, there are no paintings glorifying hunting or battle. Is this what happens when a whole society honors the Goddess? A sense of peace, a lack of violence in the culture?

As the days passed, we visited many Minoan sites. I will never forget the moment I stepped into the courtyard at the site called Phaistos. I could feel the spirits of the Minoans swirling in a dance all around me. Even after 4,000 years there was a wonderful feeling of joy in that place.

It was interesting to me to compare the art of the Minoans to that of the Egyptians, a few hundred miles away across the Libyan Sea. Think of the Egyptian art you have seen, the rigidity of the figures. To the Egyptians, change was bad. They valued permanence. That's why they built those very permanent houses for the dead that we call pyramids: so life could continue unchanged even after death.

Compared with the Egyptians, Minoan art feels fluid and graceful. They painted pictures of dolphins swimming, birds about to take flight, and acrobats in mid-leap. Did their honoring of the Goddess give them an appreciation of the constantly changing cycles of life? What an interesting way to view the world: to embrace change and flow with it.

I had a remarkable experience the day we visited one of the round tholos tombs. We gathered in the tomb, and reflected together upon the mystery of life and death and rebirth. At the end we danced a spiral dance together in the tomb, and I felt the movement of the cycle of life with my whole body. As I emerged I thought, “I am free to live, I am free to die, I am free to be reborn.” I realized that I had given up my fear of death.

Luckily this happened two days before what felt like a life-threaten-

ing experience—the descent into the Skoteino Cave.

I had read Carol Christ's book "Odyssey with the Goddess", which describes the first time she led one of these tours to Crete. So I knew that the Skoteino Cave would be a challenge. I volunteered to be part of the team to lead the ritual in the depths of the cave so I wouldn't chicken out.

Most of us were able to make the descent to the level of the cave where we gathered around the ancient altar. But at least half of us in the group were determined to go all the way to the bottom level and experience what awaited us there.

I had second thoughts as soon as I saw the opening to the lower level. It looked like a well, with steep sides leading down into darkness. We made our way sliding on our bottoms over the slippery rocks, reaching out with our feet and our hands for any projections that could keep us from tumbling down.

Carol is very tall, and seemed to be able to reach with her long legs for these outcroppings. Those of us who are shorter occasionally found ourselves in free-fall for several inches before we could grab hold. It was a lesson in the power of sisterhood. All the way down, the women helped each other. We helped to place each other's feet on safe places, and encouraged each other with our voices. At one point there was a slippery section where, if we had kept sliding, we would have gone over into what appeared to be an abyss. We figured a way for the woman in front to brace herself, hold out her hand and catch the next woman on the chest to keep her from slipping over the edge.

Safe on the floor of the cave, we meditated around a huge, beautiful stalagmite shaped like the Goddess. During the meditation the Goddess spoke to me, as She did so often on the pilgrimage. "Even in the depths of this cave I am with you," She said. "You are not alone."

When it came time to climb back up out of the cave, I was apprehensive.

All the way down I had been thinking, "I can slide down anywhere. But I can't slide up." It was one of the lessons the Goddess presented me over and over during the trip: don't miss the magic of the moment by worrying about the next step; the way will be revealed at the right time.

Slowly we began making our way up, helping each other. But there was one very slippery section where it was difficult for the woman above or below to be able to give a hand. I lay pressed flat against the wet rock and mud, my feet and hands unable to find purchase.

Then I remembered the statues of the snake goddesses we had seen in the Heraklion museum. "If I were a snake," I thought, "I would be able to get up this easily." I changed my consciousness and became like snake. And I wriggled up the slope.

One day we visited a convent, and saw how the Goddess-honoring culture of the Minoans is still alive today in Crete, underneath a veneer of Greek Orthodoxy. The black-robed nuns at the convent were dedicated to caring for a sacred myrtle tree, which grew

luxuriantly, as tall as their chapel, even in the dry climate. The myrtle tree traditionally was sacred to the Goddess.

We sang to the tree. The nuns listened, understanding the spirit if not the words of our song. We tied colored ribbons to the tree as offerings, and the nuns encouraged us to break off some dead twigs and wrap them in ribbons to take with us.

I was having a difficult time tying the ribbon around my twigs. I had selected very thin twigs only three inches long, and they kept slipping out of the ribbon. I looked around and saw that the other women had chosen good-sized twigs and were having no trouble wrapping them.

Suddenly the Goddess spoke to me from the tree: "You take so little of the abundance I offer you." It wasn't a judgmental voice, but a gentle one, the voice of one who wanted me to open up and receive the fullness of life.

Obviously this wasn't just about twigs.

Many women on the tour felt the presence of the Goddess, sometimes in experiences with rocks, sometimes with mountain streams.

There were times when I felt the Goddess definitely had a sense of humor. Once I left a beautiful garden with a pool to climb up a hillside alone in the heat of the day to meditate. As soon as I settled into meditation, She said, "You didn't have to work so hard. I was down by the pool."

I had come to Crete to see what kind of culture would be created by people who loved the Goddess, and I found stunning examples of art and architecture, and hints of a society where men and women lived in true equality.

I had come to Crete to feel new music come bubbling up, and it did, a whole new book of music.

I had come to Crete to find the Goddess, and Her presence was everywhere.

But I found even more. Sharing the pilgrimage with the other women on the trip brought a richness to the experience, beyond what I had even imagined. We laughed and cried together. We faced our fears, and shared our strengths. And we caught a glimpse of another way to live. As we explored the world of the ancient Minoans, we saw a vision of what life can be when the Goddess is honored.

Carole Etzler Eagleheart lives in Vermont, but spends nine months of the year giving concerts, workshops, and Sunday services for Unitarian Universalist congregations and other groups across North America.

"She Calls to Us: Songs to Celebrate the Goddess", her book of songs inspired by the Goddess Pilgrimage to Crete, can be ordered for US \$14.95 plus \$2.00 shipping and handling to Carole Eagleheart, 1180 VT Route 22A, Bridport, VT 05734. She plans to release a tape and CD of the songs in 2002.

Paganalia

By Dian Firebearer Mueller

Recognizing Romuva

The Lithuanian Parliament is considering an initiative to give the Pagan group Romuva the status of a "traditional religion." Proposed by Social Liberal MP Gemininas Jakavonis, himself a practicing member of the Baltic religious community, and three other members of his party and the Liberals, the move would grant Romuva federal monies. Romuva is currently "registered," and only nine religions have traditional status: Roman Catholics, Eastern-Rite Catholics (Uniates), the Orthodox Church, Old Believers, Reformed Evangelical, Evangelical Lutherans, Sunni Muslims, Jews, and Karaites.

The government's religious affairs advisor explained, "Traditional religions are those that have a history in our country of more than 300 years and significantly influence the country's life." A third acknowledged group, "recognized" religions, have operated in Lithuania for over 25 years.

Romuva carries on the country's unbroken Pagan tradition. Established in 1928, it was banned after the 1944 Soviet occupation, but was kept alive by people like Jonas Trinkunas, a religion scholar who reformed it in 1967. At the height of its revival, over 1,000 people attended festivals, and Jakavonis estimated that Romuva currently has 2,000-3,000 members.

The best-known Lithuanian Pagan was Marija Gimbutas, who wrote, "The customs, beliefs, mythological songs and folk art symbolism of the Lithuanians ... are amazingly replete with antiquity." The favorite Lithuanian holidays -- Rasos (St. John's Day), Velines (All Souls' Day), and Kucios (Christmas Eve) -- have only a thin overlay of Christianity.

The Roman Catholic archbishop of Kaunas, Sigitas Tamkevicius, issued a statement on Nov 9 denouncing the move to recognize Romuva. "What is now being called the religion of ancient Balts is just a restoration of old village culture. It is ethnography, not religion," he said, and argued that awarding traditional status to Pagans would "provoke a confrontation. The opposition of the new pagans to the Church and to Christianity is well known," he alleged. (333alliance)

Heading Off Hellenes

A crusade against the spread of Hellenic Paganism was proposed to the Greek Orthodox Church hierarchy on Oct 12 by Anthimos, Metropolite of Alexandroupolis. Declaring that "shrewd people" were "attempting to revive ancient religions" by exploiting the "love contemporary Hellenes hold for ancient ancestors," Anthimos urged the church to begin collecting and analyzing relevant publications and confronting the revival with public education and a parish-based counter campaign. (cose)

Pagan Patriots

In the wake of the 9-1-1 terrorist attacks, Pagans were among the volunteers in New York City, including members of the Temple of Ara community. And while the general public wondered how or whether to celebrate the secular Halloween, many Pagan observances of Samhain included remembrances of the victims and healing circles for peace.

Of course, not all Pagans are pacifists, and some are in the armed services. To ensure that those sent overseas received support, on Sep 24 the Military Pagan Network (MPN) established the Adopt a Pagan Soldier Program, and an independent

Blue Star Project launched on Oct 23 urged participants to light daily candles and pray for those "heading into harm's way."

Ár nDraíocht Féin (ADF) ArchDruid Emeritus Isaac Bonewits used his Website <www.neopagan.net> to call on psychics worldwide to support the anti-terror effort -- and produce potentially "scientifically useful data" -- by pinpointing Osama bin Laden's whereabouts.

Nevertheless, Paganism continued to be targeted for blame even after Rev. Jerry Falwell apologized for his Sep 13 comments saying that the "sins" of Pagans and others made the US vulnerable to the terrorist attacks. A Christian minister in Africa depicted Osama bin Laden's jihad as a fight "against America as a pagan city," and Maureen Dowd wrote in the *NY Times* on Oct 14, "America has entered the season of the witch."

More frightening was a Nov 1 *NY Post* article that pointed to anonymous "radical members of a pagan cult" in Indianapolis as suspects in the anthrax letter terrorism. This was confirmed in a post by Terry Kok to the elf-lore-family@yahoogroups.com listserv, in which he reported receiving a call from the Indianapolis FBI looking for information about Wicca. In response, Pagan and Wiccan organizations were asked to supply the FBI "with accurate information about the non-violent diversity which constitutes the Modern Craft."

Concerned that the post-9-1-1 patriotism was promoting "Christianity as the state religion," Ginger Strivelli of the Appalachian Pagan Alliance lodged a protest with the Buncombe Co., NC, school system in early October objecting to "God Bless America" signs on school property. She was criticized by HP Phillip Yardley of the NC Piedmont Church of Wicca in Morgantown, who felt that there were "bigger issues to battle right now," but school spokeswoman Gerry Kovach, who didn't understand why Strivelli was "making an issue of it," agreed to look into it.

Donations to MPN can be made through Amazon.com accounts by going to

www.amazon.com/paypage/P36Y3D9ZVWY5FW and clicking "Pay Now"; checks and money orders may be sent to MPN. (MPN; OurFreedom; Paganews; *Toronto Star*; Tuan Today)

Fires of Peace

There was a somber tone to the Nov 19 ceremony in Olympia, Greece, as white-robed "High Priestess" Thalia Prokopiou lit the Olympic Flame. She and her acolytes carried the blaze in a cauldron from temple ruins at the site; overcast skies forced them to use the weekend's rehearsal fire instead of the Sun's rays to light the torch.

Greek Olympic Cmte. Pres. Lambis Nikolaou urged onlookers to embrace the peaceful message of the Olympic tradition, and announced that the ministers of Israel, Palestine, and 15 other countries were supporting an Olympic Truce during the Winter Games, which begin Feb 8 in Salt Lake City, UT. (Reuters)

Indigenous Intelligence

Brazil's indigenous people are fighting to protect their natural resources and traditional herbal knowledge. In their latest move, a declaration from spiritual leaders and witch doctors was sent to the UN World Intellectual Property Organization meeting in Geneva Dec 10-14 by the Foun. for Indigenous People (FUNAI).

FUNAI's chief coordinator of Indian rights, Marcos Terena, noted that the group is "trying to prevent piracy in genetic resources, in biodiversity on our lands." About half of the world's plant life is located in Brazil, concentrated in the Amazon rain forest. When he brought the FUNAI concerns to a peace summit of spiritual leaders at the UN in NY during August 1999, he noted that "indigenous people have stopped sharing information for fear of being cheated."

The Nat'l Instit. for Industrial Property (INPI) hosted 23 shamans and witch doctors at a meeting earlier in the month, including members of the Crao, Quajajara, Warairo, and Xavante people. Protecting indigenous intellectual property is "a national priority," says the INPI president. It was the only country bringing solid indigenous copyright proposals to the WIPO session.

The declaration requests "punitive mechanisms to block the pillaging" of the Natives' biodiversity, and also insists on clear reservation boundaries and the right to manage their flora and fauna so it may continue to thrive. In addition, they want representation in WIPO, the World Trade Organization, and other international groups, and request final approval of the five-year-old UN declaration on indigenous rights. (Reuters)

Seeking Sanctuary

The Gaea Retreat Ctr. in Leavenworth Co., KS, came

under fire in October when the local planning commission voted not to renew its special use permit. The site hosts Pagan events including the Heartland Pagan Festival and Gaea Goddess Gathering.

County Planning Director John Zoellner stated that activities at Gaea would probably be constitutionally protected, and recommended that its permit be renewed so long as it met normal requirements. Critics claimed problems with nudity, noise, pedophilia, devil worship, and illegal drug use at the site, owned by Earth Rising, Inc.

Commissioner Ron Ewert, who found Internet materials regarding Gaea and its clients questionable, also asserted that Pagans are by his dictionary definition non-religious. The county commissioners upheld the planners' recommendation on Oct 25.

The Gaea center filed a lawsuit on Nov 26 to reverse the ruling, and cited the absence of any public complaints lodged with police during Earth Rising's ownership. County officials verified that there was no evidence of illegal activity at the site. An injunction was also sought so that events could move forward while the case was decided. (*Kansas City Star*; Paganews; Reuters; Tuan Today)

Salem Five Cleared

The last five of the 20 accused Witches killed during the 1692-3 Salem Witch craze were exonerated by an act signed by Acting Gov. Jane Swift in Salem on Halloween. Many of the descendants of Bridget Bishop, Susannah Martin, Alice Parker, Wilmot Redd, and Margaret Scott, who had lobbied for the move, were on hand to celebrate.

The MA legislature cleared all but six of the accused in 1711, and a 1957 resolution exonerated "Ann Pudeator and certain other persons." Rep. Paul E. Tirone, whose wife is a descendent of Sarah Wildes, one of those acquitted in 1711, sponsored the act. "These people were victims of hysteria," he said, adding that he hoped people would remember the travesty's lessons as they became more suspicious of each other after the 9-1-1 terrorism. (AP; *NY Times* Reuters)

Wiccan Chaplain Challenged

Wisconsin's first professional Wiccan chaplain began work at the Waupun Correctional Instit. on Dec. 3. Rev. Jamiy Witch, who previously worked as a volunteer minister for hospice and two of the prison's 30 Wiccans, received staunch support from the Dept. of Corrections and the prison warden, but opposition from three Republican legislators.

Rep. Scott Walker, chair of the Corrections and Courts Cmte., argued that receiving Witch's services might violate some inmates' beliefs. Rep. Mike Huebsch vowed to introduce a bill to eliminate funding for her job. A third legislator, Rep. Scott Suder,

...continued on next page

who chairs the state Assembly's Criminal Justice Cmte., called for public hearings on Dec 7.

Witch's new duties include scheduling religious services and volunteer ministers. She said that it was important "for people to understand that when I walk through the prison walls, I am ... interfaith and non-denominational."

Lady Liberty League of Circle Sanctuary, which provided some of Witch's training, and Witches Against Religious Discrimination (WARD) are keeping a close eye on the situation. (OurFreedom; Paganews)

Freedom Fight

Starhawk and others continued to stoke the embers of the anti-corporate globalization movement following the 9-1-1 terrorism. A Pagan Cluster participated in peace rallies in Washington, DC, the weekend of Sep 29, performing magic, hosting healing spaces, and contributing to the interfaith service.

When the Internat'l Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank met in Ottawa Nov 17-18 during the G-20 meeting, a Pagan Cluster was among the demonstrators. Another cluster participated in the annual School of the Americas Watch the same weekend at Ft. Benning, GA.

En route to lead non-violence training and participate in the Living River Pagan presence, when Starhawk arrived at the Ottawa airport on Nov 12, she and com-

panion Lisa Fithian were detained for nearly five hours, and Starhawk's computer was confiscated. At a hearing the following day, Fithian chose forced over voluntary deportation and was arrested. "Freedom of movement across the borders is one of the things we're fighting for," said Starhawk. (CW IV:6:10) (*Canadian Press*, noreastweb)

Preserving Trust

Charging that the Highways Agency and consultants hired to work on the Stonehenge bypass tunnel "were the destroyers of the Iron Age site of Twyford Down as well as 14 archaeological sites at Newbury," members of England's National Trust submitted a motion to the conservation body's Oct 27 Annual General Meeting to reconsider its position on the road scheme.

The move was supported by the Stonehenge Alliance, which includes Pagan, environmental, archaeological, and transport members, who advocate a longer tunnel bored under the entire site, instead of the 2-km cut-and-cover scheme currently proposed. They argue that sensitive archaeological sites would be disturbed by the construction, the landscape would be disfigured, and surrounding communities would be adversely affected by the increased capacity of A303 road. The motion, written by Dr. Christopher Gillham, was defeated by 65,601 votes to 24,290. (Stonehenge Alliance)

...continued on next page

Ram Temple Tempest

A Special Paganalia Feature Report

Vishnu, one of the three Hindu creator Gods, the preserver of the world and the keeper of morality and order, incarnated 900,000 years ago as Ram, a God-king and central figure of the Ramayana epic triumph of good over evil. Followers say a temple to Ram was built in the 11th century on the spot where the God was born in Ayodhya, but torn down by Muslim invaders to make room for the Babri Masjid (mosque) built in 1528 dedicated to Mughal Emperor Babar.

As one of the most widely worshipped deities in India, control over His birthplace has been a point of heated contention. During British colonial rule, a wall was erected to separate Muslim and Hindu believers, but after claims that Hindus had illegally installed statues of Ram in the mosque, the site was locked to all-comers in 1949.

Forty years later, with the site reopened, hundreds died after riots erupted when the government allowed the first foundation stone of a Hindu temple to be laid. That was nothing, however, compared to

By
Dian Firebearer Mueller

the violence following the attack on the mosque by Hindu zealots on Dec 6, 1992, in which they razed the mosque and 3,000 people, mostly Muslims, died in riots.

With a handful of ownership suits pending in lower courts, the Supreme Court ruled in 1994 that the status quo must be maintained until the rulings were handed down. Not satisfied with the progress, a Hindu religious parliament declared in Jan 2001 that it would only wait until March of this year for resolution before it would begin rebuilding the Ram temple.

Numerous outbreaks of violence have occurred in the past year because of the conflict, but heated to nearly to the 1992 boiling point again in recent months.

The Babri Masjid Action Cmte rejected a proposal on Jan 14 by India's PM Atal Behari Vajpayee for talks to settle the Hindu-Muslim dispute over the

...continued on page 11

Eagle Trader Clipped

Native American Medicine Man Terry Antoine was put on trial in Seattle, WA, on Oct 23 for smuggling Canadian bald eagle carcasses and illegally selling and trading them. The Cowichan band Salish Native provided them to other Indians for religious uses, his lawyer said. Antoine was found in possession of parts from approximately 150 birds, most at his home in British Colombia.

To legally obtain the birds, religious practitioners from federally recognized tribes must apply for permits and wait for the government to provide them from the approximately 1,000 carcasses found each year. Native American Church of N. Amer. Lawyer James Botsford criticized the system, which he said doesn't accommodate Native "religion interests in a friendly or supportive manner."

Antoine was convicted on Oct 26 of violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Attorney Michael Filipovic argued during the trial that the case was "in large part about an effort to impose laws ... of a majority culture" onto the minority. Sentencing was scheduled for Jan 11, and Antoine faced another trial in Canada. (AP)

Rallying Pride

The 2001 Pagan Pride Day events held at 76 sites in six countries, mostly over the weekend of Fall Equinox, broke attendance and charitable contribution records. The estimated 17,494 participants were double the 2000 number; together they raised over \$15,000 for local and national charities, as well as over 15,000 pounds of food and goods for food banks and shelters. In addition, hundreds of signatures were gathered for the Tempest Smith Tolerance Pledge, committing participants to practice religious tolerance. (IPPP)

Defending Dif ference

To honor the memory of Tempest Smith — the Wiccan who committed suicide on Feb 20 last year in part because of classmates' prejudice — as well as the "millions of victims of religious discrimination worldwide," the International Pagan Pride Project (IPPP) launched the Tempest Smith Tolerance Pledge in September. Calling on signatories to stand up and protest any form of religious discrimination, it also reminds them, "I make a better witness to my own beliefs by simply living them, not belittling others." In the first six weeks of the pledge drive, over 1000 signatures were collected. It is available online at <www.paganpride.org/what/pledgeonline.html>. (Tuan Today)

Kindling Hope

Erin Echels Scott, a TX Pagan trying to gain custody of her 10-year-old son from the family of her ex-husband, jailed on charges of solicitation of capital murder, has contacted Lady Liberty League (LLL) for support. In her Oct 8 exclusive update for *Paganalia*, she

reported that LLL was hoping to find her new counsel and expert testimony on the validity of her religion. She was also awaiting the defense's response to reopening the custody modification order, and had rejoined her local Covenant of UU Pagans (CUUPS) chapter for support. (Scott)

Fire Safety 101

A second Samhain-tide fire in as many years ended in tragedy. Mary Palmieri of Enfield, CT, had a couple of Wiccan friends over to her home to conduct a cleansing ritual in November. When a paper with her problems written on it was set alight, it caught her bedroom on fire, gutting the room and causing extensive damage to the rest of the house. Thankfully, no one was injured; in the 2000 Halloween accident in WA, five women were burned, one fatally. (Paganews)

A Middle Way

Although almost 50 United Ways (UW) across the country have stopped funding the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) following the US Supreme Court decision supporting their ban on gay leaders, the Cleveland UW joined about eight other local United Ways in finding a compromise. In September, it decided to shift its entire \$268,000 contribution to the BSA-affiliated Learning for Life program, a non-discriminatory project that teaches public school children how to apply academic lessons to everyday life. (*Plain Dealer*)

CUUPS Convo

"Passion, Politics and Power" was the theme of the continental Convocation of the Covenant of UU Pagans (CUUPS) held in Boulder, CO, Sep 21-23. Among the highlights were Siberian shamanic storytelling, workshops on topics from music to comparative Afro-Atlantic traditions, ritual, and drumming. The keynote panel discussion examined "Earth-centered/Pagan religious response to terrorism and our current political reality," and "the art of bringing our intentions, our will, our magick to focus on social and political transformation was a major element" of the weekend, noted CUUPS' *Connections* magazine.

Potter's Popularity Panned

While JK Rowling's Harry Potter series broke sales records for Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, they topped the American Library Assoc's list of most challenged books last year, with challenges in 27 states. This Fall, school boards in Duval and Pasco Counties, FL, were forced to consider removing the texts from school libraries and from a high school English class respectively after parents complained.

On the eve of the Nov 4 premiere of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* London, Britain's Assoc. of Teachers and Lecturers union praised the story's moral of "good triumphing over evil," but warned parents to protect children "from the more extreme

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influences of the occult.” And although he considers the novels “good reading,” the Christian owner of Britain’s largest private toy store, The Entertainer, declined to carry Potter toys for fear that role-playing would draw children into the occult.

Rowling attests that of the thousands of child fans she’s met, not one has ever told her, “I want to be a witch.” Pagan Federation spokesman Andy Norfolk confirmed that the books haven’t resulted in serious inquiries.

Meanwhile, in a Nov 23 report, HP Kevin Carlyon of the British White Witches reiterated his charge that Harry Potter exploits his religion, which he claims has the motto “For Need, Not Greed.” He purportedly cast a spell on Rowling to have her donate profits from Potter merchandise to charity or face the threat of having her fortunes “come crumbling down.” (AP; *Guardian Unlimited Observer*; Paganews; Reuters; *Telegraph*)

Crossings Over

Victor H. Anderson (b. 5/21/1917), who with his wife Cora was a Grand Master of the Faerie/Feri Tradition, died at his home on Sep 20. He was also a Kahuna, Bokor, and Yezidi elder, and the author of the classic *Thoms of the Blood Rosbook* of Goddess poetry and liturgy published in 1970. Starhawk and the late Gwydion Pendderwen were among his students. A memorial service was held at the Chapel of the Chimes in CA on Sep 24.

Ron Parshley, aka Lord Sylvanus (b. 11/17/1943), an Elder of the Alexandrian Tradition of Wicca, founding member of the Pagan Allied Network, and Elder of the Tampa UU Church Circle died Nov 12. His

Pagan radio show in Worcester, MA, in the mid-1970s was believed to be the first of its kind. Among his students was Judy Harrow. His memorial service was held Nov 17 at the UU Church of Tampa.

Pauline Campanelli (b. 1/25/1943), died at her Pohatcog Township, NJ, home on Nov 29 from complications of childhood polio. Known to the general public as a painter who called her work “communications of the essence of ... experience,” she was also a Pagan author with husband Dan serving as illustrator for *Ancient Ways* and *Wheel of the Year*. She also preserved traditional home crafts including quilting, spinning, and dye making. (333alliance; The Witches’ Voice; Witch Eye)

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...temple (continued from page 10)

Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh (UP), religious site. “We made it clear ... that no talks could be held with an opposite party that showed no semblance of a conciliatory approach,” said committee convenor Zafaryab Jilani. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP; World Hindu Council) remained firm in its plans to reconstruct a temple to Ram beginning Mar 15.

A week later, 3,000 Hindu sadhus (holy men) began a chataveni rathyatra (warning journey) from Ayodhya to New Delhi to campaign for the temple. The VHP chief headed the peaceful motorcade, which stopped at one mosque for supporters to debark and shout, “Sons of Babar, go home. Go back to Pakistan.” En route, VHP Pres. Ashok Singhal said, “We gave the government one year and three months to solve this. How much more time can be given?” At the end of the 5-day trip, leaders held a rally and met with PM Vajpayee, who has sought legal advice on whether undisputed land near the site could be used for the temple instead.

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The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) renewed its pledge to build the temple in its Feb 2 manifesto for UP’s upcoming elections. However, the statement was softened with the caveat of UP chief minister Rajnath Singh, who said, “We would want this to happen only through a proper understanding or by means of a judicial settlement.”

Pressing ahead with preparations, a yagya (holy fire ritual) begun in Ayodhya the weekend of Feb 24 was attended by tens of thousands of worshippers, many of whom planned to continue camping nearby until June. Remarking on the support, VHP Gen. Sec. Pravin Togadia warned, “If we don’t build a temple at Ayodhya we would be encouraging the jihadi forces to continue perpetrating violence against India.” Security was

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increased in the town, and the national Parliament was forced to adjourn temporarily as tempers flared.

As some activists were returning home on Feb 27, a fracas broke out with Muslims at a stop in Godhra, and a mob torched their train, resulting in 58 deaths. In the hours that followed, PM Vajpayee pleaded with the VHP to postpone their plans and work to maintain “peace and brotherhood in the country.” The VHP responded by reiterating its stance. Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani said the group faced “dangerous consequences” if it didn’t abandon its plans, and promised to take action if anyone defied court orders banning religious activity at the disputed site.

Further violence broke out in Godhra the next day as Hindus attacked and burned Muslim homes and buildings. Despite deployment of thousands of paramilitary and army troops, turmoil spread to other communities, generating the worst chaos since the mosque destruction and more than 700 deaths. To protect its minority Hindu community from a backlash, neighboring Bangladesh went on full alert on Mar 1, tightening security around Hindu places including the Indian High Commission. Within the week, the police had to stop a mob of 2,000 that had burnt an Indian flag from marching on the commission building. Pakistan also tightened security for Hindu temples and communities.

The VHP offered a compromise on Mar 1, promising to postpone the temple building if it was allowed to raise two pillars on nearby land. Before there was any official state or Muslim response to the offer, a ban on travel to Ayodhya resulted in dozens of police detentions. The following week, PM Vajpayee met with Hindu leaders and government officials but was unable to hammer out an acceptable resolution. A leading Hindu seer also met with Muslim leaders in search of an answer.

As an uneasy peace began to settle on Mar 4, the spokesman for an Islamic umbrella group warned of fresh violence if the temple proceeded. “The completion of the Ram temple on the site of the Babri Masjid will by no means be the end of the Muslim struggle,” said Maulana Musannah Miyan, “but in fact it will be the beginning of an era of violence, turmoil, anarchy.”

About 40,000 people gathered for a peace rally in Calcutta on Mar 6. Many dressed as Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Christian clerics, and shouted, “We are one, irrespective of religion.” In the US, a similar rally was held in Washington, DC, and organizers met with Indian Ambassador Lalit Mansingh to deliver a letter calling for justice in the Godhra slayings.

Meanwhile, the Indian government gave permission for the VHP to conduct a puja (symbolic prayer) on Mar 15. According to VHP officials, they also received assurances that 43 acres of undisputed land would be transferred to the Ram Janmbhoomi Nyas by Jun 2.

The demonstrations were followed the next day with conciliatory remarks from both Hindu and Muslim leaders in India. VHP Pres. Singhal expressed confidence that the Hindu temple could “be built peacefully, with-

out shedding any blood of either Hindus or Muslims,” a statement which an All India Muslim Personal Law Board spokesman said “will certainly make a difference.” In Parliament, however, the members had to adjourn again over an uproar about the violence and a call for Home Minister Advani’s resignation.

The VHP announced on Mar 8 that it would abide by the court’s decision over the Ayodhya site ownership, postpone its desired construction date until June, and hold the Mar 15 puja outside the disputed spot. Believing that it had made enough concessions, it asked Muslims to offer their own compromises. When Muslim leaders met two days later to consider the alternate temple site plan, they rejected it as an inadequate settlement. They demanded a written guarantee that the VHP

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wouldn’t proceed with construction without the court’s assent, and reiterated the warning that the dispute had “baneful and perilous repercussions for Indian society.”

Deadly violence resumed on Mar 10 in West Bengal when, as a result of a ban on large gatherings, Hindu activists were prevented from holding an unscheduled prayer meeting. The turmoil once more spread to other locales. As the revised and astrologically auspicious Mar 15 deadline approached, security forces were further beefed up in Ayodhya as officials feared an attack on the city by Muslim militants and set up a roadblock against an influx of Ram devotees for the planned vigil.

As the usual rumors circulated that Pakistanis might be acting as agents provocateur in the unrest, police commissioner Anil Kumar Gupta said there was “high grade intelligence” of a possible terrorist attack that “might look to hit Ayodhya.” Approximately 6,000 paramilitary troops and police were stationed in the area that boasts 1,200 temples, hoping to keep the violence from escalating to the level of the 1992 riots that left 3,000 dead.

While the nation held its breath awaiting that Friday’s deadline and the anticipated Wednesday Supreme Court decision on whether the VHP could conduct its puja, artisans continued their decade-long work of carving rosy sandstone blocks for the Ram temple. The puja would happen regardless of the court’s ruling, insisted VHP Gen. Sec. Togadia, adding, “Conducting a religious ritual is our fundamental right.” Defiant and frustrated with the unresolved dispute, the VHP declared that, following the prayer ceremony, it would lay the temple cornerstone on land outside the contested perimeter.

Muslim leaders were dubious of assurances that temple construction would not encroach on the site of the former mosque, and were concerned that thousands of VHP members would be allowed to attend the puja.

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"In 1992, they promised to perform a puja but they destroyed the mosque," noted Ayodhya Muslim leader Khaliq Ahmed Khan.

Nevertheless, on Mar 12 the city was relatively deserted when normally it would be overflowing with Hindus celebrating Shiva's holy day of Shivaratri. Many shops closed for lack of business until after the planned puja. "Even the monkeys are hungry because they depend on food from the pilgrims," said one priest. On the eve of the court's ruling on the ceremony, VHP Pres. Singhal vowed that his group would abide by it, but stage a protest march and "court arrest" if the decision was unfavorable.

Fleeing from terrors feared and experienced, tens of thousands of Muslims began to fill refugee camps in western India. Traumatized by witnessing family members being burned alive, and terrified of the potential for worse disaster, even those with homes left standing preferred the unsanitary stench and crowded conditions of the camps to the dangers left behind. As the VHP deadline neared, even Hindus began to evacuate places where they thought violence might erupt.

Fearing continued bloodshed, the court ruled on Mar 13 that "no religious ceremony of any kind, symbolic or actual, would be permitted" at the controversial 67-acre site. The government vowed to uphold the court ban; however, since the puja was scheduled to be held off the disputed land, the VHP wasn't convinced the ruling even applied.

"We regret Hindus have been deprived of their basic right to pray for the first time in independent India, something even British rulers and their courts never did," said VHP Gen. Sec. Togadia. Although he said the council "accepts the Supreme Court ruling," he added that they would do whatever their seers thought best about holding the puja. The VHP had no choice left, he said, but "to take it to the people's court and build opinion nationwide on building the temple," promising widespread peaceful protest if Ram devotees "were stopped" in Ayodhya. "Building the Ram temple is our birthright."

When Pakistani Pres. Pervez Musharraf heard the ruling, he called on the Indian government to "protect their minorities" and expressed deep concern about "Hindu extremism and terrorism against Muslims in India." Later, the Indian parliament had to adjourn again after an uproar was caused by a call for PM Vajpayee's resignation over his party's request that the court permit the puja. The security force in Ayodhya was increased to 20,000.

As tension mounted, Ramchandra Das Paramhans, a 93-year-old holy man and leader of the temple campaign who was among the vocal advocates of defying police and had threatened suicide if he was stopped, agreed to stop his procession short of the mosque site. The local administrator agreed that Paramhans' donation of shilas (carved temple stones) could occur in a

neutral area and not violate the court ruling.

And so the procession of hundreds of fundamentalist devotees proceeded peacefully as they chanted, "Lord Ram, we are coming. We will build the temple." Accompanied by heavily armed police escort, they car-

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ried the shilas in tricycle rickshaws. They blessed pillars they hope will one day be part of the Ram temple and then gave them to a representative of PM Vajpayee.

While some holy men were angry that the ceremony was scaled down, the VHP Gen. Sec. Togadia immediately went on the offensive again. He claimed that the government official's acceptance of the stones amounted to official acceptance of the temple in principle. Opposition party members agreed that it was "a very important development" and were outraged by the action and saw it as yet another example of the Vajpayee government pandering to the VHP agenda. {AP; Christian Science Monitor; LA Times; Reuters; Times of India; Washington Post}

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Rightwatch *By Robin Woodsong*

Nuclear civil war

"One of the first acts a seceding State militia must accomplish, will be the seizing of those nuclear weapons. Once in hand, that seceding State will have the power to force the rest of the citizens of the U.S.A. to choose between accepting secession as a fait accompli — a done deal — or launching nuclear civil war in the heretofore United States of America."

— **Neal Horsley**, *anti-abortion activist who wants to establish a Christian United States*

Down with democracy

"[We seek to] replace the heresy of democracy with Biblical law."

— **R. J. Rushdoony**

Practicing Pagans

"Now ladies and gentlemen, we have been talking about God lifting his anointing mantle from the United States of America, and if you read in Deuteronomy or Leviticus, actually the 18th Chapter, there's certain things that he says that is going to cause the Lord or the land to vomit you out. At the head of the list is Witchcraft, and that's the first. The second of, course, has to do with sodomy...We don't need to bring in heathen, pagan practices to the United States of America. We need to call on God and ask him for revival."

— **Pat Robertson**, *700 Club*

Rule and reign!

"There will never be world peace until God's house and God's people are given their rightful place of leadership at the top of the world."

— **Pat Robertson**, *700 Club*

Executing demigods?

"Where would Christianity be if Jesus got eight to fifteen years with time off for good behavior?"

— **New York State Senator James Donovan**, *speaking in support of capital punishment*

Get Involved!
American Civil Liberties Union
<http://aclu.org/>

Working For Change
<http://www.workingforchange.com/>

The Secular Web
<http://www.infidels.org/>

North is always good...

"The world will not know how to live or which direction to go without the Church's Biblical perspective."

— **Randall Terry**

Our fearless leader says...

"Who cares what you think?"
— **George W. Bush**, *in response to a citizen who told him that he's doing a poor job.*

Mobs with guns

"(The Fraternal Order of Police is)...a union mob dressed up like policemen."

— **Dick Arney**

They're not like us...

"I think the Hispanic community generally thinks that pregnancy is a positive thing. They tend to be less judgmental toward a teen-ager who's pregnant than the Anglo or African American community,"

George W. Bush appointee Reyn Archer,
Texas Health Commissioner

They're not like us...II

"If anyone understood what Hindus really believe, there would be no doubt that they have no business administering government policies."

— **Pat Robertson**, *700 Club*

...and we're in the henhouse

"A black man voting Republican is like a chicken voting for Colonel Sanders"

— **James Watts, Sr.**

father of Representative JC Watts, R-OK

...the Sinner

"Martin Luther King was a fraud and a demagogue and perhaps worse... Others consider him the Devil incarnate. Dr. King is one of the most divisive men in contemporary history."

— **Pat Buchanan**

...and the Saint

"Adolf Hitler was an individual of great courage... Hitler's success was not based on his extraordinary gifts alone. His genius was an intuitive sense of the mushiness, the character flaws, the weakness masquerading as morality that was in the hearts of the statesmen who stood in his path."

— **Pat Buchanan**



Fair trials a plot of the left

“President Bush couldn't say the word ‘war.’ It would have been politically incorrect. It would have offended the Left, the feminists, the minorities, and Amnesty International.... Our leaders would rather see us slaughtered. That's the way of the Left. Let someone else take the hit, while the lofty Left preserves its rhetorical righteousness, and prepares to file suit so the enemy gets a fair elongated trial.”

— **Gary Aldrich** ,
Patrick Henry Center for Individual Liberty

Rush Limbaugh, PhD.

“There are more acres of forest land in America today than when Columbus discovered the continent in 1492.”

— **Rush Limbaugh**

Love those faggot jokes...

“Yes, I am Dick Arme y. And if there is a dick army, Barney Frank would want to join up.”

— **Dick Arme y**

...at least not in his neighborhood

“Working family's trying to get by on minimum wage don't really exist.”

— **Tom Delay** , (R)Texas

...don't need no school ler'ning

“You know that anthropology is all politically correct bull.”

— **Jesse Helms** , (R)NC

All we are saying, is give war a chance

“I believe the Liberals are largely responsible for much of what happened Tuesday, and may God forgive them. My job and the job of all Conservatives now is to keep Liberals out of power as long as humanly possible. Our country is not safe when Liberals are in power. How much more evidence do we need?”

— **Don Feder** , columnist

...just like the good old days

“Airports scrupulously apply the same laughably ineffective airport harassment to Suzy Chapstick as to Muslim hijackers. It is preposterous to assume every passenger is a potential crazed homicidal maniac. We know who the homicidal maniacs are. They are the ones cheering and dancing right now. We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity.”

— **Ann Coulter** , *National Review*

Pagan America

“The United States of America is doomed! She has been from her birth. Her destiny, like that of all pagan dominions, is ultimate destruction.”

— **The Gospel Plow**

Internet Filtering Law Trial Starts

A trial to determine the constitutionality of a law that forces public libraries to require the use of filtering software on all computers or lose federal funding for library technology begins Monday before a three-judge federal district court in Philadelphia.

People For the American Way Foundation (PFAWF) and the law firm Jenner & Block filed the lawsuit against the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) on behalf of the American Library Association, other library associations, and library patrons. The American Civil Liberties Union also filed a lawsuit challenging CIPA. The lawsuits have been consolidated for trial before the court.

The trial starts at 9:15 a.m. on March 25 in Judge Harvey Bartle's courtroom at the James A. Byrne U.S. Courthouse at 601 Market Street, Philadelphia, Pa. PFAWF Senior Staff Attorney Larry Ottinger will attend Monday's opening trial date.

CIPA, which Congress passed in 2000, would block federal technology grants for public libraries unless they install filters to keep children from accessing Internet material deemed “obscene,” “child pornography,” or “harmful to minors.” Libraries have until July of this year to comply with the law. Any appeal of the three-judge panel's decision will go straight to the Supreme Court.

CIPA subverts the First Amendment, PFAWF contends, by requiring libraries that need federal grants to upgrade computer equipment and provide access to the Internet to use filtering software that would block all kinds of constitutionally protected speech for adults as well as children.

Since 1996, PFAWF has worked with other civil rights groups to challenge and defeat federal and state government attempts to improperly regulate use of the Internet. PFAWF and other free speech advocacy groups successfully challenged Congress' first attempt to muzzle speech on the Internet – called the Communications Decency Act (CDA). The Supreme Court in 1997 invalidated the CDA provision as a violation of the First Amendment. PFAWF along with the Washington D.C., law firm of Hogan & Hartson challenged in federal court a Virginia county's law requiring filtering of all public library computers and won a historic decision from the federal court. In that case, the district court in 1998 fully applied First Amendment principles in striking down the law, concluding that filtering software was unable to distinguish legal from illegal materials and that public libraries could not impinge upon adults' free speech rights.

PFAWF

CUUPS News

Columbia, SC

UU Fellowship of Columbia, SC, held a guided meditation workshop featuring Uchu Dolls in February. In March, the chapter welcomed Bekki Shiningbearheart and Crow Swimsaway of >>>>? in Ohio. Bekki and Crow led an Introductory Shamanic workshop and workshop on rattle making.

Conejo Valley, CA - Ace of CUUPS

Ace Of CUUPS is part of the Conejo Valley UU Fellowship in Thousand Oaks, California. We celebrated Samhain and second Full Moon of October combined, and our Full Moon Circle in November we combined with planning for our Sunday full congregation service celebration of Yule on the 23rd of December.

"When Witches Speak" Sunday service near Samhain was presented by many Pagan women of our congregation and was received with enthusiasm and feelings of connection by many others in our fellowship. In January, Rise Up and Call Her Name "graduates" presented a Sunday service which again was received enthusiastically by all.

Ace Of CUUPS continues to reach out with open Full Moon Circle gatherings in January and February and is recognized as a strong source of growth in our congregation. At Imbolc, as we have from time to time, we are taking a "field trip" to be part of a larger local celebration, this with the ReWeaving group. Ace Of CUUPS celebrated its first anniversary of existence on October 26!

We number about 30 members within the CVUUF congregation of about 200 members and friends.

Denver, CO - CUUPS at First Unitarian-Denver

CUUPS at First Unitarian-Denver is in rebirth. They recently cosponsored a weekend intensive, Elements of Magic, in November, along with MountainWeb, a newly forming Reclaiming tradition community. Suzanne Sterling, singer, songwriter and musician, Reclaiming tradition teacher and priestess, traveled from San Francisco to lead the workshop, along with student teachers Raven Stanfield (Albuquerque) and Rebecca Ferrell (Denver). Each session focused on the characteristics of one element: air, fire, water, air, or spirit, allowing it to be experienced through trance and breathwork, music and play, silence and motion. On December 23, Rocky Mountain CUUPS once again joined with the First Unitarian Insight Buddhist Meditation Group, to observe Yule. The evening included meditation time for the adults while the children made decorations for the ritual, and then all generations came together for storytelling, music, drumming, dancing and finally, snacks and conversa-

tion, as we celebrated the coming of winter in the warmth of a diverse spiritual community. The next Rocky Mountain CUUPS event will be a Spring Equinox ritual on Saturday, March 23 at First Unitarian-Denver. We will drum and dance with the surging rhythms of the season, and we will think about what we are planting in our lives as the year turns toward warmth and light.

Contact afunkycat@juno.com <<mailto:afunkycat@juno.com>> for more information about CUUPS at First Unitarian-Denver.

Lower Cape Cod CUUPS - Brewster CUUPS, MA

Brewster (Lower Cape Cod) CUUPS is preparing to celebrate Ostara on Saturday March 23. This will be a family event, lots of fun for the kids! We are gathering each month for a full moon walk so plan to join us! We are also putting together a series of workshops open to the community for Fall 2002.

Charleston, SC - SOLSTICE CUUPS

The SOLSTICE CUUPS group in Charleston, SC continues to offer meetings on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month (except Nov. and Dec. - 2nd Thursday only). We also celebrate the eight major holidays of the year. From January to March 2002, we have scheduled topics such as Candle Magick, Introduction to NIA, UU History, Magickal Creatures, Full Moon Ritual and Circle Casting Workshop. Please see our web site for more information: <http://solsticecharleston.org>

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Friends and Members of CUUPS

The Spring equinox is a time of balance, a time in which light and dark are equal. It is also a time for all of us to evaluate the balance in each of our own lives. One area that is, unfortunately, not in balance this Spring is CUUPS' finances. Because new memberships and donations have dropped precipitously since 9/11, we simply do not have enough funds to print and mail out the newsletter this Spring Equinox 2002.

Communication, however, is a central element in the mission of CUUPS and we don't want to stop the flow of information that has become so important to so many of you these past few years. Consequently, we are looking for alternative ways to communicate with our membership and seek support while we weather this unbalanced time of anxiety and meager resources.

Our Spring newsletter is now on our website, <http://www.cuups.org> as a PDF file which can be

...continued on page 10

...we are not alone (continued from page 1)

far too many of our UU congregations are having difficulty with pledge campaigns this season. And then came the realization that renewals of CUUPS memberships and donations are at an all-time low compared to the last few years. I could no longer write the column I had originally planned.

What a difference a year makes. Last year, we had a part-time paid membership coordinator, a national magazine, and great GA and Convo programming. This year the magazine is in mothballs, the membership coordinator is no longer getting even minimal salary (actually, we now owe him reimbursement for envelopes and paper and postage), and we are having difficulty raising the funds to mail out hard copies of this newsletter.

But I can understand why all of this is happening. I see a pattern. I believe it is a symptom of anxiety - long-term, unrelieved, and widespread anxiety. People are anxious about many things. They are anxious about jobs and the stock market. They are anxious about friends and neighbors in the armed services. And perhaps most of all, they are simply anxious about the unknown and what tomorrow might bring. And with our typical UU sense of fierce independence, we think we have to deal with it all on our own, alone and without assistance. It is all very understandable.

Unfortunately, when we give in to anxiety, when we let it isolate us and control our lives, we wind up letting the terrorists and the fear mongers win.

But we are better than that. I recall that in a time of similar pervasive social anxiety, Franklin D. Roosevelt said to a fearful nation "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." His words were true then and they are true now. There are ways to deal with the anxiety and fear, ways to defeat its effects on our lives.

We can stop feeding ourselves, as individuals and as a nation, negative and defeating messages. We can develop a strong spiritual life that nurtures us in good times as well as times of uncertainty. We can intentionally connect our activities in life, our work, to the Great Work of the Universe and know that what we do truly matters.

And most importantly, we can realize that we are not in this alone.

We need other people. We need our family, our friends, our congregations, and our CUUPS chapters -- those who accept us for who we are without asking questions or demanding impossible prerequisites. We need one another and all that is asked in return is that we accept one another; that we "be there" when times are hard and anxiety pervades our lives. In this way, we know we are not alone.

Reading 468 in our hymnal (by George Odell) reads, in part:

*We need one another when we mourn and
would be comforted.*

*We need one another when we are in trouble
and afraid.*

*We need one another when we are in despair
in temptation, and need to be recalled to our
best selves*

*We need one another in the hour of defeat
when with encouragement we might endure,
and stand again.*

*All our lives we are in need, and others are in
need of us.*

Just as we need others, others need us. The people in your congregation need your support now more than ever before. Each of us should review our congregational commitments and pledges for the coming year and realize how extremely important our continued mutual support is at this time.

And CUUPS needs your support now more than it ever has in the past. We know what this organization is capable of being and doing in the world. We know how its members can change the UUA and change the world. It has been a force for education and tolerance and acceptance not only in the UUA but also in the larger society. It would be a shame to drown out that voice under the static of anxiety.

We all need one another. We are not alone.

This is the Spirit I want to announce this Spring. This is the message of new life that gives me hope for the future of CUUPS, our congregations, our nation and the world.

Amen, Shalom and Blessed Be.

Joan Van Becelaere
CUUPS Co-President (2001-2002)
Spring Equinox 2002

FYI - I want to also let you know that we are exploring ways to resurrect the magazine. It will depend on a number of factors; most importantly, support from the membership. Blessings. Joan

...CUUPS news (continued from page 14)

San Antonio, TX - Celestial Celebrations Circle

Celestial Celebration Circle in San Antonio is a place to explore an earth-centered religious path in a context of Unitarian Universalist values. They recently celebrated Imbolc, the time of returning light, with fire and candles in the Jefferson Bldg. on Saturday Feb. 2nd. They meditated on what will feed our fires for the coming year. The ritual was followed by a drum jam in which the kids were included!

...friends and members (continued from page 14)

downloaded and printed on most computers. We urge you to print out a copy for yourself and print another 4 or 5 to share with other CUUPS members in your congregation or CUUPS chapter. In this way, we will reach most of our members.

If you are a CUUPS member and cannot print out the newsletter or find a friend to do it for you, then please contact our membership services coordinator at cuups@uaa.org and ask that a hard copy be mailed to you.

The words "communicate" and "community" have the same root: "to impart or make common." At this time of uncertainty in our organizational life, the members of the CUUPS board are asking you all to help us strengthen our UU Earth-centered/Pagan community. CUUPS needs your support to maintain communications with all members. CUUPS needs your dona-

Ogden, UT - Proto-CUUPS

There is a new Proto-CUUPS group at the UU Church of Ogden, Utah. They held an Imbolc Celebration in February and will be holding more celebrations and rituals in the future.

Email resar@ivillage.com for information and directions, etc, if you're in the area and would like to attend!

tions to pay for the educational and exciting GA and Convocation programming that you have all grown to expect over the years. CUUPS needs a strong community of support to maintain a voice for Pagan/Earth-centered spirituality in the UUA.

As always, your donations to CUUPS are tax deductible. You can send your new membership forms, membership renewals and donations to: CUUPS, Inc., PMB 335, 8190A Beechmont Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45255-3154. And you can contact us at: 1-888-465-9991 or CUUPS@uaa.org. Please see our website at <http://www.cuups.org> for the newsletter, membership forms, and more information regarding donations to CUUPS. May blessing and balance grace your lives.

Joan Van Becelaere

Mary Gelfand

2001-2002 Co-Presidents

...Marie Laveau (continued from page 4)

Internet. Although my son Stephen is an avowed "computer geek," he draws the line at that. The young can be such traditionalists.) The rituals differ in detail, but they all show one thing: at the end, one marks the tomb with an "X," using a fragment of one of the old slave-made red bricks that abound in the cemetery. (If you go, please remember not to mar the marble slab with the inscriptions, and mark your X on the plaster instead.)

The late UU theologian and beloved Harvard professor James Luther Adams used a quote from the Christian scripture as a guide to judging the legitimacy of religious claims: "By their fruits, ye shall know them." By this criteria, Marie Laveau can be seen as a saint and a true spiritual leader, for in her countless good works and acts of mercy, she proved that her religious faith was enduring and a powerful force for good in her life and in the lives of all who were touched by her. Would that all of us could say the same of our faith!

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