



# UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

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## Raising Awareness of the UN: The Library Project

An interesting editorial in the NY Times recently suggested that “the human brain systematically misjudges certain kinds of risks ... because evolution has programmed us to be alert to enemies with clubs, but we are not prepared to respond to dangers that require forethought.” This kind of thinking is perhaps why little attention is being paid to the UN Millennium Goals which ask us to save our planet by being mindful and proactive in matters of sustainability. The article suggests that the human brain would light up if it en-

countered a garter snake, but hardly glimmers when told that global warming would destroy the earth.

The Library Project is collaborating with the Free Library of Philadelphia again this year to talk with youngsters in their after school program LEAP about the United Nations. We have accepted as our challenge to program the teenage brain to engage in future-think specifically about the Millennium Goal #7: By 2015, to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water.

Toward that end we are in the process of recruiting college students to be the emissaries who go to branch libraries throughout the City with the alarming statistics that 1.8 million people die every year from diarrheal diseases that could easily be prevented with safe drinking water; that water and sanitation are primary drivers of public health, and that water management and adequacy affect US citizens in Arizona and North Philadelphia as well as Africa and Asia.

We have consulted with  
*(Continued on pg. 3)*

### UNA-USA ADVOCACY AGENDA 2009: *Restoring U.S. Leadership Through Global Cooperation*

*Adopted by the UNA-USA Board of Directors on December 15, 2008*

Each month we publish in our newsletter one of six priority issues as adopted by the UNA-USA on December 15, 2008. This month we highlight the last one, Priority Issue # 6

#### Promoting Arms Control and Disarmament

From nuclear weapons to landmines and cluster munitions, the United States over the past decade has failed to take advantage of key opportunities to advance the goals of nonproliferation and disarmament. There are several important steps the new Obama administration and Congress can take to demonstrate America's commitment to international arms control.

In the spring of 2010, a major international conference will review the status and implementation of the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** at a time when both nuclear and non-nuclear nations have lost confidence in the treaty's effectiveness. The review conference will provide the United States and other nations with an important opportunity to strengthen and restore confidence in the NPT, which serves as the foundation of the global nuclear arms control and disarmament regime.

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## From Christiaan's Desk:

On Tuesday, we went to a picnic on the shores of Lake Tahoe. It's a beautiful place. Humans have not spoiled it too much; no minerals here, just a lot of timber; no way you can do large scale agriculture here. Just a good amount of tourism, that's it. Nature is impressive here: Great mountain ridges, hiking trails that are demanding, huge trees that fight against the strain of sliding snow and ice in the winter, and for every drop of water they can squeeze out of the dry summer air. The scenery invites you to contemplate the meaning of "survival", while the cold nights justify the joy of a hot tub.

A guy was playing the guitar at the picnic. He had moved from Wilmington, Delaware to this place. He liked it here, singing songs of reflections and of protests and earning a living with it. We, with gray hair and bald heads, became nostalgic. He sang about Suzanne down the river, who fed you tea and oranges. He sang some songs of good old Pete. *There was Flower Power In the Air.* Indeed, we started talking about the sixties; what we did and why, where we protested against the Vietnam War, how we felt utterly powerless against the human folly of the nuclear weapons race, how we demonstrated for peace, for decolonization, for development

aid. In the sixties the world human population had just grown to more than two billion. The UN was 20 years old, Kennedy had started this Peace Corps to channel youthful energy towards doing good, without a weapon on your back. Soon we saw on TV how some guys were walking on the moon. And for the first time ever we saw pictures of Mother Earth.

Now, we have satellites to communicate worldwide in an instant (and to spy on each other); the human rights movements in the world are growing, minorities are speaking up and coming out. We have more than 192 members in the UN. We have (finally) some serious plans to do real development, to address issues of gender discrimination; we have the workings (oh so weak) of the ICC. We have

much more knowledge; yet, we have a human population of six and a half billion and growing. We have astronauts who come back to earth to warn us about the intense degradation of the ice and snow cover on earth. We have another war going on, this time without street protests; there are still killing fields being created every year; there are new signs of modern slavery, human trafficking and other crimes that are part of unstoppable globalization. We still spend billions of dollars to satisfy the folly of the world's generals; we still have a multitude of nuclear warheads, many on trigger alert.

After the singer finished his rendition of Mellow Yellow, I asked him if he knew the song *Good Night Mister President.* He did not know it and none of the others at the picnic did as

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### Note:

We will join Mary Day Kent and others on August 11th at a meeting at the offices of Chakka Fattah, where we will advocate for the House bill for Prevention of Child Marriage, HR 2103 and ask that he signs up as a co-sponsor.

Prevention of Child Marriage may seem like a detail but it is a key lever in releasing women's power to lead healthy full lives and contribute to their families and communities. Child marriage is an internationally recognized human rights violation and in many cases is also a violation of the national laws of the countries where it takes place. Early marriage leads to denial of further education for girls. Early marriage leads to early childbirth in the teen years where maternal mortality risk is significantly higher than childbirth in adulthood. Maternal mortality increases infant mortality cases as well as causing those surviving children to lose their mothers.

We will report about the results of the meeting in the September newsletter.

- Christiaan Morssink

*(Library Project from pg. 1)*

some experts on water education like the people at Fairmount Waterworks - Karen Young and Ellen Schultz - who regularly meet with students to give them an historical and practical message about water issues, and with Wayne Jacoby at GEM, the outstanding program at Chestnut Hill College that brings teenagers together to propose solutions to issues before the UN. We struggle with devising materials and methods that will cut through to the teenage e-mind that is all a-Twitter, exceedingly restless, and unresponsive to the staid pen and pencil approaches of old.

Our intern, Yufei Cao, a student at University of Pennsylvania, exudes vitality and fresh ideas, and is our main recruiter. We believe that our secret weapon is that college student – young enough to know the lingo yet savvy about the present perils that endanger our planet and the importance of the Millennium Goals. If the enlightened peer says it's so, something as esoteric as a Millennium Goal might just have relevance. To extend our reach, we will hold sessions in October, November, March and April. This will give more time for the branches to develop audience, the college students freedom to wedge this activity into their schedules, and for UNAGP members to come forth with ideas and the impetus to get involved.

*(Marietta J. Tanner )*

*(UNA-USA from pg.1)*

The United States can also provide critical momentum to international nuclear arms control efforts by ratifying the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)**. The United States, the first nuclear nation, played a key role in the treaty's development (President Eisenhower issued the first call for such a treaty and President Clinton was the first world leader to sign it) and American ratification could help jump start the effort to bring the treaty into force.

Though far less powerful than nuclear weapons, the destruction wrought by landmines and cluster munitions occurs on a regular basis, with thousands of innocent civilians killed or maimed every year. The United States has the world's largest stockpile of cluster munitions and the third largest landmine arsenal. The refusal by the United States to **ratify the Cluster Munitions Convention and the Mine Ban Treaty** cripples the broadly-supported global effort to ban these indiscriminate weapons.

### **Goals:**

- The President should help strengthen the global arms control regime by reaffirming America's [NPT](#) obligations and by working to ensure that all nations recognize and renew their own obligations under the treaty at the [2010 review conference](#);
- The United States should lead international efforts to strengthen the treaty, including through the creation of an international nuclear fuel bank;
- The President should request, and the Congress should appropriate, adequate resources to enable the UN's [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) (IAEA) to verify compliance with the NPT; and
- The President and the Senate should work together in support of U.S. ratification of the [CTBT](#); and
- The United States should sign and ratify the [Cluster Munitions Convention](#) and the [Mine Ban Treaty](#).

### **Action Items for UNA-USA Leaders and Members:**

- Visit the [local offices of your Members of Congress](#), including during National Advocacy Week (to be held in spring 2009), to show support for a U.S.-led international effort to strengthen the NPT, and ratification of the CTBT, Cluster Munitions Convention, and the Mine Ban Treaty;
- Hold public events and [engage local media](#) to highlight the important work of the IAEA and the need to renew and enhance the NPT-based global disarmament and nonproliferation regime;
- Contact the [White House](#) and [Congress](#) in support of robust funding to the IAEA; and
- Educate your community and [elected officials](#) about the importance of US ratification of the CTBT, Cluster Munitions Convention, and Mine Ban Treaty through public events, media outreach, petition drives, and the adoption of city council resolutions (visit <http://www.landmines.org/> and <http://www.uscbl.org/>).

**August 6, 1945.**  
**The start of the greatest human  
folly ever.**



Hiroshima Kembaku Dome



In the entrance of the city hall of Cardiff (Wales) this statue greets the visitor. It celebrates activism against nuclear weapons.

"On the 27th of August 1981, a total of 36 women, four babies and six men set off on a march from Cardiff to [RAF Greenham Common in Berkshire](#). The protest march was against the American ground launched [cruise](#) nuclear missiles to be located at the [RAF](#) base on [Greenham Common](#). The site then became a world famous icon for protests against nuclear weapons."

Find out more here:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/aug/03/nuclear-disarmament>

<http://bang-usa.org/node/123>



*"Tell me why it's okay to kill in the name of the gods we pray.  
Tell me who said it's okay to die in the name of the lies we say.  
Tell me why there're child soldiers.  
Tell me why they closed the borders.  
Tell me how to fight disease and tell me now won't you please.  
The only thing I want to do is to be in the arms of someone who  
believes in me like I believe in you."*

Michael Franti from his album *Hey World (Don't Give Up)*



## Countryside, Camels, Chat and Cries

July 22, 2009

*Our member Anastasia Shown is in Ethiopia, honing her skills as a global citizen and peace builder. She is leading a team of high school teachers on a quest to bring a global perspective into the classrooms of the US. Funded by a Fullbright grant.*

I've been in Ethiopia for three weeks now, and I'm starting to really see the diversity in the country- the languages, the landscapes, and the cultures. We've had some fantastic lectures: Food, Cooking and Nation in Ethiopia; Early Ethiopian Archeology; History of Ethiopian Religions: Indigenous, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; Ancient and Medieval History of Ethiopia; and Intro to Ethiopian Cultures. We've had traditional dance lessons and I have improved tenfold! So far, I prefer the dances from the South, but the Northern moves are gaining my respect. We spent a day with traditional weavers and other artists. I practiced spinning cotton with an elder in the community and her son showed me how to make designs in the cloth. We interviewed the family for our documentary and they commented on the struggle to sell traditional cloth when Chinese-made clothes and used Western clothes become cheaper and more available. We've participated in multiple coffee ceremonies and had some wonderful weekend lunches with families. Last week we were hosted by a family that has members in Germany, London, Manhattan and Virginia. Most were here in

Ethiopia for vacation to keep the kids knowing Amharic and getting close to their cousins. We enjoyed Tej (honey wine) and had a feast of assorted meats and stews. I have even indulged in kitfo (raw meat). Last week I dined with a family whose uncle was the body guard of Haile Selassie!

Our first out of Addis trip was to the Debre Libanos monastery. Everyone was happy to get out of the city and see the countryside. It was a glorious day- rain and sunshine brought out the beauty of the landscape. We had a traditional lunch over a stone fire pit that had a view of the gorge that some compared to the Grand Canyon. We watched baboon mommies and daddies run up and down the trails in the gorge with their little ones. The monastery was a bit of hike, but everyone made it up to the top part of the church. The legend goes that around 1284 Abuna Tekle Haymanot, the founding priest, spent seven years standing on one leg praying and lived off one seed a year, fed to him by a bird. Eventually his spare leg fell off and the paintings of him in the church only show one leg. His shrine is built into the rock mountain and all water that drips through the rock is

considered his tears, thus holy water. I got to go inside, without shoes, and collect some of the holy water. It was on the condition that I would give it to someone who practices the Orthodox religion. Maybe my Catholic Grandma close enough? We ventured down to the actual church, rebuilt by Haile Selassie in the 1950's. We were warned with a big sign that any woman menstruating and anyone who has had sexual intercourse with the previous 48 hours is forbidden to enter. We all entered. Let's hope none of us are cursed or will suffer in Hell for eternity. The stain glass windows were amazing and I felt small and special inside that church with the sun shining through in blue, green, red and yellow rays.

This past weekend we took a 12-hr trip to the Eastern region, Dire Dawa and Harar. The bus ride was not fun, but the walled city of Harar was a must-see. To make ride easier some people chewed Chat- a stimulating leaf that is popular with Muslims. Others drank tej. The wine helped to pass time on the bus. We kept sipping tej all afternoon. It is a really hard ride, twelve hours in a bus, that has less comfort than an old school

*(Continued on pg. 7-8)*

## A Traveler's Thoughts



Someone once told me that it is important to have a “global mind.” But, what is a global mind? to always look from a wide perspective? My brief trip to Moscow have forced me to exercise my “global mind” in order to find peace in such a vibrant city.

Being of Asian descent and speaking American English in Moscow can land you stares and glares. My family and I were prime targets for pickpockets, con artists, and eager shopkeepers. My no-brand jeans and sneakers were no match for the fashionably dressed women who can run on cobblestone streets with three-inch stiletto heels. If I had not paid attention to the Stalin and Lenin statues that sparsely decorated the city streets, I would not have guessed that this country was once the powerhouse of Communism.

Progress is inevitable. When people are given freedom to excel in their passions, there is no stopping progress. The process, however, can either be beautiful or ugly. To comfort myself in my days in Russia, I kept in mind that I was just a tourist caught in a transitional period in one of the most capable countries in the world.

*(Nalat Phanit)*

## Letter From the Field: Draining the Ocean, so the Fish Can't Swim

July 26, 2009

**M**y three teammates are currently in Chiang Mai [Thailand] and I am staying in Mae Sot because U Thant, the manager of the guesthouse where we are staying, tells me about the need for water system at some migrant schools for children from Burma, who either came illegally with their parents as refugees and economic migrants or on their own to seek education, which is very restricted and unaffordable, especially for ethnic minorities in Burma. Having been inspired by and done water projects with Engineers without Borders at Penn, I cannot suppress my curiosity and desire to help when I hear there is a need for water anywhere...

"Draining the ocean so the fish cannot swim" is essentially the paranoid military junta's policy in Myanmar that has been in effect since the early 1970s. It goes hand in hand with the Four Cuts policy that intended to derive opposition groups (there are many) of



*Our member, Hong Truong, sounding a prayer bell in Thailand.*

food, funds, recruits, and intelligence. In practice, this is implemented by systematic intimidation and repression of the civilian population until they no longer dare to support the opposition, and by making them so destitute that they are unable to provide any material support.

Despite Burmese government's brutality and even sending undercover military intelligence to bordering towns in Thailand such as Mae Sot, there are strong official and underground efforts to provide aids to displaced people from Burma as well as bringing to light the situation in Burma. I will focus on two underground efforts here. The first one is the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG: [www.khrg.org](http://www.khrg.org)) that reports on the human right issues in rural Burma by sending reporters to work directly with villagers who have been victimized by the government through forced labor, extortion, torture, sexual abuses, etc. The government has put up a reward of 500,000 kyat or 400USD on the head of each KHRG reporter but this did not deter the organization and reporters from helping their countrymen through informing the world. My teammate and I have met with two reporters in Mae Sot, a Karen woman who has resettled in Australia but returned to Mae Sot to work as KHRG project manager as soon

*(Continued on pg. 8)*

## Am I hearing what I've always wanted to hear? Secretary Clinton is sounding quite on the right track.

August 6, 2009

NAIROBI, Kenya — U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says it is a "great regret" that the United States is not a member of the International Criminal Court. The court is the first permanent institution authorized to try individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes when national courts are unable or unwilling to do so. The U.S. formally rejected U.S. participation in May 2002. A main concern was that American servicemen hunting down terrorists abroad might not be safe from politically motivated prosecutions. Clinton said it is "a great regret but it is a fact that we are not *yet* a signatory. But we have supported the court and continue to do so." (*The italics are my addition*)

### Clinton quotes from July:

"Our approach to foreign policy must reflect the world as it is, not as it used to be," Clinton said in a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations. "It does not make sense to adapt a 19th-century concert of powers or a 20th-century balance-of-power strategy. We cannot go back to Cold War containment or to unilateralism. . . . We will lead by inducing greater cooperation among a greater number of actors and reducing competition, tilting the balance away from a multi-polar world and toward a multi-partner world."

"No nation can meet the world's challenges alone. The issues are too complex. Too many players are competing for influence: from rising powers to corporations to criminal cartels; from NGOs [nongovernmental groups] to al-Qaeda; from state-controlled media to individuals using Twitter," Clinton said. "Most nations worry about the same global threats, from nonproliferation to fighting disease to counterterrorism, but also face very real obstacles for reasons of history, geography, ideology and inertia."

Clinton said that "these two facts demand a different global architecture -- one in which states have clear incentives to cooperate and live up to their responsibilities, as well as strong disincentives to sit on the sidelines or sow discord and division."

I am smiling!

*Christiaan*

(*Christiaan's Desk* from pg. 2)

well. I had heard it in Dutch, lastly in 2004, and always thought that it was translated from Bob Dylan. Back onto the computer I learned that it actually was a Dutch original. (for an English translation, go to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welterusten\\_Meneer\\_de\\_President](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welterusten_Meneer_de_President)).

I am writing this message on Hiroshima day, deeply hoping, almost against all hope, that we never have to play this song for president Obama, or for that

matter, any other presidents anywhere, now and in the future. I'll keep my fingers crossed. Meanwhile, let us start composing a song for Obama and Medvedev for the hard work ahead in their deliberations; a song of hope, wisdom, strength and inspiring statesmanship.

(*Christiaan Morssink*)

(*Countryside* from pg. 5)

bus. We told lots of stories and the whole trip became a bonding experience for the group.

The stone walkways are a giant maze around the city. We walked for over an hour through the maze and collected friends along the way, mostly teenagers with limited English asking us about the U.S. Some offered to sell us formal tours and local drinks. The colors of the East side of Ethiopia are many- Muslim Harari, Oromo

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and Somali women with bright multi-colored headscarves and men with T-shirts and skirt-like wraps. At night we visited the famous hyena man. Hyenas run the streets at night in Harar. They are bigger than dogs but run through the city at night like stray cats. The hyena-man let us help with the night feeding. I was the first to try it. I got a stick with raw meat at the end. The hyena jumped up and ate it right off the stick! It was scary! I swear it was going to tear my hand off! We promised not to make this the most talked about story from the trip. The 12 hour ride back was not only due to bad roads, but to the frequent delays caused by animal crossings. I bet we stopped at least 15 times for passing goats, donkeys, cattle, baboons, and camels. They were beautiful though and I did not mind slowing down every so often to get a glimpse of them up close. At one point it became quite dramatic as a group of young, barefoot boys, in-charge of the camels, noticed us taking pictures of their flock. They demanded money and surrounded our bus armed with sticks and rocks. They threatened to break our windows. Legase, our Ethiopian friend, leaned out the door to give them money and begged for them not to do damage to our bus. One kid saw our plethora of water bottles inside the bus and asked for water. We threw water bottles out of the bus into the field at the boys. Finally we were able to drive away damage-free. Crazy how a

group of boys under age 15 struck fear in us? I couldn't help but cry seeing a kid scramble for the water bottle. We sat the rest of the ride silent- with our water bottles, digital cameras and lives of privilege.

My mind wandered those last few hours on the bus. I couldn't slow it down. I thought about my life this last year, my family, Africa and poor children around the world. I was exhausted, emotionally and physically. I'm feeling better today, but as Michelle (one of the teachers on the trip) said, "Girl! You were a mess!"

Pickin' up my messy-self and heading out to face another day in Ethiopia. Take care.

*(Anastasia Shown)*

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*(Letter from pg. 6)*

as she obtained her Australian citizenship and a Karen man who regularly sneaks back into Burma to get the latest news about military attacks. There is a medical equivalent of KHRG, which is the Backpacks, who slips into rural Burma to provide medical services to villages.

The second effort I want to tell you about is that of the people from Burma who either live as migrant workers (legal or illegal) in Thailand or have already resettled in a third country. I have met with several people, who, like the KHRG reporter, returned to Thailand to help refugees and displaced people from Burma. These people--monks, businessmen and women, mothers and wives--leave the comfort of their

homes and family and risk their lives to help their own people because as they explain to us, "everyone in Burma is a part of my family." And then there are people like U Thant, the manager of my guesthouse. U Thant (his name is Thant and the "U" is a title of respect) was born to a single mother in Burma and was orphaned at 8 years old. He went to a university in Rangoon and took 9 years to complete due to multiple closings of his university during the uprisings and revolution. He then moved to Thailand as migrant worker, and like others, he has suffered from abuses of police and Thai owners. During all of his sufferings, U Thant understandably become depressed. What is unusual is that U Thant's therapy is helping others. Through his salary at the guesthouse and renting out rooms in his house, U Thant supports migrant schools, helps volunteers in Mae Sot, and provides food and shelter for migrant workers from Burma. U Thant did not want, and in fact avoids, recognition and publicity because he tries to maintain a low profile so he can avoid the Thai and Burmese watchdogs and continue to help people.

It is important for me to see and share with others that oppression, brutality, poverty, etc. can rob people's lives and land but they cannot suppress our humanity and love. Let's us not be intimidated or worse, indifferent.

*(Hong Truong)*

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