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*"A View from the Pew":  
Lucile Longview, Unitarian Universalism,  
and the 1977 Women and Religion Resolution*

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**Introduction**

On June 11, 2001, at the age of ninety, Lucile Longview, radical feminist and Unitarian Universalist lay leader, sent the following letter to the Commission on Appraisal of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) at the UUA's 25 Beacon Street headquarters:

Dear Members,

The Women's Movement in the Unitarian Universalist Association has many facets, is widely misunderstood and often misrepresented. It is revolutionary in that women, over half of the UUA membership and long invisible to those in charge, have moved to the fore. Some are seeking places in the power structure and others are working to change the ideology.

It is exceptional and even astonishing that feminists among the laity, those expected to be docile in the pews, have become change agents in the institution.

Following traditional patterns those outside the institutional hierarchy are marginalized. Ideas and voices of feminists among the laity are overlooked and/or undervalued by many.

I urge the Commission on Appraisal to study and help clarify the reformation taking place in the UUA, the role of the feminist perspective in bringing it about, and the potential for this change to lead ideologically to a more egalitarian and inclusive world view.

Sincerely,

Lucile Longview,  
Originator and promoter of the  
Women and Religion Resolution<sup>1</sup>

The letter reveals much about its author, the woman responsible—as her signature pointedly reminds the Commission—for developing and promulgating the 1977 Women and Religion Resolution at the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in Ithaca, New York. In these brief, pleading lines, Longview's position on feminism and religion is made clear, a position she had long promoted in essays, speeches, and activism. Her views on the centrality of laywomen in the Unitarian Universalist story and her emphasis on the importance of radical feminism are not the most striking aspects of this particular document. Rather this letter, mailed only nine years before her death, demonstrates the urgency that Longview continued to feel, especially towards the end of her life, about telling the story of her movement, sharing her voice and the voices of her co-conspirators and sisters in the pews. As she writes in the opening words of her letter, "the Women's Movement in the Unitarian Universalist Association has many facets, is widely misunderstood and often misrepresented," but it is also understudied. The Commission on Appraisal did not heed Longview's call. To this day the story remains largely untold.

This article offers a modest attempt to investigate the long overlooked history of the encounter between second-wave feminism and the Unitarian Universalist Association in the 1970s and 1980s. It is not exhaustive, nor does it claim to present comprehensive answers or judgments. Rather this article is written in the hope of beginning a conversation about how courageous women, both lay and ordained, transformed the nascent post-merger Unitarian Universalist Association, forever altering its trajectory in the American religious landscape as the new millennium approached.

In the process, this article will examine the encounter between the radical strand of second-wave feminism and the UUA as that encounter became embodied in the 1977 Women and Religion Resolution. It argues that the Women and Religion Resolution was spearheaded by radical feminist UU laywomen—led by Lucile Longview—who did not represent one organization, but rather shared similar convictions about what feminism had to offer to Unitarian Universalism. It further argues that the Women and Religion Resolution produced a decisive shift in the UU approach to feminism, by moving UU feminism into a more radical vein and initiating a proliferation of feminist theology, language, and ritual, which indelibly changed the future of the Association. Central

to this story is the brave and relentless laywoman who catalyzed the movement: Lucile Longview, the self-proclaimed "Originator and Promoter." This article is dedicated to Longview and her prophetic vision for a more gender equal Unitarian Universalism and world.

## Second-Wave Feminism(s) and Religion

The term *feminism* is used to describe a variety of gender-specific perspectives, the diversity of which is relevant to the study of how feminism came to influence the UUA. Sara Evans, an award-winning scholar of women's history and Director of the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota, sees feminism as the "mobilization [of women to challenge inequality and to claim their civic right to be full participants] and the egalitarian ideas that inspire [this mobilization]."<sup>2</sup> Evans traces the origins of the word to France in the nineteenth century and argues that, while it was used by select activists in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, the word "feminism" did not become commonly used until the 1970s.<sup>3</sup>

Ann Braude, director of the Women's Studies in Religion Program and Senior Lecturer on American Religious History at Harvard Divinity School, delineates four categories of feminism: "radical feminism, liberal feminism, cultural feminism, and socialist feminism."<sup>4</sup> In her thinking, liberal feminists focus more on obtaining equal access to employment and civic rights; radical feminists are more concerned with transforming the patriarchal underpinnings of society and culture, dismantling what they perceive to be the originating assumptions of gender inequality; socialist feminists explore the intersection of sexism and classism; and cultural feminists interrogate the ways in which culture, through art, media, and communication, contributes to perpetuating subordination based on gender. Braude contends that "religious feminists can be found in organizations and activities associated with all four" types of feminism, thus complicating the traditional typology.<sup>5</sup>

These differing approaches to promoting equal rights for women demonstrate that there is some disagreement among feminists over how to build a more gender equal society.<sup>6</sup> While liberal feminists are often framed as reformers, supporting the assimilation of women into traditional power structures, radical feminists are often framed as revolutionaries who challenge the foundations of such power structures

and patriarchy. Many women of color in the United States have established a "womanist" movement, which advocates liberation for women of color on their terms. They have rightly critiqued the feminist movement for its privileging of the white female experience as normative and for ignoring the experiences of women of color.<sup>7</sup>

These "faces" of feminism fall within what is known as the second wave of feminism, a term used to distinguish the movement for gender equality of the 1960s and 1970s from that of the earlier Woman's Movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The earlier movement was shaped significantly by the campaign for woman suffrage, culminating in the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.<sup>8</sup> Second-wave feminists include established professionals advocating for equal employment and occupational access, and younger women whose consciousness was raised as a result of their activism in the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s.<sup>9</sup> Evans argues that, while these two groups had different origins and interests, both were directly influenced by the Civil Rights Movement and the national conversation about racial justice.<sup>10</sup> The best known of the second-wave feminist organizations—the National Organization for Women (NOW), founded in 1966 by women from a variety of races and religions—aimed "to bring [women] into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men."<sup>11</sup> NOW was "dedicated to the proposition that women, first and foremost, are human beings, who, like all other people in our society, must have the chance to develop their fullest human potential."<sup>12</sup> This included liberal and radical feminist goals.

It is usually assumed that the feminist movement was secular in nature, yet the diverse religious commitments among the earliest founders of NOW demonstrate the important role that faith communities played in the rise of the second wave feminist movement. Indeed, the effects of second-wave feminism could be felt throughout most, if not all, religious institutions in the United States. As early as 1965, Church Women United, an affiliate of the National Council of Churches, "sponsored a Committee on the Changing Role of Women that insisted on the need to make 'a radical challenge to the Church ... and raise[d] the question of why the Church [was] not practicing what it preache[d].'"<sup>13</sup>

By the end of the 1960s, the language of second-wave feminism appeared in a variety of mainline Protestant denominations, including the American Baptist Convention and the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, both of which "passed resolutions calling for the church to work toward equality for women both within its own structures and in every aspect of social and economic life."<sup>14</sup> By the early 1970s, the movement for women's rights within many denominations began to extend beyond liberal feminist questions of polity and ordination and to radical feminist issues of theology and liturgy. The 1973 publication of *Beyond God the Father* by Mary Daly, a radical feminist Catholic theologian, presented "a trenchant critique of patriarchal assumptions embedded in Christian doctrine" and inspired many religious feminists outside of Daly's own Catholic tradition to revisit and revision traditional theologies and creeds.<sup>15</sup>

Within the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the movement for gender equality emerged soon after the 1961 formation of the UUA. However, as Unitarian Universalist women's historian Cynthia Grant Tucker warns, a causative relationship between the two events cannot be assumed. She writes, "the stirrings [of feminist organizing] had little to do with the institutional cross-pollination [of merger]. Rather, the stimulus came from the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*," and the formation of NOW, which influenced UU churches in much the same way it did mainline Protestant churches.<sup>16</sup> The movement for women's rights in the UUA also emerged, as it did throughout the country, on the heels of significant UU participation in the marches in Selma in 1965, and in the wake of rising tensions surrounding the Black Empowerment movement in the UUA. Although the Universalists and Unitarians had been ordaining women to their respective ministries since the mid-nineteenth century, the collapse in women's ordination begun around 1910 could not be ignored. And in the 1960s and 1970s, UU women began to recognize that the apparent progressiveness of their movement had not succeeded in achieving gender parity. In her 1980 essay, "Feminist Theology in the UUA," Lucile Longview reflected on this situation:

The effective propaganda in this socialization process within liberalism where the myth held that women were equal to men, has been the

illusion that the universals, the ambiguous tent words such as "man," "human," "person," and the patriarchal "isms" including "Universalism" and "Unitarianism" covered that which was not covered, — half of the membership of our two denominations, namely, women.<sup>17</sup>

Many Unitarian Universalist women in the post-merger era felt as though they had been doubly deceived, made to believe by the predominantly male leadership of their liberal religious organization that they had already been liberated, when in fact, "despite all the fine liberal claims, their religious traditions had not set them free."<sup>18</sup>

Catherine Hitchings, author of *Universalist and Unitarian Women Ministers*, maintains that the number of women in ordained UU ministry was low at the time of merger—only twenty-four in 1961.<sup>19</sup> As the second-wave feminist movement gained momentum within the UUA, women and men in the Association began to explore ways to bring greater gender equity into the tradition. To do so, church leaders turned toward resolutions—declarations passed at annual General Assembly meetings—to begin to create institutional change.

### The 1977 Women and Religion Resolution

While several resolutions pertaining to gender equality had been passed in the 1960s and early 1970s, perhaps the most radical of the UU gender resolutions was the 1977 Women and Religion Resolution. The Women and Religion Resolution had far-reaching implications, one of which was to inspire a revision of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes in 1985. The story of the connection between the Women and Religion Resolution and the changes in the UU Principles and Purposes that came eight years later has not been well known.

In an article entitled "Shared Values," Warren R. Ross, a former contributing editor of *UU World*, explored the meaning of the Principles and Purposes fifteen years after their revision occurred at General Assembly in 1985.<sup>20</sup> While Ross credited women within the UUA for beginning the movement to revise the Principles, he set off a firestorm among UU feminists by omitting several women and organizations critical to the story, including Lucile Longview. Scathing criticism of the article came in the form of letters from several UU women, including Rosemary Matson (former President of the Women and

Religion Continental Conference), Rev. Shirley Ranck (author of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*), and Lucile Longview herself.<sup>21</sup> These women charged Ross with making their stories invisible, and distorting and erasing their lives' work as radical feminists. In that time, and ever since, there has been confusion in UU popular discourse about who was responsible for originating the Women and Religion Resolution and other subsequent feminist-inspired reforms. Where did the Women and Religion Resolution come from, and how did it come to pass unanimously at General Assembly in 1977?

### An Idea Is Born

Contrary to Ross's telling of the story, the Women and Religion Resolution was not primarily nor originally initiated at the national level of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation (UUWF). While many of the women who developed the idea were members of the UUWF, the resolution was decidedly a grassroots effort led by Lucile Longview and members of the Alliance at First Parish Lexington in Lexington, Massachusetts. It represents the radical feminist strand of the second-wave feminist movement among Unitarian Universalist women. To better understand the evolution of the Women and Religion Resolution, we must first examine the life of its "Originator and Promoter," Lucile Schuck Longview.

When Blanche Lucile Kitson<sup>22</sup> was born in Indiana farm country on March 28, 1911, she was neither a Unitarian nor a Universalist. It would be many years before she would set foot inside a Universalist Church. Choosing to be known by her middle name, Lucile<sup>23</sup> grew up near Columbia City, Indiana and received her B.A. in Mathematics from Indiana University in 1933. Following college, Lucile Kitson worked as a math teacher for five years until she married Hugo O. Schuck in 1939 and left teaching to raise her three children, Stephen (b. 1942), Susan (b. 1943), and Linda (b. 1947).<sup>24</sup> While the children were young, the family lived in Minneapolis, and it was there that Lucile and her family joined the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis. Hugo and Lucile wanted a church community for their children, and "the message of the church school appealed to [them] as parents."<sup>25</sup> Both Lucile and her husband became active in teaching Sunday School at

First Universalist while their children were young. In addition to this Universalist volunteer involvement, Lucile was an active member of the League of Women Voters from 1942 to 1970, serving for a time on the board of the Minnesota chapter.<sup>26</sup>

In 1967, when their children were young adults, Lucile Kitson Schuck and her husband moved to Massachusetts for Hugo's work as an engineer. The couple settled first in Belmont before moving to Lexington where they subsequently joined First Parish Lexington. The minister at First Parish Lexington was Rev. John Wells, a well-known peace activist. This appealed to Lucile and her husband, as they were staunchly opposed to the Vietnam War.<sup>27</sup> Upon arriving at First Parish Lexington, Lucile became involved in the Alliance, the local congregational chapter of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation (UUWF). After working closely with the chapter, Lucile was nominated in 1970 to serve a two-year term on the Board of the UUWF. In her tenure from 1971 to 1973, she worked primarily on the administration of the Unitarian Universalist camps, which were historically under the jurisdiction of the UUWF.

In 1972 the sudden death of Hugo due to a heart attack left Lucile Schuck widowed at the age of sixty-one. In reflecting on her deceased husband, she described him as a "workaholic" and herself as "dependent" and "subsumed within [her] husband's identity."<sup>28</sup> His death, while sudden and tragic, seems to have allowed her more space to explore her own identity and claim her independence. Indeed, some years after this, she changed her last name to Longview and dropped the name of Schuck. The new name was emblematic of the evolution in her identity. With her children fully grown and with no husband to care for at this later stage in life, she had time to devote to the women's movement growing within the UUA.

In the early 1970s, Longview began to read feminist authors and became interested in the notion of "feminist consciousness." Longview credits Mary Daly's book, *Beyond God the Father*, with helping her open "the door to the dungeon of patriarchal consciousness."<sup>29</sup> Her exposure to feminist thought increased as Longview befriended Mary Lou Thompson and became "involved in a peripheral way in editing" a collection of feminist essays entitled *Voices of New Feminism*. This volume contained writings from a variety of feminists—including

Betty Friedan, Pauli Murray, and Mary Daly—and was published by Beacon Press in 1970.<sup>30</sup> Although it is not clearly indicated in her writings, Longview appears to have been involved at some level with a chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in Lexington.<sup>31</sup> Around this time, Longview also joined in the nascent Grey Panther movement, an activist organization founded by Maggie Kuhn to counter ageism. Longview helped organize a Greater Boston Chapter of the Grey Panthers, and her feminism directly intersected with her passion for elder rights.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, Longview's feminist consciousness and activism evolved steadily over the course of the early 1970s. A significant turning point occurred in 1975 when she attended the International Conference for Women, held in Mexico City at the start of the United Nations "Decade for Women," as a representative of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF).<sup>33</sup> With support from Drusilla Cummins, then President of the UUWF, she obtained institutional UU endorsement to attend the conference.<sup>34</sup> This experience was transformative for Longview, and she returned to the United States with a renewed



Lucile Longview loved and celebrated nature. Here she is in her late 80s celebrating the summer solstice with other women.

interest in bringing the feminist movement more fully into realization in the UUA.

She continued to reflect on the profound experience of the Mexico City conference, as she recounted in her 1983 essay "Reaching for a New Consciousness":

As I shoveled the deep snow one January morning in 1977 I thought, "Why not try to call attention in the UUA to my concern by submitting a Resolution?"

Putting the shovel into the snow bank I had been making as I shoveled I went into the house and penned the first of many drafts of what was to become the "Women and Religion Resolution."<sup>35</sup>

She later acknowledged that a resolution was "a frail tool" for creating social change, but as an outsider to the denominational hierarchy, she believed it to be the option most accessible to her.<sup>36</sup> Enlisting the support of fellow members of the Alliance at First Parish Lexington, Longview began to promote a resolution that would challenge the Unitarian Universalist Association to restructure its language, theology, and liturgy.<sup>37</sup> As Longview reflected in another essay, "Unitarian Universalist Women on the Move," "two mornings in a row we [members of the Alliance at First Parish Lexington] met to write and rewrite the resolution making sure that it went into new territory—beyond the roles of women in the institution."<sup>38</sup>

Prior to Longview's idea for the Women and Religion Resolution, several resolutions passed that were related to gender equality and women's rights. These included: the 1964 resolution on Unitarian Universalist Ministry pertaining to equal employment opportunities, the 1970 resolution on Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women, and the 1973 resolution on Equal Opportunity in UUA Employment. These resolutions were important liberal feminist achievements that began to open doors of opportunity for women in the UUA. However, as Longview noted later, "The feminist theory underlying these three resolutions is that all we have to do to bring equality and self-fulfillment for women and improve the society is to add women to the on-going patriarchy. Add women and stir."<sup>39</sup> Longview believed that this approach to women's rights, which she considered to be more illustrative of the liberal feminist movement, was insufficient for creating long-term and effective denominational

and societal change. Rather Longview advocated a radical feminism, a feminism that attempted to disrupt patriarchy at its cultural and social origins. As she later wrote, "the 1977 resolution ... seeks the root cause of sexism in religious ideology."<sup>40</sup>

Due to her personal investment in the radical strand of the second-wave feminist movement and her desire to work outside of traditional, patriarchal power structures, Longview's writing is replete with references to her outsider status.<sup>41</sup> In addition to signing some of her essays with the title "Originator and Promoter of the 1977 Resolution," she also frequently included the signature, "Outsider by Intention."<sup>42</sup> In one of her autobiographical essays from 1992, Longview openly acknowledged, "I was an institutional outsider: no credentials to give me access to the pulpit or to the ministerial brotherhood."<sup>43</sup> While her impulse to identify as an outsider corresponded with her understanding of radical feminism and with her experience as a laywoman, Longview may have been overstating her own marginalization. While she was never formally ordained nor working for the UUA, her decades of membership in pre- and post-merger Unitarian and Universalist congregations, her term of service on the UUWF Board, and her close personal relationships with several UUWF Presidents—including Drusilla Cummins, Natalie Gulbrandsen, and Denise Davidoff—and influential ministers' wives, such as Rosemary Matson, suggest that she had more access to denominational power than she recognized. It was these connections to denominational figures of authority that Longview called upon when she needed support to get the newly drafted Women and Religion Resolution on the ballot at the 1977 General Assembly.

### *Passing a Resolution*

Once a preliminary draft of the Women and Religion Resolution was completed in January of 1977, Longview and her supporters at First Parish Lexington began the process of getting the resolution on the ballot. They decided to submit the text as a business resolution. According to UUA requirements, the submission of business resolutions by petition requires signatures from "not less than 250 members of active member societies, with no more than 10 members of any one member society counted as part of the 250."<sup>44</sup> In 1977, submission of the petitions was due to the UUA headquarters at 25 Beacon Street by

March 4, so Longview and her partners had less than six weeks to collect the required number of signatures. Drawing upon her connections with the Alliance and UUWF Board members, Longview mailed copies of the resolution to many prominent women and men in UU churches throughout the country. Her form letter struck a friendly but urgent tone, as she searched for friends to support the cause. The letter read:

Dear Concerned Friend,

Many of us, men and women from across the continent, feel strongly that the UUA should examine religious teachings and worship content for the attitudes toward women which they convey and perpetuate.

We cannot leave this responsibility to staff alone. We must take up the task individually and throughout the denomination.

The enclosed resolution strives to promote that undertaking and also to put the UUA in a position to share and cooperate with others who are examining and confronting sexism on a broad front.

The resolution is already lengthy and yes it does not detail the many concerns which so many of you have mentioned. Therefore we expect to submit an outline of suggested programs for implementation along with, but not as a part of, the resolution.

We need your help immediately. To meet the March 4 deadline we must have your certified signature list by March 1 – No later

Will you please take the responsibility, or fund someone who will, of obtaining signatures of members of your church (hopefully ten) on the enclosed form – fill in the legal name and address of your society at the top and the name of the certifying officer or minister at the bottom and return – still attached to the resolution!

Also enclose a list of actions which these members wish to have undertaken under this resolution.

We thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Lucile Schuck<sup>45</sup>

As Longview recalled in a later writing, "the responses were beyond what we could have anticipated. From fifty-seven different societies came 548 endorsements," well over the requisite 250 signatures from twenty-five congregations necessary for inclusion in the General Assembly Agenda.<sup>46</sup> Many of these early supporters were members of the UUWF Board, with whom Longview had served a few years earlier. In a

letter sent to Longview from Drusilla Cummins, the then UUWF President, on January 24, 1977, Cummins wrote that she "like[d] the resolution. It is simple and classic." Cummins continued to provide a few suggestions about wording and concluded by urging Longview to reach out to other UUWF Board members, "especially [...] Denny, Muriel, Margaret, Nat, Til, Berny, and Virginia," to help with distributing the petition.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately, no records remain of the original language of the resolution that Longview and her associates were circulating with these preliminary letters. However, this correspondence clearly indicates that while members of the UUWF Board would become instrumental in promoting the Women and Religion Resolution, they were not its primary originators.

After months of petitioning, gathering signatures, and revising the language, the Women and Religion Resolution made it onto the agenda at the General Assembly, held in Ithaca, New York in June of 1977. Interestingly, after the Resolution had been circulated among congregations and regional UUA districts to garner support, a second version of the Resolution emerged from the Joseph Priestly District, promoted by UU women in Bethesda, Maryland who were not part of the UUWF. This version retained most of the original language of the Resolution drafted by Longview and the Alliance in Lexington, with a few subtle changes. Therefore, the 1977 General Assembly Agenda listed two versions (A and B) of the Women and Religion Resolution for a vote. In a short essay written on July 7, 1977, only a few weeks after the passage of the Resolution, Longview wrote:

To prevent time being spent at the Assembly deciding whether to support 'A' (the [Joseph Priestly] District version) or 'B' (our version), our group decided to abandon our own resolution and endorse the District one. We succeeded in getting the UUWF and the board of Trustees of the UUA to do the same. Our aim was to bring in an amended version in either case.<sup>48</sup>

Despite Longview's recommendation that her Version B be removed from the vote, it remained on the Final Agenda for the General Assembly in 1977. While the differences in language between the versions are subtle, they are meaningful. Below is the text of Version A as submitted by the Joseph Priestly District, and Version B as submitted by Longview and the Lexington Alliance. The bolded words highlight the differences in language.



*Version A – Joseph Priestly District<sup>49</sup>*

WHEREAS, a principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association is to "affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships"; and

WHEREAS, great strides have been taken to affirm this principle within our denomination; and

WHEREAS, some models of human relationships arising from religious myths, historical materials, and other teachings still create and perpetuate attitudes that cause women everywhere to be overlooked and undervalued; and

WHEREAS, children, youth and adults internalize and act on these cultural models, thereby tending to limit their sense of self-worth and dignity;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1977 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls upon all Unitarian Universalists to examine carefully their own religious beliefs and the extent to which these beliefs influence sex-role stereotypes within their own families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association to **encourage** the Unitarian Universalist Association administrative officers and staff, the religious leaders within societies, the Unitarian Universalist theological schools, the directors of related organizations, and the planners of seminars and conferences, to make every effort to eradicate sexist assumptions and sexist language and to continue to provide publications, resource materials and programs that foster the full humanity and potential of all children, youth and adults; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the President of the Unitarian Universalist Association to send copies of this resolution to other denominations examining sexism inherent in religious literature and institutions and to the International Association of Liberal Religious Women and the IARF; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly requests the Unitarian Universalist Association to: (a) join with those who are encouraging others in the society to examine the relationship between religious and cultural attitudes toward women, and (b) to send a representative and resource materials to **associations appropriate to furthering the above goals.**

*Version B – Longview and the Lexington Alliance<sup>50</sup>*

WHEREAS, a principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association is to "affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships"; and

WHEREAS, great strides have been taken to affirm this principle within our denomination; and

WHEREAS, some models of human relationships arising from religious myths, historical materials, and other teachings still create and perpetuate attitudes that cause women everywhere to be overlooked and undervalued; and

WHEREAS, children, youth and adults internalize and act on these cultural models, thereby tending to limit their sense of self-worth and dignity;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1977 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls upon all Unitarian Universalists to examine carefully their own religious beliefs and the extent to which these beliefs influence sex-role stereotypes within their own families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association to **direct** the Unitarian Universalist Association administrative officers and staff, the religious leaders within societies, the Unitarian Universalist theological schools, the directors of related organizations, and the planners of seminars and conferences to make every effort to eradicate sexist assumptions and sexist language and to continue to provide publications, resource materials and programs that foster the full humanity and potential of all children, youth, and adults; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the President of the Unitarian Universalist Association to send copies of this resolution to other denominations examining sexism inherent in religious literature and institutions and to the International Association of Liberal Religious Women and the IARF; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly requests the Unitarian Universalist Association

a) to join with those who are encouraging others in the broader society to examine the relationship between religious and cultural attitudes toward women, and

b) to send a representative and resource materials to the National



Women's Conference in Houston, Texas, November 1977, and to as many preparatory State Conferences as is feasible, and  
c) to become associated with the Homemakers Task Force and the Women and Religion Task Force of the National Women's Agenda Coalition.

As can be seen, the most significant item that distinguishes Version A from Version B of the Resolution is use of the verb "encourage" rather than "direct." Notes on the two versions printed in the 1977 Final Agenda show that the UUA Board felt that "To 'encourage' rather than 'direct' may be said to be more consonant with the voluntary nature of our Association and activities."<sup>51</sup> This upheld a broader Unitarian Universalist concern for maintaining the integrity of church autonomy and congregational polity in matters of denominational social witness and resolutions. In addition to this small difference in wording, the final clause of Version B of the Resolution is more specific in identifying commitments to action, while the wording in Version A is more open ended in implying further action.

Unfortunately, the history behind the process of refining the language for the final Resolution and the elimination of earlier versions remains unclear, in spite of Longview's extensive writings. It is known that when the final version of the Women and Religion Resolution came to a vote in plenary session in 1977, it passed with unanimous support.<sup>52</sup> The final language of the official Resolution appears to reflect almost exactly the language of Version A of the Resolution, including the word "encourage" rather than "direct." However, additional language was added in two places, shown in bold face below. The final version of the Women and Religion Resolution of 1977 reads:

WHEREAS, a principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association is to "affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships"; and

WHEREAS, great strides have been taken to affirm this principle within our denomination; and

WHEREAS, some models of human relationships arising from religious myths, historical materials, and other teachings still create and perpetuate attitudes that cause women everywhere to be overlooked and undervalued; and

WHEREAS, children, youth and adults internalize and act on these cultural models, thereby tending to limit their sense of self-worth and dignity;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1977 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls upon all Unitarian Universalists to examine carefully their own religious beliefs and the extent to which these beliefs influence sex-role stereotypes within their own families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association to encourage the Unitarian Universalist Association administrative officers and staff, the religious leaders within societies, the Unitarian Universalist theological schools, the directors of related organizations, and the planners of seminars and conferences, to make every effort to: **(a) put traditional assumptions and language in perspective, and (b) avoid sexist assumptions and language in the future.**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the President of the Unitarian Universalist Association to send copies of this resolution to other denominations examining sexism inherent in religious literature and institutions and to the International Association of Liberal Religious Women and the IARF; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly requests the Unitarian Universalist Association to: (a) join with those who are encouraging others in the society to examine the relationship between religious and cultural attitudes toward women, and (b) to send a representative and resource materials to associations appropriate to furthering the above goals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The General Assembly requests the President of the UUA to report annually on progress in implementing this resolution.<sup>53</sup>

As evidenced by the references to "sex-role stereotypes" and "sexist assumptions and language," the Women and Religion Resolution called for a paradigm shift regarding gender within the UUA. The fact that the resolution passed unanimously and without significant contestation or debate concerned Longview, who believed that the uncontested vote for the Resolution demonstrated that people did not fully comprehend its profound message.<sup>54</sup> Longview saw the work as radically feminist, and she believed that if people had understood the full

implications of its meaning, there would have been more resistance. It is notable that both Versions A and B assert that UUA actors should "make every effort to eradicate sexist assumptions and sexist language and to continue to provide publications, resource materials and programs that foster the full humanity and potential of all children, youth, and adults." The final version passed at General Assembly states instead that UUA actors should "(a) put traditional assumptions and language in perspective, and (b) avoid sexist assumptions and language in the future." The rhetoric of "eradicating" in Versions A and B, which was removed, indicates more urgency and activity than the more general language of "putting in perspective" and "avoiding," as included in the final Resolution. This subtle language shift clearly compromised the feminist expectations expressed in the earlier more specific versions of the Resolution.

Some question whether the earlier versions of the Resolution speak fully to the depth of Longview's feminist vision. They wonder why Longview did not craft the resolution in more radically feminist language. The disappearance of her earliest drafts makes it impossible to answer that question. This question was partially answered two years after the passage of the Resolution. In the spring 1979 publication of *Kairos*, the UUWF supplement to *Unitarian Universalist World*, Longview off-handedly suggested that the Women and Religion Resolution "might have been more descriptively titled 'the religious roots of sexism' or 'the religious basis for women's oppression.'"<sup>55</sup> It seems that Longview herself questioned whether religion had been sufficiently accounted for as the source of sexism in the rhetoric of the Resolution.

### Ramifications in the 1980s

As soon as the Women and Religion Resolution was passed at General Assembly in 1977, it began to affect Unitarian Universalist theologies, values, and liturgies. To begin, two subsequent resolutions were passed—the 1979 Resolution on Battered Women and the 1980 Resolution on the Implementation of Women and Religion. Longview saw these subsequent resolutions as extensions of the 1977 Resolution, building on its momentum by critiquing and dismantling systems of patriarchal oppression at their origins.<sup>56</sup> Beyond these follow-up resolu-

tions, the Women and Religion Resolution led to the creation of the UU Committee on Women and Religion and the hiring of Rev. Leslie Arden Westbrook to serve as the UUA Minister for Women and Religion. Rev. Westbrook worked closely with the Women and Religion Committee to further the conversation around gender equality within the denomination. They organized a conference called "Beyond This Time," which met during Memorial Day weekend in 1979 at Grailville, a retreat center in Loveland, Ohio. The conference was attended by ministers, seminarians, and lay leaders who together examined questions about the future of gender equality in the UUA. At the conference, Lucile Longview sponsored a workshop entitled "Do UUA Principles Affirm Women as They Affirm Men?" She reflected later that "the answer of those attending was a resounding 'No.'"<sup>57</sup> Thus, it was at Grailville that a more formal conversation was begun in regard to revising the Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

The process of revising the UUA Principles, which began at Grailville in 1979, continued over several years, with committee meetings and plenary sessions, until the new Principles were passed at General Assembly in 1985. Longview believed that evidence of the radically feminist nature of the new Principles can be located especially in the Seventh Principle: "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." She wrote that this "sense of interconnectedness" is "basic to feminist consciousness." This choice of language represented a marked shift away from more traditional, patriarchal forms of relating—which tended to be more linear and hierarchical—and towards a more feminist worldview.<sup>58</sup> It was the kind of change that Longview had hoped to see, marking a genuine transformation in denominational culture and values.

Taken together, the Committee on Women and Religion, the 1979 conference at Grailville, and the 1985 revision of the UUA Principles represent ways in which the Women and Religion Resolution initiated changes in denominational culture. The Resolution also inspired significant innovations in liturgy and worship, as evidenced by the creation of the original Water Ceremony in 1980. The Water Ceremony, also referred to as the "Water Ritual" and later as the "Water Communion," was a worship service designed by Lucile Longview and Carolyn McDade, a well-known Unitarian Universalist activist and

musician, to honor the life-giving force that women embody through the symbol of water. The ceremony was originally performed in a service entitled "Coming Home Like Rivers to the Sea" at the Women and Religion Continental Convocation of Unitarian Universalists in East Lansing, Michigan,<sup>59</sup> and was subsequently performed again at the 1981 General Assembly in Philadelphia.<sup>60</sup> The ceremony consisted of music and readings honoring the power of women, and employing the imagery of water as a symbol of power and strength. The central component of the ritual consisted of women offering water that they had brought with them from places of meaning in their lives, then sharing how that water spoke to their own truths as women. In doing so, the ritual was centered on the importance of the lived experiences of laywomen, transforming the traditionally male-centered liturgical space in a way consistent with Longview's radical feminism. In later years, Longview and McDade reflected on the Water Ceremony:

The water ceremony became the central part of a religious service that broke with tradition in significant ways. It was created by lay women, women who had long been silent in the pews. The ritual space was also made sacred by the women themselves. We gathered to worship in a way authentic and liberating to us, not as in a church but in a semi-circle around a large common earthen bowl. It was a ritual of women's being connected by a universal symbol, water, a ritual of women being connected to the totality of life.<sup>61</sup>

Not unlike the passage of the Women and Religion Resolution in 1977, the significance of the Water Ceremony was not only that it emphasized the importance of women's experiences and spiritual needs, but also that it was created primarily by and for laywomen, who, in Longview's mind, had traditionally been ignored because of their distance from the patriarchal structures of power, i.e., the male-dominated ministry. The lay-led nature of both the Resolution and the Water Ceremony was essential, Longview believed, to understanding these projects as radically feminist.

Despite Longview's initial concern that the radical feminist nature of the Women and Religion Resolution was misunderstood, it must be acknowledged that the Resolution helped to create significant transformations in institutional language and liturgy, as demonstrated by the revision of the UUA Principles and the creation of the Water



*Lucile Longview in her 90s  
Photograph taken in the garden by Cheryl Robinson*

Ceremony. Although these changes might have occurred without the passage of the 1977 Resolution, the Resolution itself laid the groundwork for a new denominational infrastructure—committees, a paid staff person, and regular conferences—necessary to support these changes. These transformations were significant and long lasting, as illustrated by the continued importance of the UUA Seven Principles for many churches and individuals today, and by the continued widespread use of the Water Ceremony as an ingathering service at the beginning of the new church year in September. These changes should not be underestimated. They have significantly impacted the language that Unitarian Universalists use to describe who they are and have provided new tools to create worship. The radical feminist movement led by Lucile Longview and embodied in the Women and Religion Resolution permanently reshaped the assumptions, language, and praxis of the Unitarian Universalist tradition as the newly merged Association moved into the new millennium.

## Conclusion

To properly evaluate the legacy of the Women and Religion Resolution and the work of Lucile Longview and others in the second-wave feminist movement, we must remember that the radical feminist story is not the only story of feminism within the UUA. Feminism has never been a monolith. As evidenced in this article, the radical feminist movement led by Lucile Longview, while crucial in shaping the future of gender parity within the UUA, did not address the needs of all women. Notably absent from Longview's writing is concern for the needs of women of color and the intersections of racism and classism with sexism. The radical feminist voices in the UUA appear to have been primarily, if not entirely, white.

Furthermore, with their interest in transforming the patriarchy from outside the institution, Longview and her radical feminist counterparts did not write extensively about the place for women who were interested in becoming part of the institutional hierarchy, namely as clergy. When the denominations merged in 1961, there were twenty-four ordained women in the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America combined; fourteen years later, in 1975, only forty-eight ordained women served in the UUA.<sup>63</sup> Then quite suddenly, the number of ordained women began to grow, reaching 203 by 1985, and comprising half of all UU clergy by 1999.<sup>63</sup> The story of this dramatic increase of women in ordained religious leadership is not adequately explained by the radical feminist narrative that Longview presents in her writing. To more fully understand the meaning of the encounter between second-wave feminism and the UUA, there are many other women's voices that need to be heard, sharing their experiences of the movement that redefined the denomination.

The story of women leaders in the Unitarian Universalist religion has been a story of uneven progress. We celebrate the work of our foremothers, such as Judith Sargent Murray in the eighteenth century, and Olympia Brown in the nineteenth. But the sudden and dramatic increase of women ministers in the late twentieth century is new and overcomes decades of exclusion. As we approach the fortieth anniversary of the passage of the Women and Religion Resolution, it is a good time to re-examine the dramatic transformation that women have brought to

the UUA since then. Let us heed Longview's plea to the Commission on Appraisal in 2001 "to study and help clarify the reformation taking place in the UUA, the role of the feminist perspective in bringing it about, and the potential for this change to lead ideologically to a more egalitarian and inclusive world view."<sup>64</sup> If we are to understand our present moment and the future scenarios that lie before us, we must turn again to the past and to the stories of the powerful, visionary women who shaped it.

## Notes

A major source for this article is the Papers of Lucile Schuck Longview, 1927-2010, located in the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Cambridge, MA (hereafter referred to as Longview Papers). The title "A View from the Pew" is taken from "The Perversion of the Purpose and the Process," 6 March 1982, Longview Papers 19.19.

<sup>1</sup> "Longview letter to Commission on Appraisal," 11 June 2001, Longview Papers 7.6.

<sup>2</sup> Sara M. Evans, *Tidal Wave* (New York: The Free Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ann Braude, "Religions and Modern Feminism," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Reuther (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 22.

<sup>5</sup> Braude, "Religions and Modern Feminism," 22.

<sup>6</sup> Catherine Wessinger, "Women's Religious Leadership in the United States," in *Religious Institutions and Women's Leadership: New Roles Inside the Mainstream*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 14.

<sup>7</sup> Wessinger, "Women's Religious Leadership," 19.

<sup>8</sup> Wessinger, "Women's Religious Leadership," 19.

<sup>9</sup> Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 22.

<sup>11</sup> Ann Braude, "Faith, Feminism, and History," in *The Religious History of American Women*, ed. Catherine Brekus (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 238.

<sup>12</sup> "The National Organization for Women's 1966 Statement of Purpose," National Organization for Women, <<http://now.org/about/history/statement-of-purpose/>>.

<sup>13</sup> Braude, "Religions and Modern Feminism," 17.

<sup>14</sup> Braude, "Religions and Modern Feminism," 15.

<sup>15</sup> Braude, "Religions and Modern Feminism," 19.

<sup>16</sup> Cynthia Grant Tucker, "Women and the Unitarian-Universalist Ministry," in *Religious Institutions and Women's Leadership: New Roles Inside the Mainstream*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 94.

- 17 "Feminist Theology in the UUA (Reformation by Resolution)," 15 November 1980, Longview Papers 19.9.
- 18 Tucker, "Women and the Unitarian-Universalist Ministry," 94.
- 19 Catherine F. Hitchings, *Universalist and Unitarian Women Ministers*, 2nd ed. (Boston, MA: Unitarian Universalist Historical Society, 1985), 7.
- 20 "Shared Values," November/December 2000, Longview Papers 19.19.
- 21 Selected letters, Longview Papers 19.19.
- 22 Blanche Lucile Kitson was known as Lucile from childhood. Her last name evolved significantly over time, first when she took her husband Hugo Schuck's last name when they married in 1939 and later following his death. Although the precise date of her name change is unclear, Lucile began referring to herself by the last name Longview in the early 1980s after her husband had been deceased for almost ten years. Initially she also continued using her husband's last name as well, signing letters "Lucile Schuck Longview," but eventually she discontinued the use of Schuck altogether, and in 1986 she legally changed her last name to Longview. Lucile wrote about her decision to change her last name as a decision to listen to her own "inner voice." The name resonates with her identity as a prophetic leader for social change, one whose perspective is long and far reaching. For the purposes of this article, I mostly refer to Lucile by her chosen and legal last name of Longview as appropriate. However, there are instances in this paper, in primary source material prior to the 1980s, when she was still using her husband's last name. After her husband's death, I use the name Longview for the sake of clarity and out of respect for Lucile's chosen identity.
- 23 Ann Braude, "Faith, Feminism, and History," 238.
- 24 "Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation Biographical Information," undated, Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, Records, 1969-1978, Box 3, Andover-Harvard Theological Library.
- 25 "The Sacred Thread," 13 May 1999, Longview Papers 7.3.
- 26 "Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation Biographical Information," undated, Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, Records, 1969-1978, Box 3, Andover-Harvard Theological Library.
- 27 Lucile Longview, Interview conducted November 18, 1992 by Lenore Fenn, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc.
- 28 "Transforming the Myths: Telling Our Stories," 7 November 1992, Longview Papers 21.8.
- 29 "Transforming the Myths: Telling Our Stories," 7 November 1992, Longview Papers 21.8.
- 30 "The Root of My Feminist Theology," 17 June 1980, Longview Papers 19.15.
- 31 Lucile Longview, Interview conducted November 18, 1992 by Lenore Fenn, Lexington Oral History Projects, Inc.
- 32 "Transforming the Myths: Telling Our Stories," 7 November 1992, Longview Papers 21.8.
- 33 "Transforming the Myths: Telling Our Stories," 7 November 1992, Longview Papers 21.8.
- 34 "Origins of the Women and Religion Movement: 'Who Knows Where Inklings Start?'" undated, Longview Papers 20.2.
- 35 "Reaching for a New Consciousness," 25 January 1983, Longview Papers 19.9.
- 36 "Feminist Theology in the UUA (Reformation by Resolution)," 15 November 1980, Longview Papers 19.9.

- 37 "Owning Rage as Part of Courage," 31 March 1984, Longview Papers 20.1.
- 38 "Unitarian Universalist Women on the Move," 10 April 1990, Longview Papers 20.2.
- 39 "Feminist Theology in the UUA (Reformation by Resolution)," 15 November 1980, Longview Papers 19.9.
- 40 "Feminism in the Unitarian Universalist Association" 29 September 1987, Longview Papers 19.8.
- 41 "I began thinking of myself as an intentional outsider — *outside* hierarchical groups, even *outside* the beliefs of my early religious indoctrination, which I had so long considered to be the major strand of the sacred thread of my life." A quote from "The Sacred Thread," 13 May 1999, Longview Papers 7.3.
- 42 "Feminist Theology in the UUA (Reformation by Resolution)," 15 November 1980, Longview Papers 19.9.
- 43 "Transforming the Myths: Telling Our Stories," 7 November 1992, Longview Papers 21.8.
- 44 "Procedure for Submitting Material for the 1977 Business Agenda," 1977, Longview Papers 21.12.
- 45 Form letter from Longview, 29 January 1977, Longview Papers 21.12.
- 46 "Development of the Resolution 'Women and Religion'... A Personal Journey," 7 July 1977, Longview Papers 20.2.
- 47 Cummins letter to Longview, 24 January 1977, Longview Papers 21.12.
- 48 "Development of the Resolution 'Women and Religion'... A Personal Journey," 7 July 1977, Longview Papers 20.2.
- 49 "16<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly June 20-26, 1977 Final Agenda," Longview Papers 19.13.
- 50 "16<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly June 20-26, 1977 Final Agenda," Longview Papers 19.13.
- 51 "16<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly June 20-26, 1977 Final Agenda," Longview Papers 19.13.
- 52 "To Make a Significant Difference" *Kairos*, Spring 1979, Longview Papers 19.6.
- 53 "Unitarian Universalist Students at Harvard Divinity School," 3 March 1988, Longview Papers 20.2.
- 54 "Women and Religion—One More Time!" February 1992, Longview Papers 19.19.
- 55 "To Make a Significant Difference," *Kairos*, Spring 1979, Longview Papers 19.6.
- 56 "Feminist Theology in the UUA (Reformation by Resolution)," 15 November 1980, Longview Papers 19.9.
- 57 "The Sacred Thread," 13 May 1999, Longview Papers 7.3.
- 58 "The Sacred Thread," 13 May 1999, Longview Papers 7.3.
- 59 "The Sacred Thread," 13 May 1999, Longview Papers 7.3.
- 60 "20<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly June 12 - 18, 1981 Final Program," Longview Papers 19.15.
- 61 Lucile Longview and Carolyn McDade, "Coming Home Like Waters to the Sea," Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Pamphlet No. 1,000,573.
- 62 Hitchings, *Universalist and Unitarian Women Ministers*, 7.
- 63 Hitchings, *Universalist and Unitarian Women Ministers*, 7.
- 64 "Longview letter to Commission on Appraisal," 11 June 2001, Longview Papers 7.6.