

Statement from the Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock

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Presented by Claire Deroche

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My name is Claire Deroche. I am here today to speak on behalf of the Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset. I offer these remarks as a representative of this community of faith.

Since 1790, the U.S. Census Bureau has conducted a count of the country's population every 10 years, as required by the U.S. Constitution. The importance of this count cannot be overstated. The apportionment of congressional representatives and funding for important programs affecting the health and welfare of each of us depend on an accurate count of every person living in the country.

As Unitarian Universalists we covenant to promote the dignity of every person. We are especially concerned for the most vulnerable among us. Without an accurate count of every person, local governments and social service organizations will not have the funding necessary to serve the needs of those who live in these communities. If our communities are unaware of the need to participate in the census, there will not be an accurate count and unmet needs will abound.

New York State has set aside \$20 million for the census. This amount is woefully short of what is needed for grass roots organizations to do the work that is required to ensure that everyone is counted. As Unitarian Universalists who are committed to the democratic process, we believe that every effort must be made to ensure that every person learns of the importance of being counted and participates in the census.

Our commitment to the common good impels us to speak out. We insist that New York State commit funding beyond the \$20 million already set aside for the census, and that this funding be made available to grass roots organizations. They already have the trust of local community members. They are the ones with the connections and knowhow to make sure that their communities become aware of the census and participate. Without this outreach, New Yorkers will be shortchanged, and the quality of life for all of us will be jeopardized.