



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

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UNA-GP.ORG

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From Christiaan's Desk:

Hello. I hope to keep our newsletters short and frequent. Help from Leia D'Amboise and Tiffany Wang is essential in this effort.

I received an email from one member that I considered real help. He reacted to my notion about dwindling membership, assuming a partisan problem. "The reason I believe that UNA -USA may be losing members is that when I go to meetings, and they have been few, I get the feeling that if you do not agree with the group 100% you are made to feel like an outsider, not welcome."

His email made me reflect on who we are, how we go about presenting our case and how we all can promote the cause of the UN, without exclusion. I never thought much about the partisan aspects of the UNA -USA as reason for losing members, as it happens in almost all chapters, whether in republican regions like Orange county or democratic regions like Chicago. The loss does not seem to be linked to dramatic action or strong controversial stands.

In simple terms, I hypothesize that

the older guard of the UNA-USA is strongly influenced by the experiences of the WW II and the early years of the Nuclear Scare. That group is slowly losing members, yet still very much sets the tone in many a chapter. New members look to Darfur, get frustrated over ecological issues and the unwillingness of the USA to sign treaties, and don't connect that easily with the history of UNA-USA.

Whereas there may be a perception that the republican party expresses a stronger demand for UN reform, the democratic party is definitely on the same wave length, with both parties harboring many politicians who have ambivalent feelings about the UN and its role in the world. Most of these politicians, reflecting perhaps the mood of their constituents, think of the UN as a tool in the box of the US foreign policy, and aspire to see the UN as useful if subordinate to the wishes of the USA. We tend to walk through the world with a big stick.

I was pleased to hear on CNN that soft power is being brought in again

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Water Ambassador Program launched

UNA-GP and the Philadelphia Global Water Initiative (PGWI) joined to create a Water Ambassador Program (WAP) for our city. The WAP will have its first workshop on November 8.

We intend to train volunteers on the importance to understand and embrace the United Nations Development Goals, especially about clean water, proper hygiene and sustainability. Volunteers will go to schools, libraries, workplaces, churches and even City Hall to advocate on the need to work globally for the human right to clean drinking water.

For more information, to sign up or request brochures for your school, church, library or family, contact info@pgwi.org or info@una-gp.org.

YPIC members Anastasia Shown and Patience Lehrman will address students at Cheyney University on UN Day. Go YPIC!!

Illegal Handguns, Causing Death Globally & Locally

This month, once again, we have seen the flags at the police and fire stations hanging at half-staff in a solemn tribute to another police officer killed in the line of duty.

Handguns are so prolific and so easy to obtain. Even the UN is

preparing a treaty regulating the trade and registration of small arms.

We cannot emphasize enough that there is a difference between the right of people to own firearms for hunting and sports and the zealous all-or-nothing position of the NRA as

a marketing force of the weapons industry.

We as UNA-GP need to advocate, like our local officials, to bring some sanity to this unique American dilemma. Please read Mike Felker's post on our website, click on "illegal handguns."

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as a strategic concept for the USA. But I wish we could go one step further and



think -before power- in terms of fairness and equity in dialogue, in terms of science and reason as

fundamentals for trade and exchange, and in terms of respect for the dignity of the other, even our enemy.

There may be another reason why it is hard to belong to a group with diverse opinions. I come from the Netherlands and have been trained to look at politics as an arena in which many parties operate, where no party has a majority and each government consists of coalitions. Unlike in two-party systems, we need to keep enough friendliness in our relations with other parties to make governing possible. Philosophically, that implies the other can never be the enemy. Governing requires allowances for compromise, without that compromise becoming a sign of weakness. In the

NOVEMBER 14th Luncheon with 34 Million Friends founder Jane Roberts

Nicholas Kristoff expressed righteous anger in a Oct. 9 New York Times article that US AID ordered six African countries to be sure no U.S.-funded condoms, birth control pills, I.U.D's or other contraceptives are furnished to Marie Stopes International, a British-based aid group that operates clinics in poor countries.

It's a policy asphyxiation tightening the Bush 2002 spending cutoff of \$34 million which was appropriated by Congress for the United Nations Population Fund for its work saving women's lives. In parts of Africa women have a 1-in-10 risk of dying in childbirth.

Our presidential candidates differ on the US policies towards the UN

US, especially during election time, the rhetoric about the other becomes venom, the other is the enemy to be beaten. Winner takes all and losers have few rights. What worries me most is that we bring this kind of either-or thinking to the complex reality of the UN and multilateral collaborations. It can force groups like the UNA-GP into "either-or-positions" as well. We need to bring all multilateralists together, regardless of party lines and with due respect for certain differences on certain policy issues.

In his answer, our member expressed his desire to step up to the plate and: "... will do whatever I can to help revive the Phila Chapter. An example of what I am talking about, my son is the President of the World Affairs Club at XXX. This group would be a good fit with UNA -USA since they do about 5 model UN's per year. However being a Catholic School there are certain issues, mainly around population control they cannot discuss, or will take a position different from UNA _USA, but on 90-95% of the issues there is agreement. If both sides will agree to leave this one issue off the table we can work

Population Fund and the financing of contraceptives to fight AIDS. John McCain has actually stated, "I haven't thought about it."

Hear Jane Roberts, organizer of 34 Million Friends, generating \$34 million, \$1 at a time, for UNFPA from indignant citizens who disagree strongly with polices of the Bush administration.

Roberts will speak Friday, Nov. 14 as UNAGP's guest at a noon lunch at Schnader, Harrison, Segal and Lewis law firm, 1600 Market Street. An interactive videocast conversation with a UNFPA representative is planned. For more information call or 215-751-2000 or visit www.schnader.com.

together and develop members in the future."

I will work with this member on issues of water, poverty, human rights, child labor, etc. When working with his son, we will look for the common denominator. I myself am in the Public Health field. I know about the ethical dilemmas behind many health policies. We partner where we can. If issues need to be

addressed that are a taboo for one member or another, we need to respect that and



don't force participation. I look forward to working with people from many backgrounds. We need to work together wherever we can find common cause, and always recognizing each other's dignity.

BAN CLUSTER BOMBS, WAR'S DEADLY DEBRIS

We need to keep up the pressure on political representatives in the house and senate for the ban of all cluster bombs.

The civilian death toll caused by these bombs is unacceptable. Talk about our honorable men and women serving so heroically is put to shame by the sheer disregard for the plight of the innocent.

Our advocate for the cause, Mike Felker, has written an article about this. The article is posted on our website. Please visit www.una-gp.org and click on "cluster bombs."

Next board meeting

Please note that our next board meeting will be on Monday, Nov. 10, at 5:15 PM.

Place to be determined, as the Friend Center is still under construction. Feel free to drop by and listen to our deliberations.

Adopt-A-Minefield Holiday Cards

Every half an hour a landmine harms a child. Landmines are indiscriminate weapons, maiming or killing 15,000 to 20,000 civilians every year – landmines do not distinguish between a soldier’s footstep and the footfall of a child. They cost as little as \$3 to produce, but as much as \$1000 to remove.

Once again, UNA-GP is holding our “adopt a mine field” holiday card. Proceeds of card sales will

go towards clearing landmines, allowing children to play freely and enabling people to rebuild their homes and cultivate their land.

Each holiday card is \$5.00, although supplemental donations are welcome. We can send the holiday cards to you, or mail them for you.

The adopt-a-minefield holiday cards are an easy way to help prevent victims of landmines.



Our Commitment to Philadelphia’s Youth. The Library project.

Our efforts to prepare kids of Philadelphia as global citizens is shaping up as a sustaining program. The program started with Marietta Tanner’s idea to train students to speak with youngsters at the libraries of Philadelphia.

On Saturday morning, Sept. 27, about 30 volunteers from UPenn, Drexel, Temple and Rowan University gathered for a workshop about how to speak



Christiaan Morssink told the students in his opening remarks, “we must learn to share this one world. And this understanding begins at a young age.”

Gillian Gilhool addressed the students about the organization of the UN and how it is evolving. Gillhool, using a large amount of publications and references, underscored the need to train ourselves in advocacy as truly engaged citizen of a democracy.

Wayne Jacoby introduced students to useful tools on the internet which are very beneficial when teaching about the complexities of the UN.

Participants of the workshop were trained to discuss UN material at three age levels. Anastasia Shown, Marietta Tanner and Wayne Jacoby lead the discussion pointing out sensitivity toward different ages, races, ethnicities and how to keep kids interested.

The workshop ended with an hour of social mingling, where students

from the different campuses learned about each other’s motivation.

This stage of the project will end before UN Day. UNA-GP will host a lunch meeting with the volunteers and learn from their experiences. Follow up of this project is geared towards updating each library with a special UN section. For which we will need more input from our members. If you feel up to it, step forward and see how you can help in making the libraries of



positively to young people on the United Nations. The student volunteers will work in the free public libraries in Philadelphia and speak to young people at the elementary, middle and high school level.

The library talks are organized by Upenn-Unifec and UNA-GP in collaboration with Philadelphia Free Library.

“We have only one world,”



Philadelphia into focal points for global awareness raising.

UNA-GP hopes the collaboration with the Free Library of Philadelphia will become an annual event. As Christiaan Morssink remarked: “We hope this initial project will contribute to a continuous, interactive and positive dialogue about the future of humanity, where respect, dignity and global solidarity are cornerstones of our policies for survival.”

Nuclear Awareness at Chestnut Hill College

Remember Hans Blix?

Dr. Hans Blix, the Chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, whose wise words about Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction to the Security Council in 2003 were ignored by trigger-happy representatives who comprise our government.

That Hans Blix is coming to Philadelphia.

Blix is a featured speaker for International Dialogue on Achieving a Nuclear-weapons free world. On Oct. 22, Chestnut Hill College, in collaboration with The Project for Nuclear Awareness (PNA), is hosting an event to educate the public about nuclear arms in effort to end the threat of nuclear war.

Other speakers include U.S.



Hans Blix, Wikipedia image

Ambassador Thomas Graham, Chair of the Bipartisan Security Group. Graham will discuss practical steps towards a world without nukes.

The program plans to apply cutting-edge technology to extend the dialogue beyond Chestnut Hill to include audiences in Burnaby, British

Columbia, Mexico City, and Washington, DC. During an hour-long question and answer period, attendees will have a chance to communicate with two of the world's leading experts on these issues.

The dialogue will be held in Fournier Hall on 9601 Germantown Ave. in Philadelphia, PA. Doors open at 4:30. This event is Free but RSPV now! For more information please visit:

www.projectfornuclearawareness.org

DURBAN II is coming

April 2009 the Durban Review Conference, also called Durban II, will (most likely) take place in Geneva. The conference is organized by the UN Human Rights Council.

The first meeting in Durban, South Africa in 2001, became a tumultuous affair. During the conference the U.S. withdrew, after very undiplomatic discourses occurred on the floor. Many countries accused each other of hijacking the commission for their own narrow political purposes. Most painful were the efforts to single out the state of Israel as the only country where apartheid and racism are part of its social fabric. In reality, many countries have blatant racial and ethnic problems within their borders

A second preparatory meeting is underway in Geneva. Several countries like the U.S., Canada, Israel, France and the UK have stated they will either not participate or put strict conditions on participation.

Since Durban I several watchdog groups have been created to report on the actions of individual states and

also on NGO's like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. These NGO's are working from a strict issue-based platform, and they can be exploited easily in the political maelstrom of international power struggles.

The UN Human Rights Council exists for good reasons. It exists, because we experience and practice racism, ethnocentricity, gender discrimination, religious bigotry and sheer disrespect. Whether we live in Norway or New Zealand, in the USA or India, there is not one nation, where these forces of human denigration do not exist. Each nation must be vigilant against ethnocentricity and vulgar denigration of the other.

The Human Rights Council has a large, global portfolio. There is however a major concern, that Durban II may deteriorate as well, based on the composition of the Council and the tendency to politicize its agenda.

We think it important that the UNA-GP participates in a dialogue about the fears and emotions around Durban II.

From the UNA-USA

We invite all chapters and divisions to help draft the UNA-USA advocacy agenda by completing a brief online survey, by Nov. 1, 2008. We hope this attracts 100 percent UNA-USA chapter participation!

To access the survey, visit:

www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB2288DCBUB8T

Boycotting a conference is a political act of high visibility. When doing so, we better have a clear alternative to offer and live up to. Boycott without further action is not a real option. We need to work hard to make our national leaders participate fully in the global debate of human rights, whether in or out of Durban II.

Given our own recent history, our nation has to restore quite a bit of its moral capital. In dealing with Durban II and with the questions of human rights broadly, the U.S. needs to talk crisply and convincingly--without carrying a big stick.

We would like to hear from you. If you would like to volunteer for an educational or blogging effort to bring the best of Philadelphia in the spotlight. Send a note to info@una-gp.org