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THE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

An Ode for International Toilet Day
Sanitation and a lack thereof is a very serious for many people around the world, and celebrating World Toilet Day is a great way to spread awareness
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Upcoming Youth Conferences
We are constantly trying to engage others and teach world citizenship. Learn about how we are working with Philadelphia high schoolers in the coming year.
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Stay abreast of the United Nations five days per week with UN Wire.
You can receive it free in your inbox here.
I am in Atlanta, at the annual conference of the American Public Health Association. The theme this year is “Climate Changes Health.” I was most pleased to read yesterday that Syria now has signed the Paris Climate Agreement, leaving the bullying USA standing as a lone fool. Also, I am mighty pleased to read and hear the many reports about positive actions being taken by local and state governments and commerce to deal with climate concerns. For example, in Atlanta I pass by a parking lot, where large solar panels collect energy while protecting cars from the sun and rain. The Atlanta congress center is Silver Leed Certified. Our hotel has water saving toilets; and so it goes on.

I also visited the booth of the UNA-USA, and shook hands with Wesley Rogerson of the UN Foundation and Toyshebia of the Atlanta chapter. It gave me pause, as it was in Atlanta that I became connected to the UNA system. It was at the APHA conference of 2001, November, not even two months after the 9/11 attack. At that APHA exhibition I met a group that promoted the Nobel Prize winning Adopt-a-Minefield Campaign. In 2001 I just had had two operations for melanoma and was undergoing chemo treatment. Not knowing how long I had to live, I was interested in doing something small and definitive, and the Adopt a Minefield Campaign fitted well. The folks in Atlanta told me to connect with one David Eldridge, president of the UNA-GP. Back in Philly, I met David at a book signing event of Craig Eisendrath. David directed me to Joan Reivich, who, together with Mike Felker and Joy Harbeson led the Philly committee. And so it started. Now I am pleased that we find one of my former student mentees, Nalat Phanit, in leadership at the UNA Atlanta. Returning the favor, it feels.

Meanwhile, being at this conference about Public Health, and reading how health is a major issue for most American voters, at least in Virginia and New Jersey, and DC, and Maine, I think that our Human Rights Day topic on Health Care Insurance systems is most timely. I congratulate Bob Groves for putting together a great panel, whose members will debate two, basically positive, models for insurance. While we are debating these models against an old and outlived employer-based model, the World Health Organization and the PAHO are ranking health outcomes (measured as life expectancy at birth) of nations against the presence of universal health care coverage or free health care coverage or none. As we all know, within the OECD countries, we Americans are doing not well at all. Even worse, our health inequities by race, class, place, ethnicity and education levels are rather spectacular. The worst part in the American debate on health care coverage is the incredible unwillingness, fed by a proud but dumb exceptionalism I fear, to look abroad, to look for comparisons and best practices elsewhere. The same seems to be holding for the opioid epidemic, as well as the gun violence and gun control debates. If leading politicians like Ryan can state that praying is the right thing do (and he means also the only thing), we make all
From Christiaan’s Desk (cont.): politicians and peoples elsewhere shake their head in sheer bewilderment. For me, we use the United Nations System to work in and to learn from. I see our role in Philadelphia as making sure that the citizens of our city and region will apply a global mindset, a global perspective, when dealing with our local problems. The UNA-GP is hell-bent on making Philadelphia a great, healthy, smart and equitable city, with deep regard for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with a focus on curbing climate change right here at home, and with a realization that mother earth bestows life for all of us, until we abuse our rights for that life once too many times. I think we are on the threshold of this realization. Let’s get on board and start work in our own backyard right now.

An Ode to the Throne

In a few days, we "celebrate" World Toilet Day. On November 19, the world will reflect again on the huge disparities in hygiene facilities and the need to keep working towards assuring that everybody has access to safe and clean "johns." In that vein, it is with pleasure to read of a new initiative in Germany. Women there have complained long about the lack of publicly available toilets, as compared to men. Aware of that discrepancy, local governments started to explore building more facilities for women. Building such lavatories, however is not cheap. Also, in the modern cities eateries and restaurants and coffee shops dot the urban landscape, each with mandated facilities for their clients. Thus, administrators from these cities sat down with the owners and reached a win-win deal. The shop owners are paid an annual stipend for making their facilities available to the public. They keep doing what they were already doing, and the governments have no other headache than providing some moneys for this "service." I love win-win solutions. May we all pee in pleasant and clean surroundings. Be grateful for your throne on this World Toilet Day 2017.

It’s always calm near the throne;
Homework was made and creative ideas unleashed;
Splendor was not a thought and ‘t was always cool if not cold;
With windows open and ventilation improved;
Birthday calendars hanging on eye level;
As to not forget who to mail a card or buy a present;
Niagara was printed on the cistern high;
Having visited the real falls, an exaggeration indeed;
Nevertheless, a throne it was and a democratic one at that;
Build to flush whosoever’s excrements were deposited;
Carrying weights of many variations;
Fear only if the frame is small and tiny;

Now we embellish the surroundings of our thrones;
A whole room is made for it and splendid furniture abounds;
Some have several in their homes and none bang on doors;
Demanding their own moment of reflection during exertion;
We will never know how much our throne has maintained our health;
No need to contemplate indeed;
Yet, every traveler knows, wherever we go;
A throne nearby is what we need.
Open Letter to Philadelphians
Re: Paris Climate Agreement and the need for Local and State action, a request for pro-active policy

Philadelphia, November 12, 2017

On November 7, while we were voting (hopefully), the USA became the only country on this planet not to support the framework accord on global climate action, the Paris Climate Agreement. On that day Syria became the last signatory to that agreement other than the USA.

We at the United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia (UNA-GP) are baffled and distressed by the (in)actions of our federal leaders regarding climate change and climate action. We see the UN work on climate change as essential for human survival and as a most needed bullhorn for urging progressive actions at all levels. That action is one of the most relevant parts of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and we seek to harness those goals by policies small and large and at all levels of our societies.

In that context we embrace the initiative of the UNA-USA, and the World Federation of UNAs, to promote the SDGs as relevant everywhere, under the slogan: “Global Goals, Local Leaders.” On United Nations Day, October 24, 2017 we had the pleasure of hearing Susan Biniaz, a senior Fellow of the UN Foundation. She spoke about what can be done locally in terms of climate action. She authored a very practical article, using her own slogan “Act Locally, Reflect Globally,” for use by cities and states everywhere to organize, unite, and move forward together. A copy of her article can be found here.

We at the UNA-GP are pleased with the many green and forward-thinking steps that the city has started to make, and we believe that Philadelphia is on the right track. This letter is meant to urge you as leaders of the city, of companies large and small, of networks of policy making, to broaden that track, to increase the speed on that track and to expand the data bases we will need to make decisions when there are obstacles on that track. We stand ready to walk, run, race, along that track together. On that track for preventing global climate change and producing sustainable economic development for the good of all mankind there are only winners, early winners some, but winners all. Count us in.

Onward,

Christiaan Morssink, PhD
Executive Director
Can Health Care Ever Be a Human Right in the US?

December 7th, 2017

On December 7th, UNA-GP will, along with many others throughout the world, recognize the 69th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Each year, we focus on one of the 30 rights established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), written and published in 1948 under the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt. This year, our program will address the right to health care for all Americans. What is the best path to pursue that will get our country closest to the goal of comprehensive, quality care for all Americans simply because they are human? Two views will be presented: one supportive of a single payer system and the other on the side of reforms of the Affordable Care Act. The program will be held at The Philadelphia Ethical Society located at 1906 Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, 19103, from 5:30 to 8:00 pm. The program is free, and food and drinks will be provided. Mark your calendars now and attend a lively exchange of views on the fundamental question facing all those who support the human right to health care. Look for more details in the coming months.

Global Water Alliance’s Water Conference

Call for Abstracts

The Global Water Alliance’s 11th annual conference with the theme of “Groundwater, the Hidden and Disappearing Resource: Global Focus and Examples from Sub-Saharan Africa” is coming up on April 5th, 2018 at Villanova University’s College of Engineering. This all-day conference (9am to 4 pm) will include panel discussions, poster presentations, and network opportunities. A job market stand for prospective employers and research institutes is planned. Continuing Education Credits are available for some professions. As of now we are looking for abstracts of projects hoping to be featured at the conference. Additional information on how to submit your abstract, as well as general information about the conference can be found here. We will have more details as the even draws nearer. Mark your calendars and keep an eye out for further information. To receive regular email updates from GWA about Conferences, symposia and volunteer opportunities, write to info@globalwateralliance.net
Upcoming High School Conferences

As we often say here at UNA-GP, education is the key to change, and, as everyone knows, the young will be the ones to change the world. Fitting with this vision, one of our main projects in the year is putting on conferences for Philadelphia high school students. We want to help them be engaged in global goings-on, to teach them a certain sense of global citizenship and to encourage them to change the world. They have the will; we just want to help provide a platform for discussion.

February 24th, 2017: Rights of the Child

Our first conference in the new year will be centered around the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Just as nearly every country came together to discuss the inalienable rights of every child, Philadelphian students will come together to learn about and examine current issues surrounding children closer to home. With a series of expert speakers and breakout sessions for closer debate, we hope to educate the next generation of global citizens about this important topic.

April 1st, 2017: Disarmament and Citizen Safety

Our second conference tackles the very applicable theme of disarmament. In a world so sadly plagued by violence, there are a number of levels on which to discuss disarmament. We want to address the current issues of nuclear weapons as well as gun control, as both of these topics are relevant to current events. Paying specific attention to how this affects Philadelphia’s youth, participants will have a chance to reassess and solidify their own beliefs about weapon accessibility and use while engaging in discussion about how those beliefs affect their local and global communities.

If you are interested, or know high school students or teachers that may be interested, more information is available on our website and here for the Rights of the Child conference.
Upcoming Events: at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location and Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can Health Care Ever Be a Human Right in the United States?</td>
<td>December 7th</td>
<td>5:30—8:00 pm</td>
<td>Philadelphia Ethical Society (1906 S. Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundwater, the Hidden and Disappearing Resource: Global Focus and Examples from Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>April 15th, 2018</td>
<td>9:00 am—4:00 pm</td>
<td>Villanova University's College of Engineering</td>
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Spotlight on Human Rights, November 2017

Bureau of Investigative Journalism  [https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/](https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/)

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism is based in London and sees itself as an “Independent, non-profit media organisation that holds power to account”. It address a broad range of issues and places a very strong emphasis on human rights. Some of the Bureau's key areas of human rights concern are the Migration Crisis, Privatized Warfare, CIA torture, Counterterrorism, the Surveillance State and Drone Warfare. It has become one of the world’s most authoritative sources on the extent of drone warfare by the United States. The Bureau's investigations and coverage have helped force greater transparency by the U.S., and other countries, about the number and location of drone strikes as well as civilian deaths. Some of the other areas of focus are corporate and police behavior, fake news, as well as food and drugs. Via its website the Bureau offers a regular online newsletter. It also offers the public, journalists, and whistleblowers safe ways to provide important information or suggest new stories.

UNA-GP 2017 Board Members

All Board Members can be reached through info@una-gp.org.

- Manisha Patel, President
- Carol Jenkins, Vice-President
- Ed Graeley, Secretary
- Barbara Nolan, Treasurer
- Enid Adler, focus area ICC
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- Louis Bolling, focus area PR and Sports
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- Lucille Pilling, focus area Global Health
- Prachi Potdar, focus area Human Rights
- Nick Sanders, focus area Advocacy
- Ashley Session, focus area Education & GenUN
- Anastasia Shown, focus area Women’s Day
You can help the United Nations Association!

Please donate whatever you can to the UNA-GP, and in turn, Philadelphians and beyond!

Have any ideas for fundraising events? We're all ears! We are always in need of volunteers, no matter how much or how (seemingly!) little time you have to devote. 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

The UNA-GP is a chapter of the United Nations Association of the United States of American (UNA-USA). Our website offers information about our mission and upcoming events, and ways to get involved, including volunteering and becoming a member.

Visit our website at www.una-gp.org
Check out our social media at www.facebook.com/UNAGP and www.twitter.com/UNAGP
Our office is located at 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

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.