

The George L. Jackson and Bessie Florence Hazelton Jackson Social Welfare Fund



The Jacksons' Wedding Portrait, 1902.

Presented 4/26/2015 by Kayla Boyse and Phil Tuchinsky

What it is and how it came to be

Kyla: This year our congregation celebrates another big anniversary that you may not have heard about: The George L. Jackson and Bessie Florence Hazelton Jackson Social Welfare Fund is 60 years old!

George Jackson died in 1955; Bessie had died a couple of years earlier. George set aside a generous portion of his estate in two bequests to our congregation. The first provided capital funds for the congregation. The second bequest created the Jackson Social Welfare Fund. Our investments committee manages these funds outside the UUAA budget.

Phil: The Jackson Fund bequest requires – simply stated -- that we use its income to advance two goals: understanding and acceptance of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and promoting peaceful means of conflict resolution. The exact language is longer; it appears in the insert we've provided for today's service.

The First Amendment also appears in your insert. In a few words, it guarantees us freedom of religion, free speech and press, and our right to assemble peacefully and petition the government for redress of grievances.

Each year the Jackson Fund Committee asks organizations to send us proposals that align with this mission established by the Jacksons. We evaluate these proposals and award grants. The committee is special in that it includes six members from our congregation and two from Ann Arbor Friends Meeting.

The Jacksons

Kyla: The Jacksons, a wealthy couple who lived near our former building at 1917 Washtenaw, were long-term members of the congregation and staunch supporters of civil liberties. Dr. Jackson was a pioneer in the field of the History of Education, and professor at U of M from 1909-1936. As they aged, they increasingly relied on Rev. Ed and Annette Redman for comfort and pastoral care. The U of M School of Education Bulletin carried a memorial tribute to Dr. Jackson and described him thus: “And he retained that buoyancy of spirit and amused outlook on the foibles of mankind as well as his capacity for human sympathy and understanding, which had always endeared him to those who knew him best.”

Great good – achieved down thru the decades

Phil: Jackson Social Welfare Fund grants have achieved great good down through six decades. Through the Fund, our congregation has long supported the ACLU of Michigan and other organizations working for separation of church and state and freedom of speech. The four Ben Shahn prints that hang in our entry hall (check them out – they’re wonderful!) were a gift from the ACLU of Michigan in gratitude for support from the Fund, which especially helped them through leaner times. Two examples from the early 1960’s: First, we helped fund litigation by the citizens of Willow Run alleging that school attendance districts were gerrymandered along racial lines, leading to segregated schools. Second, we supported the ACLU’s suit in Stanzione v. Hubbard, which alleged that Dearborn’s mayor had allowed rioting to proceed unhindered for 24 hours against a man who had hired a Black-owned moving company to move him into his new Dearborn home.

Kyla: More recently, we have supported model UN programs for high school students, restorative justice in local schools to slow the school-to-prison pipeline, a local dispute resolution center, the American Friends Service Committee’s Michigan Criminal Justice Program and the Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice.

This week, we awarded the 2015 grants, giving \$27,200 to support...

Wrap up:

Kyla: In envisioning our next 150 years, we’ve talked about the urgency in our time to forge a more just and peaceful world. The Jackson’s legacy is one way we try to do that. Sixty years since its inception, the Jackson Social Welfare Fund remains a robust, consistent way to advance the principles of the First Amendment and promote peaceful, reasonable resolution of conflicts.

Phil

The Jacksons issued a call that rings down thru the decades and they gave us the financial means to answer it. We will continue to seek on-mission proposals and make grants that help our congregation live out our UU principles, building a better community, region and nation.

Additional printed information provided in the order of service for 4/26

George Jackson's will established the Jackson Social Welfare Fund, stating:

Sixth: I bequeath to the First Unitarian Church of Ann Arbor a sum equal to one-seventh of the value of my estate at the time of my death, ... said sum to be held in trust by said First Unitarian Church, and the income used for the purpose of advancing the understanding and acceptance of the great principles of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for the promotion of the use of reason and understanding as the effective method of solving in a peaceful manner domestic and international difficulties and conflicts. In the event that all of the income from this fund shall not be needed for the above purposes I direct that the same may be used for any closely allied purpose. The trust fund hereby created shall be known as the George L. Jackson and Bessie Florence Hazelton Jackson Social Welfare Fund.

The First Amendment states:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Excerpts from *Memorial: George Leroy Jackson*, written by William Clark Trow

Professor George Leroy Jackson died at his home in Ann Arbor on December 13th at the age of 79. He had been suffering from Parkinson's disease for a number of years after his retirement from the staff of the School of Education in June 1936. He survived his wife, Bessie F. Hazelton of Bradford, Pennsylvania, whom he married in 1902, by three years. His affliction, particularly in the later years, was often embarrassing to him, and it cut him off from the work he might otherwise have done, and from the associations he might have enjoyed during his period of retirement. However, he was able to get about the house with help, even up to the last. And he retained that buoyancy of spirit and amused outlook on the foibles of mankind as well as his capacity for human sympathy and understanding, which had always endeared him to those who knew him best.

....

A good deal of an individualist, he was not easily swayed toward the acceptance of new ideas just because they were new, and was quick to see weaknesses which his colleagues had overlooked. His objections were direct, but always made in a kindly spirit, and often with that characteristic twinkle in his eye which his friends take pleasure in recalling. For even through the long period of his wife's invalidism, followed by his own, he was always quick to note any ironical turn of events, and remarked on the situation in a way that was often as unexpected as it was amusing.

(UM School of Education Bulletin, Jan. 1955, vol. 26, n. 4)

In 2014, \$26,000 was awarded in varying amounts to these eleven organizations:

American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan	Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, Michigan Chapter
American Friends Service Committee Criminal Justice Program	Defending Dissent Foundation
American United for Separation of Church and State	The Dispute Resolution Center, Livingston and Washtenaw Counties
Ann Arbor Skyline High School Restorative Justice Program	Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice Prison Creative Arts Project
Citizens Alliance on Prisons and Public Spending	UM-Dearborn College Courses at Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility