President’s Greetings

From Mary Day Kent’s balcony, somewhere in COLOMBIA, where she has no access to the internet. She sends greetings and her empathy.

The United Nations: Building Peace in an Age of Upheaval

UNA-USA Members’ Day at the UN

By Christiaan Morssink

On February 7, the diehards among us took the bus at 6.30AM to again participate in a day of listening, seeking coffee and eventually fighting sleep. Marietta Tanner, Carla Campbell, Diana Larisgoitia, Jesse Ferrante, Zoriana Strockyj, and Sandra Zarichny arrived in time for the sessions, which were held in the temporary General Assembly. Members Bob Groves and Charles Logan joined us at the meeting itself. According to the organizers, a group of students from the University of Pennsylvania have been volunteering, but that group stayed unbeknown to us. We did however meet up with a delegation from Drexel University, under the leadership of Joel Oestreich and Heidi West. Overall, Philadelphia was well represented.

I myself was invited to a leadership lunch sponsored by the United Nations Federal Credit Union. I was pleased to hear that the UNFCU has opened its organization to the membership of UNAUSA and all its chapters. See more elsewhere in this newsletter.

During that lunch Chris Whatley spoke, the new Executive Director of the UNA-USA. He is a forceful and insightful speaker and it will be good for our chapter to get him to be a guest this year for our re-invigorated Speakers Series.

The proceedings of the event followed the usual format. The ambassadors and the officials of the state department stayed within the script, the representatives of the NGOs spoke with more intensity and the question time was always too short. I wonder if it would be feasible to organize a more open style of debate, with more participation from the audience; a bit like you see on TV with BBC and Al Jazeera.
The leadership of UNAUSA stayed in New York for a full day of more deliberation about the organization, a meeting I could not attend. I needed to return home and had to leave by 3PM, and could not even greet our friends on the way out of the door. Since then the weather has been such that almost all attention is directed to survival and I have not heard from our delegation, including our students.

On the website of the UNAUSA are a lot of pictures and several texts about the event. It is a worthwhile trip. Next year, I hope to combine the (too late acknowledged interest) of Cheyney U, Drexel U and our volunteers to rent again a bus for the day. Much More FUN. Stay tuned.

Lucille Pilling to participate in the UNCSW.

UNA-GP member Lucille B. Pilling will serve as the provincial delegate of the Episcopal Church at the 58th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) in New York City, March 10 - 21, 2014. The 2014 priority theme of UNCSW is

Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for women and girls.

http://publicaffairs.createsend1.com/t/ViewEmail/r/66323BBCE41AF2692540EF23F30FEDED/7A75D955197642654415EB25BE999822

Lucille will be looking for opportunities to speak re women’s issues afterwards. If you are interested in meeting with her, shoot an email to info@una-gp.org with Lucille in the subject line.

From Carol Jenkins:

To: all members of UNA-GP

Re: Nominations for the Board and Committees.

The nominating committee of the UNA-GP board is accepting and reviewing nominations for new members to the 2014-2015 board, and would like to welcome any names (including your own) of members who can serve in that capacity for a two year period. The names and contact information should be sent to president@una-gp.org. The deadline for submissions is May 15, 2014, and elections will be held during the Annual Membership Meeting on June 19. Please forward your suggestions to info@una-gp.org

February, 28th 12.30-2.00PM; MacAlister Hall room 2019. Drexel University; I-Café.
Speakers Marietta Tanner, Christiaan Morssink.
Topic (tbc): Philadelphia and Nelson Mandela; Leon Sullivan, the Pan African Movement and the boycott that liberated.
Between all the snow and the school closings, the drought in California, the bullying reports regarding the NFL and the Governor’s office in Trenton, not to forget the politically laced reporting from the Olympic Games, many of us (at least me and my social circles) forgot that in all the struggles for women’s rights, the undoing of sheer physical harm is the most direct of causes. Acid attacks, gang rape, breast ironing, fistula caused pariah status, and female genital mutilation are abhorrent parts of the life stories of too many women. February 6 passed us by as just another day. Yet, we as UNA-GP members deeply involved in progressive social action should have paid attention to this call for awareness and action. Let us be awake and aware from now on.

International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

6 February

Key Facts

- An estimated 125 million girls and women alive today have been cut in 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East.
- If current trends continue, some 86 million young girls worldwide are likely to experience some form of the practice by 2030.
- FGM is mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and age 15.
- FGM can cause severe bleeding and health issues including cysts, infections, and infertility, as well as complications in childbirth increased risk of newborn deaths.
- FGM is a violation of the human rights of girls and women.
- Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons, and is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women.

For more information and action:
Stephanie Williams, J.D.
Vice President, Janus Institute For Justice
International Human Rights Law Advocate
Twitter SWilliamsJD
Websites IMPOWR
Janus Institute For Justice
Silent All These Years (Blog)
• It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes, and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. It is nearly always carried out on minors.

• The practice also violates a person’s rights to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life (when the procedure results in death).

• Though the practice has persisted for over a thousand years, programmatic evidence suggests that FGM can end in one generation. While UNICEF currently works in 22 countries on the elimination of FGM/C, since 2008 UNFPA and UNICEF have collaborated on the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Accelerating Change in 15 of those countries in West, East and North Africa.

• On 20 December 2012, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/67/146 in which it “Calls upon States, the United Nations system, civil society and all stakeholders to continue to observe 6 February as the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation and to use the day to enhance awareness-raising campaigns and to take concrete actions against female genital mutilations”.

From Christiaan’s desk.

Let’s talk snow. Mary Day Kent and hubby escaped the storms and only have to express empathy. In Japan this weekend 12 people died from an enormous snow storm, that came after last week’s snow storm. In England they wished that it snowed instead of rained, as the south of the island nation is looking at more damage from water than they ever experienced from foreign enemies. In the Netherlands, the weather is almost balmy and folks are again frustrated of another winter without a great Elfstedentocht (just Google it). Meanwhile, in California they are praying for snow, sleet, rain, hail, anything that can fall from the sky and soak the grounds and fill the reservoirs. And did you read how bad the summer is in Australia, South Africa and Argentina? Me neither.

It is clear that the United Nations and its many agencies are failing to control the weather. It is bad enough that they can’t force the Syrians to stop killing each other, or stop the terror in eastern Congo, or make chemical and nuclear weapons disappear from the arsenals in all countries, including our own US of A, but that they can’t organize a proper weather pattern worldwide, that is unacceptable. What good is a UN if it can’t get us good weather. They know what we need: gentle rains and small amounts of snow, falling during the wee hours; short periods of frost to harden the seeds and plants; daily white clouds that keep the sunlight balmy and not too hot; moderate dry spells during harvest time and no rain during the garden party. Rather simple, yet the UN fails miserably. Bah Humbug. We need to reform the UN immediately and forcefully; otherwise we Americans will need to go it alone and do our own weather. Let’s see if we can get the ball rolling on February 23rd at the FWWIC.

Meanwhile, in between storms, we keep working on Model UN conferences, the PGWI conference, our P3 soccer tournament, and, especially, under the forceful direction of Marietta Tanner, our UN Day celebration. We are working, as a sideline, with Common Cause (Pennsylvania chapter) to have a celebratory event for their 40th anniversary, where our contribution is related to the international action arm of CC. At the Global Philadelphia Association meeting we learned about many new initiatives, and UNA-GP will be participating in the planning dialogues of the Education cluster. Moreover, UNA-GP is working via the Philadelphia Global Water Initiative (PGWI) on bringing a Philadelphia Public Private Partnership for Global Water Management into the policy debates in our city.

We have been working with Drexel University on several occasions and lately we developed a relationship to participate in their I-Café. On February 28, we will be discussing the impact of Philadelphia’s Leon Sullivan on Nelson Mandela, all in the context of the Pan-African movement, anti-colonialism and anti-apartheid struggles. Marietta Tanner and I will make the link between Dubois, Robeson and Sullivan as the Philadelphians whose voices were heard worldwide. Let’s move, let’s move on, forward. No medal to expect, but the hope for a better future is only realized by hard work, strong dedication and purposeful energy. Like at the Olympics.
UN DAY 2014 Theme

“People of Faiths and the United Nations”

Board members Marietta Tanner and Christiaan Morssink are working on our plans for United Nations Day 2014, October 24th. We intend to celebrate United Nations Day in Philadelphia with an ecumenical gathering of religious congregations, including humanist organizations and individual agnostics.

This will be the 69th year for the UN -- our program will look forward to the 70th anniversary, when we hope to be well organized and able to stir the people in Philadelphia in a grand way. This year we want to create awareness about the role of the UN in stemming conflict through the Declaration of Human Rights and about its efforts to conduct dialogue between religious people, animists and agnostics in order to prevent or reduce animosity around the world. For this to become the norm, many religious groups will have to become more tolerant, and their dogmas need to curtail calls for revenge and punishment in line with universal humanitarian norms and values, and allowance for self-expression.

Marietta and Christiaan will identify representatives from these groups to join with us in developing a City-wide event on Friday, October 24. We plan a first meeting in late April where, with designated representatives of each religious group, we will outline the program with their advice and consent. We will ask each representative to present what they are already doing to help young people learn of the UN, what the adults do concerning advocacy and what they would want a City-wide event to encompass. A second meeting shall happen in June, where we will publicize the event, work on marketing and possibly have some training sessions to bring in congregants, especially the young, to be ambassadors, networking and doing outreach to spread the word, being trained possibly to do something like a Photo Voice project to photograph and interview people about their knowledge and opinion of the UN on UN Day. The final meeting would be in early September when we would complete the content of the program and its participants.

Tentatively we have ideas about holding the UN Day event at one of our largest and most beautiful religious facilities, with youth choirs participating, and having an organ recital with an outstanding young woman, one of our acquaintances, as an evening finale. The day would include having a panel of the various religious leaders expressing their ideas for global governance and peace, and including our Model UN club students presenting their research and artistic expression.

Marietta Tanner, coordinator “People of Faiths and the United Nations”
You can help the United Nations Association

Have any ideas for fundraising events? We're all ears!

With the volume of projects the UNA-GP is constantly immersed in, we are always in need of more volunteers, no matter how much or how (seemingly!) little time you have to devote. Email Manisha Patel, (Volunteer Coordinator and Board Member) with your suggestions or any questions at mpatel@una-gp.org.

The UNA-GP is in need of funds for upcoming projects. In order to continue with extremely beneficial and enriching events, such as the Model UN, we need your help! Please donate whatever you can to the UNA-GP, and in turn, Philadelphians and beyond!

Save the Date:

UNA-GP Annual Garden Party!!

July 20, 4:00 to 8:00 PM

Food, Drinks, Games, Music, Story Telling, Gossip, and Much More

Deep pockets and fat wallets needed. It is our fundraiser!!

Bring friends, Bring good humor.

See you there

Bring us a new member and we give you a hug. Our membership committee is ready soon with updated recruitment plans. Get Involved!!!!

The snow will be gone. Christiaan promised he will take care of that in time.
Our Coop Intern Ariane Heffinck has left us in early February in order to pursue a semester of study abroad. She will be in the UK till June and has promised to organize a chat about her experiences. Over the winter break she visited Liberia and she followed up with a short report about that trip. She was asked to share her impressions about the presence of the UN peace keepers in that country.

Liberia: A Nation in Recovery

By Ariane Heffinck

The Republic of Liberia (since 1847) was started by citizens of the United States as a colony for former African American slaves and their free black descendants. Following its legacy during slave times, Liberia championed other African nations to work towards independence. The small country was one of the first to sign the League of Nations, and thereafter the United Nations Charter. In addition, Liberia was very involved in the formation of the Organization of African Unity (1963, replaced by the African Union in 2002) . . . The quest for justice is overmatched by a quest for peace and calm. I think that time is a healer of sorts, but that will imply a continuation of the UN Peace Keepers on the ground and in the daily lives of Liberians for many more years. (For the complete article, please see http://una-gp.org/2014/02/17/liberia-a-nation-in-recovery/ )

Our Model UN on Water Management and MLK Day.

On January 20 UNA-GP and the H2OforLife club of Abington Senior High organized a Model UN of sorts on water management. We discussed water frugality, water harvesting, hygiene and sanitation, as well as the public investment strategies needed. Our friends from Engineers Without Borders, Steve Kim and Rupal Patel, presented and led breakout sessions. Ellyn Walters of WashAdvocates was the keynote speaker and Mary Rodgers organized the whole shebang. It was fun doing this and we will try a repeat next year. Many pictures were taken, but none have been received yet. Bummer!!

Palestine/Israel blog: Interesting blog post, probably controversial, but interesting nevertheless:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ferrari-sheppard/i-traveled-to-palestine_b_4761896.html
Please make an effort to attend our “Celebration” of International Women’s Day. This is about the fifth year that we will collaborate with International House and others for an evening of intense debate and good progressive attitudes. The Anna Crusis Women’s Choir has become a regular contributor and the events are inspiring. This is great work as always from our own Anastasia who is full of energy, has great empathy and can move mountains. Let’s win this struggle. Sisters and brothers, together.

United Nations Federal Credit Union open for UNAUSA Members

During the Membership Day at the UN, the leadership announced that the UNFCU has opened its membership to UNAUSA. This is a big deal for those who travel a lot or who have family and business relations abroad. The UNFCU works with a virtual banking system; is global in scope and has a very respectful standing among credit unions. $50 is all it takes to start and account. The Credit Union has offices on all continents and offers credit cards, mortgages, educational loans, competitive rates, and membership webinars, among other services. For more information and to learn more visit www.unfcu.org/unausa or contact the call center at 1-347-686-6000.

“The United Nations Federal Credit Union is dedicated to serving the people who serve the world by enriching the lives of its members.”
Student Poster Session
Philadelphia Global Water Initiative - 7th Annual Conference

"Urban Water Solutions in the Developing World -- Sustainable services and just policies for the poor"

April 10, 2014
Behrakis Hall, Drexel University
Philadelphia, PA

Students with well developed research topics related to this year's conference theme are invited to present their posters at Behrakis Hall, Drexel University on April 10, 2014. Poster presentations will be on an informal basis during the opening coffee hour of the conference and during the lunch intermission. During this time students will have the opportunity to interact with conference panelists, PGWI members, and attendees.

Keynote Speakers: Kusum Athukorala - Women for Water Partnership and Jeanine Cooper - Economic Commission for Africa

All selected participants will receive a complimentary ticket to the conference and following reception at the Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center.

Interested participants are asked to submit their research topics to alexmawrot@gmail.com by date for approval. Due to limited space eligible presenters will be selected on a first come first serve basis.

The UNA-GP is a chapter of the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA). Our website offers information about our mission, upcoming events, and ways to get involved, including joining and volunteering. In addition, we are on social media sites and send out our monthly newsletter. Take a look around!

Volunteers with all types of skill sets are welcome to work with the UNA-GP, in the short or long term. If interested, please contact:

Manisha Patel
Volunteer Coordinator
Board Member
mpatel@una-gp.org