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UNA-GP President Mary Day Kent sends greetings from Colombia!

All is well here except for a national truckers´ strike which blocks roads and is beginning to have serious effects on supplies of gas, basic foodstuffs, and general travel within the country. Also, we had an earthquake last week which completely escaped my notice although it was a 6.6 at the center, one state away. A good test for our brick and tile house!

Looking forward to hearing good reports on the many events coming up,

Mary Day

Mary Day Kent, President, UNA-GP
From Christiaan’s Desk

I can’t say that I am writing this text from my desk. I just finished “doing our taxes.” Doing taxes requires lots of surface space, patience from the family and a tolerance for more-than-usual clutter. It also brings on that annual reflection on how much did we pay, what is reasonable in terms of tax rates and what is justifiable. I grew up in a society that never was that much obsessed with how much taxes one pays, and most tax debates focused on how our taxes were spent.

Those two questions, how much and what for, seem to be still very strong parts of the American tax culture. Our tax-preparer is always on the look-out for any legal way to pay as little taxes as possible. That’s his reason for being in the business, he says, much more so than being a professional helper in processing the complex tax-paper work. We want to be correct when filing our taxes, so that we don’t get into punitive trouble. That’s why we need his help.

I love to discuss with our tax-advisor where we should spend those taxes. Like I would love a good chunk of that money go to equitable and full/open access education, starting with pregnant mothers, all the way to creative classes for the old-old among us. Another good chunk should be

Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), who sponsored the Strong Start for America Act in 2013, which aimed to expand access to High-Quality Early Learning Programs.
directed towards creating great, affordable, innovative housing and urban planning. After all, our character and mental outlook are in no small part shaped by our surroundings. Also, I would like to spend good money on good, modern, fast and attractive communication infrastructure, well maintained and properly adopted to the needs of special groups. Moreover I would gladly see ten percent or so of my tax dollars go to a well-integrated, well-operating public health system, in which single-payer health care services were focused on maintaining health and preventing illness, while ensuring that everyone had access to care.

And yes, I know that we need to spend some money on law-enforcement, but not that much, not that discriminatory, and not without much better influence from the community. Law-enforcement is to be of the community, in the community, not upon the community and separated by a thick blue line. And I know that we need to spend some money on prisons and imprisonment, but do we need to be the biggest spenders on prisons in the world? Prisons that have no programs to speak of that address the crucially important question how to prepare the prisoner for returning into the community of the free (?) citizens.

And yes, we need to spend money on national security. It is a sad reality. We humans still live in a world structured around nations and territories; and nations have that weird tendency to compete with each other for dominance. I wish it was a peaceful competition around sports, scientific
exploration, excellence in arts and culture. But no, we humans need weapons and organizations to protect us from violent attacks. Oh, the irony of weaponizing yourself against the weapons of others. The existence of enemies has been made part and parcel of our constitution, our mindset, our culture. The incredible impact of the military-industrial complex is partly explained by that cultural trait. In our masculine world of seeking dominance through force, we ignore two other contributing facts regarding national security. One is that good diplomacy and long-term strategic collaborations hold more promise for peace, security and prosperity than the rattling and use of the saber. The other is that continuous, unwavering, constructive support of the United Nations and the United Nations System is a major venue for securing the people and the interests of the United States. I wish that our government, regardless which party is in power, keeps the full and robust payment of the fees to the United Nations as a non-negotiable item on every annual budget, as non-negotiable as the annual budget for the congress or the white house itself, even if that would include expensive decorations.

So I asked my tax advisor for some assistance in prioritizing the expenditure of my taxes. He looked bewildered and perplexed. That was not what tax advisors do he said. You have to go to the politicians and the political system, he said. And then he added: “They do listen, even the politicians on the Supreme Court; witness the Koch Brothers.” ARGGGHHH!!

Senator Mike Pompeo (R-KS), who supports US military expansion and further weaponization to eliminate threats and keep Americans safe

US Vice President Joe Biden meets Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing
UNA-GP’s newly formed Membership Committee has been meeting regularly with a mission of mobilizing the community in becoming more involved in the local chapter. Membership support helps in bringing programming for the local community, its schools and university students. Some of the other objectives of the committee are to keep its members more connected to world issues through participation in Chapter events as well as get them involved in UNA-USA/UN programs and grow local support for the ideals and work of the UN in Philadelphia’s community.

Manisha Patel
mpatel@una-gp.org

Online Platform for Gender Equality Training

UN Women has created an online platform for training on gender equality. They offer a number of free self-paced courses that equip participants with the tools that they would need to integrate a gender perspective in everyday life. With these courses the organization aims to use learning as a means to advance gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s rights. The courses gives an introduction to gender concepts and highlights the different areas in which the UN is working to advance gender equality. Some of the self-paced courses that UN Women include:

- I Know Gender: An Introduction to Gender Equality for UN Staff
- Aid Effectiveness from a Gender Perspective
- Rights and Needs of Women in Border Management
- Rights and Needs of Women in Prisons

Home: SELF-PACED

Although the course is intended for UN staff members, it is open to anyone who wants to improve their knowledge on gender issues. Participation in the course also allows you to print a certificate or feature it on your resume. The online courses can be accessed at the above link.
In 2011 case, Malaysian woman won principle discrimination lawsuit based on CEDAW principles

Several years ago, the Malaysian Ministry of Education, responding to a shortage of trained teachers in the country, decided to implement a program by which they would hire untrained teachers to serve on a temporary basis. In 2009, a Malaysian woman, Noorfadilla Saipin, interviewed for the position and several months later, was offered the job.

While she was attending a group meeting for those hired into the program, the program coordinator asked anyone present whether or not she was pregnant. At the time, Noorfadilla was in fact three months pregnant. After raising her hand (along with two other women), the coordinator immediately revoked the letter, or placement memo, granting her the position. When prompted by Noorfadilla’s husband to explain why she had lost the position, the Ministry listed four main reasons:

- The recovery period between the time of delivery to full health after giving birth was too long;
- A pregnant woman might not be able to attend to her job due to various health reasons;
- When she gives birth she would have to be replaced by a new teacher who will require further briefings; and
- Her post could not be filled by a “replacement” teacher.

The Ministry added that the point of Noorfadilla’s position in the program was to “overcome the shortage of teachers and not add to the problem.” However, instead of resigning herself to the decision, Noorfadilla decided to fight it.

It took two years before the case was brought to court. Finally, in 2011 the judge ruled on her behalf.

To read the rest of this piece or other editions of Lana’s blog, please visit the UNA-GP website.
Last summer, two members of the UNAGP team, Arame Niang and Sabine Cardio went to Kumasi, Ghana for a four week international development program at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. During their time there they were able to attend lectures given by Ghanaian professors and professionals as well as, for three days each week, volunteer at the Kumasi Children’s Home. There they spent lots of time with teachers and students at the primary school that was located in the home. After returning to the United States, Arame and Sabine, as well as another student from the University of Pennsylvania and two students from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology decided to raise funds for the school that was achieving monumental successes in caring for its students.

The primary school located in the Kumasi Children’s Home has the first and only inclusive special needs education program in Kumasi, Ghana. The school has been about five years old and has already achieved great advancements, including the addition of a school van to transport special needs kids from their homes to the school. Madame Shirley, who is the current headmistress of the school, and other teachers at KCH are worthy of praise for all they have done and all they continue to do for their students.

For more information about the campaign and to donate please visit:  
http://www.gofundme.com/iit0mk
Our third annual Rule of Law Conference lifted off emphatically at the end of last month. Huntsman Hall and the University of Pennsylvania proved to be a great venue, situating us in the forum of the building. We really capitalized on the open area, and spread out in our smaller breakout discussions, organically and easily.

Shujaa Graham, a representative from Witnesses to Innocence, framed our topic for this year, *International Systems of Incarceration*, with his keynote speech. Drawing from his own life, he spoke about the inside of the American incarceration system, his fight against a wrongful accusation, and his eventual exoneration from death row. It sent a powerful message to all watching. It also endowed the rest of the day with a sense of urgency and inspiration.

We split the rest of the conference in two different parts. The first, using case studies, explored the ideas of the Rule of Law when applied to different case studies. The second half of the day made use of breakout sessions, as well as a final plenary session to come together and draft a combined resolution. Each group looked at a different country and a specific problem area. And displaying remarkable critical thinking and insight, they came up with some great suggestions for both the International Criminal Court, and the countries in which the systems of incarceration were located.

Our endnote speaker was Jondhi Harrell, the founder for the Center for Returning Citizens. He also drew from personal experiences to really summarize and highlight the ideas of justice, and social equality especially when considering Incarceration.

Many thanks to Dr. Christiaan Morssink for coming up with the topic for the year, the team at the UNAGP who worked tirelessly to bring this conference to fruition, the teachers from the different schools who attended and who worked with us in the weeks leading to the conference, and lastly to the students themselves for learning, considering, engaging, and debating the crucial principle of the Rule of Law.
On March 6th, women from across the Greater Philadelphia area came together to celebrate International Women’s Day through presentations, performances and discussions about women’s issues. This year’s event focuses on immigrant rights, women and children’s rights, and the impact of immigration policies and enforcement in the United States and abroad. It was an evening to remember, and we hope to see you at our International Women’s Day event next year!
Police face off against protestors in front of Ferguson police station in Ferguson, MO.

Organized by the United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia
Net proceeds will go to Shot@Life. For more information: www.shotatlife.org

To donate directly, click here.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location/info</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habitat III Subcommittee Meeting</td>
<td>April 7th</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>5:00PM</td>
<td>Friends Center Mott Room 1501 Cherry St, Philadelphia, PA 19102</td>
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<td></td>
<td>All members interested are welcome to attend.</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Public Health Week: Shots 4 Shots Campaign</td>
<td>April 9th</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>6:00PM - 9:00 PM</td>
<td>Tavern on Broad 200 South Broad Street Philadelphia, PA 19102</td>
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<td>½ off drinks, $4 signature shots, $10 cover charge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th Annual Membership Meeting</td>
<td>June 24th</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>5:30 PM - 8:00 PM</td>
<td>TBA, Most likely the Carriage House at the University of Pennsylvania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garden Party</td>
<td>July 19th</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>TBA, Usually at a member’s house in northwest Philadelphia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNA-GP Board Meeting</td>
<td>August 20th</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>5:30PM - 7:00PM</td>
<td>TBA All members are welcome to attend.</td>
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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!

The UNA-GP March 2015 newsletter is a collaborative effort:
- Layout and design editor: Carolyn Curry
- Board liaison: Ed Gracely
- President: Mary Day Kent
- Executive Director: Christiaan Morssink

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 and upcoming events, and ways to get involved, including joining and volunteering. In addition, we are on social media sites and send out our monthly newsletters. 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

You can help the United Nations Association!

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