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Stay abreast of the UN five days per week with UN Wire. You can receive it free in your inbox here.
Leadership Changes Afoot at UNA-GP

Our new leadership team, Manisha Patel and Carol Jenkins, chaired the board meeting on December 20th. The board accepted a motion to “Wish all members of the UNA-GP a most prosperous, peaceful and healthy 2017” and expressing the hope to increase our membership exponentially. Please become our recruiters. Peace to you all.

THANK YOU, MARY DAY!!

Mary Day Kent, our now immediate past president, after four years at the helm.

Manisha Patel (left) and Carol Jenkins (right)
This week our heating system failed, and of course just during that nasty cold spell. The technician could not come till the next day and we scrambled to have some electrical heaters in the basement to keep the pipes from freezing, and we huddled around the fireplace (EPA approved fireplace inserts have a great efficiency ratio and only use ‘renewable’ energy). The temperature in the living room dropped to 51 degrees. Luckily the hot water supply was not effected and hot showers and triple layered clothing kept us comfortable enough.

Watching the desperate plight of the children in the cold of winter in Aleppo, that short exposure of domestic discomfort was enough to re-double my fury towards politicians, maniacal “professional” soldiers, politicians, sectarian absolutists, politicians, murdering sociopaths, politicians, criminal gangs (I may have said politicians a few times, sorry for the repetition), who have made a slaughterhouse out of a political disagreement. What is done to the families in Aleppo is not only heart-breaking, it is a never-to-be-prosecuted crime against humanity, executed by uniformed criminals who are so well armed that no UN Police Force, nor the ICC can get to the point of holding these beasts accountable. Moreover, the arm traders from the USA, Russia, China, France, Britain, Israel, The Netherlands, among others, are having good sales, and will wash the blood of their hands and that on the hands of their shareholders with impunity. Bah Humbug.

The UN includes --by definition-- all nations that represent a sovereign political piece of real estate and where that sovereignty is acknowledged by others. All members of the UN have agreed to abide by its charter and by the treaties that they have ratified. Sadly, the UN was never empowered with real tools to maintain peace, or enforce dialogue between bellicose entities. It also was never charged with a mandate to interfere in violent unrest within a nation. And it was not at all equipped to handle the international violence and warfare that emanates from non-governmental entities, which we have learned to label terrorists.
More importantly, the big boys in the UN have developed an attitude of using, abusing, and ignoring the UN as they see fit. For them, playing for dominance on the world stage is worth spending billions on weapons, maintaining a primitive mindset among well trained warriors, espousing that War Is The Answer, and getting shamelessly involved in the killing of innocents, whether by drone or barrel bomb, whether by hunger, disease or bullet. The use of the word shame in the hall of the Security Council is deceitful and useless. These politicians understand power, not shame. They don’t have any.

Ban Ki-Moon is triste; he did great work during his tenure, but with Aleppo in mind, realizes that his pleas on behalf of humanity have fallen on deaf ears in Teheran, Washington, Moscow, Bagdad, and London, Paris, Damascus, and Tripoli, Tel Aviv, Islamabad, Khartoum, Juba, Riyadh. The new Secretary General, Antonio Guterres will have an awfully large amount of mostly ugly issues on his plate. I wish him well, and I am oh so hoping for a fantastically good rapport between him and our new ambassador to be, Nikki Haley. Our Mantra: KEEP HOPE ALIVE

And on that note, witnessing the capacity of most humans to compartmentalize their emotions, their time, and their rationality, I wish you, with tip of the hat to Donald Trump, Fox news and the empowered Alt Right: “MERRY CHRISTMAS” and a happy new year.
A Few Words From Our Volunteer Coordinator and President

UNA-GP’s Membership Committee has been meeting regularly in preparation for this year's Model UN conferences and could use your help! Membership support helps in bringing programming for the local community, its schools and university students. Members are more connected to world issues through their participation in Chapter events and their involvement in UNA-USA/UN programs. They grow local support for United Nations ideals and its work in Philadelphia's community.

Manisha Patel
mpatel@una-gp.org

Spotlight on Human Rights

Southern Poverty Law Center

Based in Montgomery, Alabama, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)—describes itself as “fighting hate, teaching tolerance and seeking justice”. SPLC was founded in 1971 with an initial mission of ensuring that the promise of the civil rights movement became a reality for all. Among its many activities is monitoring “Hate Groups” around the country. As of this writing, SPLC says there are 892 such groups in the United States, 40 of which are in Pennsylvania. SPLC is very active in countering such groups through investigative reports, training law enforcement officers as well as sharing key intelligence and expert analysis about such groups to the media and public. SPLC has a rich history of litigating civil rights cases to protect the most vulnerable. Its current priorities are: children's rights, economic justice, immigrant justice, LGBT rights, and mass incarceration. Through its “teaching tolerance” initiative, SPLC is very pro-active in promoting human rights education in schools and other settings. It offers many free resources for educators at all levels. SPLC provides regular updates to those interested through online newsletters that are free to all.
Students Learn about Water Rights

By Thomas McKeon

A glimpse into the activities around our Education Programs:

We are busy prepping high school students for the Alternative Model UN Conference on Water Stewardship on MLK day. Here is a brief report from Tom McKeon from one of those interactions.

With a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals on Water (number 6 of the SDG), environmental science students at Parkway NW High School for Peace and Social Justice have been learning about different sources of contamination in our drinking water, and the lessons go hopefully beyond the classroom, with the ultimate goal the formation of a Water Club at the school that can bring community service locally under the big banner of the UN’s SDGs. Facilitated by the teacher, Mr. Glen, the environmental science class is working with students from the University of Pennsylvania to learn about current and past water quality issues impacting people in Philadelphia and around the world. Together with fellow UPenn student Jedidiah Dale I visited Mr. Glen’s class for 45 minutes for the past three Friday’s talking about biological, pharmaceutical and industrial sources of contamination. The enthusiasm is clear. After learning about water pollution problems, students broke into small groups to brainstorm obstacles and approaches to eliminating water contamination. The students are preparing themselves for the annual Water Model UN Conference to be held on January 16th 2017, MLK Jr. Day. The Conference is an empowering event, where youth from several high schools from the greater Philadelphia area will come together to debate solutions to the pollution struggles affecting our drinking water and stand for improving access to safe water FOR ALL. Our immediate hope is that the students attending the conference will use the opportunity to write a petition to policy makers at the federal, state and local level, challenging them to stay on track in maintaining clean water initiatives and not to mess around. Flint is indeed a wake-up call.

It takes patience and persistence to get the students from the High School for Peace and Social Justice to create a living Peace Symbol. Yet the message is clear. WE DEMAND PEACE!!
Our Right to Education

By Bob Groves

In honor of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Association-Greater Philadelphia Chapter (UNA-GP) placed a special focus this year on Article 26—our Right to Education. On December 8 over 60 persons gathered at The Ethical Society of Philadelphia to engage with an outstanding group of panelists who provided both global and local perspectives. Andrea Townrow, Executive Director of Women’s Campaign International provided a compelling overview of her group’s work educating women for leadership roles in Liberia, Afghanistan and Timor Leste as well a special initiative with high school girls in Philadelphia. The grassroots interfaith group POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower and Rebuild) combined passionate oratory and passionate data on the need for a much improved public school fair-funding formula in Pennsylvania. The presentations of Sheila Armstrong and David Mosenkis made it crystal clear that the educational resources a child has or does not have in Pennsylvania are linked most closely with the level of poverty and racial composition of their community. Philadelphia City Councilwoman Helen Gym spoke eloquently about the tremendous importance of community organizing and engagement to achieve justice and equity for all in public education. She made it clear that far more is needed than online petitions in today’s world. Ms. Gym inspired the attendees to help create a groundswell of citizen demands for the basic right to education so Philadelphia City Council and other legislative bodies have no choice but to make policies that serve all equally.
Children Are the Barometer

By Christiaan Morssink

Our life time board member Marietta Tanner published her book earlier this year, reflecting on her professional encounters with students in the urban environments of the Bronx, NY in the seventies and eighties. The body of the text narrates six stories of students, highlighting different aspects of troubles in the living conditions with which these children had to cope, often resulting in scaring their psyches with emotional reactivity that most communities cannot handle or tolerate; yet these same communities and their institutions were also not equipped/funded/prepared to intervene pro-actively to stem and correct the abuses that these children endured early in their development. Marietta laments how the pipeline to prison has developed, through insanely heavy sentencing and police practices, into a mass-incarceration system, unique in the western world, and designed to keep a good number of our urban neighbors in a state of underclass with underclass behaviors and values and very little opportunity to escape. They are structurally violated.

Reading Marietta’s reflections and observations makes me sad. Forty years passing by and the stories of the students of today are the same as in the seventies. Worse, in many ways the despair of poor urban black communities is more acute, with policing now enforced with military style equipment, schools with metal detectors and a behavioral drill mentality that befits the rules of prisons. Truancy officials and social workers who need to “go by the book”, are understaffed and given few or no tools to counteract the onslaught of economic, political and social neglect. The worst is that we cry foul over school shootings, bombardments of neighborhoods, the “illegality” of many a young immigrant, the sudden peaks in death from dangerous drugs or other incidents that “spark” our empathy for a moment, but we don’t seem to care of the structural violence that we as a system impose on the weak in our neighborhoods, our cities, our nations, our continents.

Marietta’s book gives a glimpse into the frustrations of one teacher, one dedicated believer in the rights of the child. I am sure that her story can be repeated by hundreds of thousands of teachers who work in public education systems that are beholden to political machinations and fluctuations, where the public education is never fully embraced as a right for all in the whole of each nation; where the powers-that-are make sure that the brood of the well-the-do is kept ahead in a system of private or exclusionary school systems. Damn the rest. What Marietta described in the Bronx, is, in all kind of forms, done to the children in Karachi, Dakar, Accra, Cairo and Bamenda. The right to education must be the right to quality education for and with each child; and the right to that quality education cannot and should not be treated as separate from the right to safe housing, safe water, and fair labor conditions. All impact on the rights of the child.
SAVE THE DATE: Friday, February 17, 2017

Members’ Day at the UN is one of the most important gatherings for UNA-USA during the year, and is a great opportunity for members to network with fellow UN supporters from around the country and hear from top UN voices. UNA-USA members and UN supporters will meet at the UN Headquarters to participate in a day of dynamic and informative discussion on the most pressing issues facing the United Nations. Members will get exclusive access to the UN, where they will hear from experts on topics like refugees and sustainable development, and network with community leaders, academics and students, and representatives from think tanks and like-minded organizations.

Online registration begins on December 1, 2016. Admission is on a first-come, first-served basis. Check here for updated as details and information.

Thank you to those who participated last year in what was the largest gathering of UN supporters in the U.S. on a single day. It is exactly the kind of dedication the UN needs as it looks to take bold action and create a more sustainable world for us all.

Pre-Members' Day briefings will held on Thursday, February 16, 2017 in New York City. Please book travel accordingly.
## UNA-GP Upcoming Events

<table>
<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>Model UN Conference on Water</td>
<td>January 16th</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Join us for our college-student led conference that replicates the modern United Nations consulting system, giving high school students a chance to debate international issues. Interested in attending the conference or getting involved? Learn more <a href="#">here</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNA-GP Board Meeting</td>
<td>February 4th</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>10:00AM</td>
<td>All are welcome to attend. Location: Friends Center, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member's Day at the UN</td>
<td>February 17th</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Join us in New York City, where UNA-USA members and UN supporters will meet at the UN Headquarters to participate in a day of dynamic and informative discussion on the most pressing issues facing the United Nations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNA-GP Board Meeting</td>
<td>April 5th</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>5:30PM</td>
<td>All are welcome to attend. Location: Friends Center, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia PA</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 involved in, we are always in need of 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 questions any time at mpatel@una-gp.org.

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

If this newsletter was forwarded or shared with you, you can get your own subscription and keep up with our chapter's activities! Sign up on our website.

The UNA-GP January newsletter is a collaborative effort:

- Layout and design editor: Carolyn Curry
- Board Liaison: Ed Gracely
- President: Manisha Patel
- 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 volunteering and becoming a member. Please take a look at our social media accounts and monthly newsletters!

Volunteers with all types of skill sets are welcome to work with the UNA-GP, short or long term. If interested, please contact Manisha Patel, Volunteer Coordinator and President, at mpatel@una-gp.org

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