

Flaming Chalice Award presentation to Helen Guerrant Toy, by Beth Jerde

Books and reading are at the heart of Helen Guerrant Toy!

"I love books. They're my favorite entertainment and have been since I learned to read. I never go to bed without reading first." Her favs are **Hamilton** and Michelle Obama's **Becoming**. **Becoming** for inspiration; **Hamilton** for information!

After graduating from Stanford, Helen lived abroad, in Lagos, Nigeria, then Paris. This laid the groundwork for appreciating other cultures and languages. Back in the States in SoCal, she taught ESL and English Lit for 25 years, then migrated north to be with her family. Definitely Helen was no little old lady from Pasadena, coming up to Berkeley!

She joined UUCB in 2012, weaving herself into the very fiber of the church, beginning with teaching Religious Ed kindergartners.

When the Social Justice Council was re-vivified in 2015, Helen joined the Leadership Team and enrolled DACA youth, stating, "Helping with DACA applications was the first invitation I was aware of to join a social justice program." She then curated the SJC Table and has been a member of **LFDC** and **WOWS** since their inception.

In 2018 a Sanctuary Accompaniment team was initiated, which evolved into a congregational project. Helen onboarded, still accompanying the family today, providing reading tutors and other services.

WHY she became so involved in immigration work, she said, "In my teaching career in Southern Cal, most of my students were Latinx. I loved hearing their stories and was so moved by their deep fears of **la Migra (immigration police)**. I was a full-time literacy coach at a very large high school in L.A. --- blown away with literacy needs of the students. Worked my tail off with every class (including P.E. and band!) to teach kids better reading skills."

Attending the monthly protests at the West County Detention Facility which detained undocumented people, Helen ran a fund drive raising over \$5000 to support local immigrants.

In 2020, she helped plan the 75th Commemoration of the Hiroshima/Nagasaki bombings. For **RECLAIM OUR VOTE**, she organized 21 congregants who wrote 1900 POSTCARDS. She has energized the Stewardship Committee --- never missing the op to seek volunteers.

Most recently, Helen established the **Books for Richmond Schools Program** with Judy Sam:

Not only the Richmond school librarians and principals, but the Multicultural Bookstore are so appreciative of our generosity over the past few months. 40 of us have donated books on diversity, self-esteem, people of color, immigrants ---- all of which will end up in the hands and **minds** of Richmond students. Books are special.

Helen is an educator-at-large, with a keen, incisive mind, and spirit that matches it! a prismatic outlook on life! Her intention: to inform via stories and books. And last but not least, her penmanship/calligraphy--- OUTSTANDING --- handwriting that is beautiful and legible!

With love and respect, CONGRATULATIONS!!! Helen on your Flaming Chalice award!