

Little Known Facts about Hurricane Matthew

Hurricane Matthew pounded the Atlantic coast last October, but inland North Carolina suffered the storm's gravest damage – a flood affecting six counties. What was not reported was that thousands of bloated carcasses of drowned and decaying hogs and millions of dead chickens and turkeys have been tallied. The flood also breached at least 15 enormous waste lagoons at hog factories, spreading untreated hog excrement (which can contain E.coli and other potentially deadly bacteria) across the land and into North Carolina's water systems.

The Sierra Club reports that even China's regulation of hog factories is "more robust" than North Carolina's. This lax oversight is one reason that the Chinese conglomerate (WH Group) bought Smithfield Foods to make it the world's largest pork producer. [Excerpted from: *The Hightower Lowdown*, Jan. 2017]

Good News about Florida manatees:

In February, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission reported a preliminary count of 6,620 manatees in state waters – the highest count on record of this federally endangered species. These annual counts are typically conducted after a cold front and cover all known manatee winter hangouts. You can support manatee research and conservation by buying a manatee license plate or a decal. Go to BuyaPlate.com or MyFWC.com/ManateeSeaTurtleDecals.



1996 Welfare Reform Bill Has Latent Effects

During Bill Clinton's administration, a sweeping welfare reform bill passed. An often overlooked section of that legislation is a three-month limit on food stamps for "able-bodied adults" between the ages of 18 and 49 who have no dependents. After 3 months of receiving federal food aid through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or what we usually refer to as "food stamps"), these adults would have to prove they were working at

least 20 hours a week. If they couldn't, their food stamps would be cut off.

The cutoff was in keeping with the bill's core assumption – that pushing welfare recipients to get a job, no matter how menial, was the most effective way to end their dependency on public aid. Long-term studies eventually disproved the "get a job, any job" theory: Giving people new skills and education has proved more effective at lifting them out of poverty.

The 1996 law grants states a large degree of discretion over how the food stamp cutoff would be implemented. States with high unemployment could request a waiver from the time limit. Yet in 2016, six states have passed up the waivers. Mississippi (with the highest rate of food insecurity and poverty and the 5th highest unemployment rate in the nation) is one of those states, as is Florida.

Across the country, between 500,000 and 1 million people will lose access to food assistance this year because of the newly introduced time limits. In a survey by the Ohio Association of Food Banks, they found 1 in 3 unemployed but "able-bodied" reported a physical or mental limitation. Nearly 13% said they were care givers, and 36% had a felony conviction – a common barrier to employment.

[Excerpted from: *Mother Jones*, Nov./Dec. 2016 issue; by Delphine d'Amora]

5 Things We Can Do To Lessen Global Warming

When Emerson Center Celebrated Speaker Dr. Michael Oppenheimer of Princeton was asked what citizens could do to lessen global warming, he made five suggestions:

1. Drive the most energy efficient car you can afford
2. Choose energy efficient appliances using the yellow energy guide stickers
3. Trade incandescent bulbs for LED bulbs
4. If you own property, plant trees on it
5. Eat less meat



Free Trade vs Fair Trade

In the first days of President Trump's administration, he officially withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the massive trade pact with eleven other countries that Congress had already declined to sign into law, and he promised to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). He has even been using the term "fair trade."



But the future of trade and its fairness under Trump is far from clear. He has promised to protect American workers and bring jobs back to the United States.

The rights and livelihood of working families in the United States are an important priority, but a strong and truly **fair** trade agreement will meet multiple needs and priorities including:

- All stakeholders should be at the table not just representatives of large corporations but also small-scale farmers, farmworkers, consumer advocates, environmental protectors, and indigenous communities from all member countries.
- Preference should be given to agroecology and food justice. The next round of trade agreements must prioritize agricultural systems that ensure fair payments for farmers, decent agricultural jobs, biodiversity and regenerative agriculture, and healthy food.
- The climate crisis must also be addressed. If we are serious about addressing the climate crisis, climate goals must receive priority in binding trade agreements.
- People must be prioritized over profits. Fair trade means fair payments, living wages, and dignified work for people in all participating countries.

[Excerpted from: Fair World Project Action Alert, salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/2002/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=19876]

Mark your calendar for the documentary film "A Plastic Ocean" to be shown in the sanctuary on Thursday, April 20, at 7:00 PM.

The Story of Solar Power:

Plummeting Prices, Soaring Demand

In 1977 solar cells cost \$76.67 per watt. By 2015, the price had fallen to \$0.26 per watt. In 2004, yearly solar capacity was 398 Megawatts; by 2015 it had grown to 12,180 MW. Here are some important moments in the history of solar power in the U.S.

- 1978 – first solar-powered village in remote Arizona Native American community
- 1994 – National Renewable Energy Lab develops a solar cell that breaks the 30% efficiency barrier for the first time.
- 2005 – The Energy Policy Act is passed which includes a 30% investment tax credit for installing new solar systems.
- 2006 – California leads the nation by approving the Solar Roofs Initiative for one million roofs.
- 2016 – Scientists create ultra-thin solar cells that can be used on anything wearable.
- 2016 – The US celebrates the one millionth installation of solar energy nationwide.

[Excerpted from: EDF Solutions, Fall 2016 by Charlie Miller]

UU Justice Florida (UUJFL) is a statewide advocacy network that educates, organizes, and advocates for policies consistent with Unitarian Universalist principles. The two-month 2017 Florida Legislative Session started on Tuesday, March 7th. You can follow issues and bills using the UU Justice Florida Legislative tracker (<http://tinyurl.com/UUJFTracker>)

Florida Sierra Club and Florida Audubon provide information on issues and bills of an environmental nature that impact Florida.

You can view FL Sierra Club 2017 legislative platform at:

<http://www.sierraclubfloridanews.org/2016/12/sierra-club-floridas-2017-session.html>

and Audubon Florida legislative session information at:

<http://fl.audubon.org/news/audubon-advocate-2017-legislative-session-week-2-update>