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Spotlight on Human Rights

Learn more about our human rights organization of the month: The American Friends Service Committee
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Human Rights: The Healthcare Challenge

Read about our lively discussion about public options of healthcare in the United States; hosted in honor of UN Human Rights Day on December 7th
Page 3

UNA-GP Annual Board Meeting

It’s that time of year again. We had our annual meeting on December 14th, and reports and next years tentative calendar of events are now available:
Page 5, calendar of events on 6
From Christiaan’s Desk
A Few Words from our Executive Director

I am experiencing mental anguish of late. Part of me wants to be elated by the fact that my government is going to lower my taxes so that I can have about $4.00 each day more to put away in my savings account. I am not going to spend that of course, because with the economy rolling on nicely after Obama’s eight years of close collaboration with Wall Street and, oh also, Main Street, it would be unwise to overheat the economy with spending those four bucks daily. I never minded paying taxes, even more taxes; I minded what these taxes were spent on. And that’s what irks me and should irk any citizen anywhere in the world. It infuriates me that the important things that need to be done to keep our society(ies) great, safe, and free, are not done. My government ignores public transportation, education, housing, public health, bridges, sustainable agriculture, sustainable energy; instead my government focuses on building walls, and armies, and prisons, and nuclear arsenals, and re-explores fossil fuels. And that troubles me.

I am also depressed and upset that my government is not only engaged in discrediting scientists and the news reporters, it is actually censoring its own public servants and scientists. Large portions on governmental websites have been removed, and now I am dismayed to learn that our own CDC, which has a worldwide presence, has been given a menu of at least seven banned words: "diversity," "fetus," "transgender," "vulnerable," "entitlement," "science-based" and "evidence-based." We have science deniers in the halls of power!!! Science deniers. That is almost worse than fake science, something that eugenics and fascists like to engage in. Instead our government is, without any proof and only because of populist expediency, throwing the label “fake news” around with abandon, while heaping praise on the propagandists in the media. Images of the thirties are forming in my mind; anguish indeed.

Belittling “fake news” has consequences on a global scale, where many governments, friendly governments like in Russia, are holding more than 250 journalists in jails. At least 49 journalists were murdered in 2016 and I await with gloom the tally for 2017. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) describes a terrible fear for the demise of good journalism and news reporting globally; a most relevant part of any democracy. Indeed, my four dollars per day need not be saved; it needs to be spend on fighting for democracies at home and abroad. My money will go to the CPJ, and my body and soul will be used to fight for restoring and enabling democracy at home and create a “decent society” where human rights for all are to be respected and applied.

In that vein, let me embellish. On December 7, we had health care insurance as the theme for our Human Rights Day event; a week later, on Dec. 12, designated “International Universal Health Coverage Day”, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was urging countries to invest in health care systems that are sustainable and inclusive. And he cited the World Health Organization and the World Bank reports, that health care costs drive close to 100 million people into extreme poverty each year. I can attest to how important universal health care coverage is for the wellbeing of individuals and families. It so happened that on December 7 I was in Holland discussing the care situation and options for my 93-year old mother. The doctor came (that’s right the doctor came, as well as the social care manager), and we, the children, and my mother went through an hourlong conversation around the coffee table. Later we organized administrative details and my sister signed some papers and then we had coffee with cake. Money was never mentioned. Insurance was never mentioned. Those issues are unimportant in these decisions, because of universal health care AND the acceptance by all of the people of the rights and obligations that flow from belonging and being a citizen of the state. All countries that score high on the “happiness index” have universal health care systems, one way or another.

Overall, my anguish is a bit overblown, I think. There is lots of work to be done, but/and I can (still) do it. And It is great that the work can be done with many volunteers and students, with others who are bundling their own anguish into political activism. Our energy gets multiplied by good team work and uplifting camaraderie. The work is progressive, forward looking, never-ending, and transferable through place and time. It doesn’t tire me. So I am looking forward to an active 2018 AND working with you all some more. Let’s celebrate diversity and the human rights of transgender people, make the vulnerable less vulnerable, use science-based approaches to assure proper entitlements and let our political choices in 2018 be driven by evidence-based facts. And, sorry expecting moms, you can only vote once, for yourself or for your fetus, but not for each.

Happy Holidays and all the best for the new year.
Can Health Care Ever Be a Human Right in the United States? This was the question addressed by 3 outstanding speakers and a panel discussion on December 7. The UNA-GP program was held at the Ethical Society of Philadelphia to recognize the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Before an audience of over 60 people, two views were presented. Allison Hoffman, JD, Professor of Law at Penn Law School, argued that reform of the Affordable Care Act (ACA/ObamaCare) offers the most viable route to the elusive goal of providing quality care for anyone who lives in the United States. Gene Bishop, MD and graduate student, Tony Spadaro, both from Penn’s School of Medicine and Physicians for a National Health Program, argued on behalf of single payer system such as those that already exist in 58 countries.

Professor Hoffman indicated her preference for single payer if the U.S. were to be starting from scratch. However, she indicated that all countries with universal coverage have achieved this through unique paths of their own providing examples from the United Kingdom, France and others. In her view, the history, culture and powerful private interests in the U.S. preclude a speedy reorganization of our health system along single payer lines. Some of the ACA upon which to build toward universal coverage are dramatic increases in health insurance coverage—reaching all-time highs—and improved quality of coverage such as requiring all policies to include 10 essential health benefits. The provision of Medicaid to millions more Americans under the ACA has been a major factor in the growth of insurance coverage. From a human rights standpoint, many more Americans now consider health care as their right due to this ACA induced Medicaid expansion. Professor Hoffman indicated the ACA's weaknesses must be addressed to achieve universal coverage such as allowing insurance for undocumented immigrants (now banned), Medicaid expansion in all states, allowing more adults to buy into Medicare, full funding for CHIP (Children’s Health Insurance Program), creating a public plan to compete with private insurance and pricing reforms such as allowing Medicare and Medicaid to negotiate drug prices with pharmaceutical companies.

Dr. Bishop and Mr. Spadaro promoted a single payer approach as embodied by two bills now before the U.S. Congress: HR 676—"Improved Medicare for All" which has 120 House co-sponsors and S. 1804, “Medicare for All”, introduced by Bernie Sanders, which has 15 Senate co-sponsors. They promoted these bills as ways the U. S. could pay for health care through progressive taxation and eliminate deductibles, co-pays and cost sharing. In their view, Medicare for All provides major improvements in cost, quality and access to services. Significant savings in administrative overhead would be realized because of the dramatically reduced role of private insurance. Mr. Spadaro presented examples of 6 CEOs of private insurance companies who currently make between $39,000 and $80,000 per weekday.
Human Rights: The Healthcare Challenge (cont.): Also, government could negotiate prices with any private interest serving the system to keep costs in reasonable bounds. In terms of quality, there would be no more “junk” health insurance plans or class-based rationing. With all providers "in-network", they argued that freedom of choice of any provider will be maximized— everybody will be in the system and no one left out.

A lively discussion took place following presentations. Panelists posed questions to each other and took a variety of questions from the audience. If Americans expect that they will have things like clean water and air, police and fire protection from the public sector as well as schools for children—why not health care as well? Through this program UNA-GP raised these questions and was able to offer some important information, some direction and perhaps a bit of inspiration to those attending.

The Global Migration Crisis

On September 19, 2017, at the Ethical Society of Philadelphia, members and friends of the UNA-GP met to hear a series of speakers and a panel discussing global migration and the refugee crisis. This event was part of the overall Philadelphia Peace Day celebration a few days before Peace Day itself, on Sept 21.

Partners in this program were United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia, Peace Day Philly, Department Of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disabilities Services, and Amnesty International Philadelphia.

Individual Speakers included:

- Peter Decherney, Professor, University of Pennsylvania who talked about life in refugee camps.
- Helen Gym, Councilwoman-At-Large and, who talked about how city government is addressing this crisis.
- Ronald F. Coburn, Amnesty International-Philadelphia
- Gretchen Shanfeld, Director of Health and Wellness, Nationalities Service Center
- Madap Sharma, Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program, Bethany Christian Services of Greater Delaware Valley

On the panel to address the issue from their organizations' perspectives were:

- Maria Porteiro Lopez, Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians
- Symbol Lai, Ph.D., Deputy Dir., Office of Immigrant Affairs, City of Philadelphia
- Rona Buchalter, Ph.D., Dir. of Refugee Programming & Planning, HIAS-PA,
- Carlos Adolfo Gonzalez, Statewide Capacity Building Coordinator, Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition (PICC)

Randy Duque, Deputy Director, Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, moderated the event.
Seventeen members and friends (mostly members!) of the UNA-GP came together in the MLK Room in the Friends Center to learn about the UNA-GP and our plans for the year, approve some business items, and sign up for committees.

President Manisha Patel presented a slide show with our activities for the past year (a fairly long show -- we did a lot!). Treasurer Barbara Nolan presented the financial report. In the materials was a detailed list of plans for the year (see pages 6 and 7 in this newsletter).

As part of our Nominating Committee report we agree to a substantial change -- fewer board members and more committees. We felt that some sitting board members would serve the organization better as leaders of an off-board committee in their area of interest (and probably prefer that role). The Executive Board will meet more often as well to make up for probably fewer board meetings.

At the end we chatted about UNA-GP matters (and whatever else came up), and some of the attendees signed up for various committees. Member involvement will (continue to) be important going forward.

### Membership Meeting Report:

**Decisions derived from the report of the Nominating Committee:**

The nominating committee of the UNA-GP issued a report to the membership meeting and made several recommendations. The members in attendance voted and approved the following:

- Re-establish the executive committee, consisting of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Immediate Past President, and assisted by the executive director. The Executive Committee shall meet each month in person or by conference call.

- The executive committee shall act during the year 2018 to reduce the total number of board members to twelve and identify chairs for specific committees. There shall be several standing and ad hoc committees as described in the bylaws. The full board shall establish or disband committees as needed.

- Appoint Ed Gracely for another term as Secretary of the board.

- Appoint Prachi Potdar for another term as board member at large

- Appoint Esther Wiemand as board member at large.

President Manisha Patel reported to the membership meeting that several committees are to be considered, which can be chaired by members and/or board members: 1. Education committee; 2. Program and Communication committee, 3. Finance committee; 4. Membership committee; as well as the following “topic” committees: 5. Human Rights; 6. Peace and conflict; 7. UN Women; 8. UN Habitat; 9. World Food Program; 10. Global Health and the WHO; 11. The international Court Systems and Treaties; 12. UN Sports and Youth.
Plans for 2018:

The UNA-GP works as a chapter of the UNAUSA, and builds its programmatic activities around the policies that flow from the UN System and its components, and from the Sustainable Development Goals.

As part of the UNA-USA, we do our advocacy at the national level with much guidance from headquarters, to which we add advocacy at the local level. Our calendar every year will have:

The multiday, Annual Membership/Leadership meeting in DC in early June, including the “Storming of the Hill”.

The UNA-USA Global Engagement Summit. In 2018 to be held at the UN in NY on February 24th (not to be confused with the GES held at NWU in Chicago, http://theges.org/).

We at the UNA-GP like to work with others to create a roster of events that “fits” with the UN Calendar, and where we highlight the work of the UN and what we can do locally. For a complete list of “International Days” please visit the UN website.

Beyond the tentative events listed on the following page, the UNA-GP has plans to organize or support in 2018:

- Model United Nations Conference on the Rule of Law
- Model United Nations on Water Stewardship
- High school level Workshop on Gun Violence and “how to take steps towards prevention”
- School level discussions and lessons about issues related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Workshops or summer camp on understanding the global labor market (forces)
- Global Water Alliance Annual Conference
- World Heritage City educational outreach (and expansion)
- Advocacy work in the realm of public policies in relation to international treaties; the role of the city in UN development plans; informing the public about the stance of political parties and candidates re issues relevant to the UN System and the charter of the UN
### Tentative Calendar of 2018 UNA-GP Events:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 27:</td>
<td>International Holocaust Remembrance Day. No concrete plans in the works (yet)</td>
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<td>March 8:</td>
<td>International Women’s Day. We usually work with others when holding an event. Stay tuned for more details; suggested topic from one UNA-GP member: Is there an global impact of the #MeToo movement?</td>
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<td>March 22:</td>
<td>World Water Day; collaborative work with Keiyo Soy Ministries, Global Water Alliance and Fairmount Water Works.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 22:</td>
<td>Earth Day. On this day, we work with others to plant (fruit) trees and tell the story of Wangari Maathai. The work is done through our Youth Building Roots program.</td>
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<td>May 8:</td>
<td>International Red Cross/Red Crescent Day. No concrete plans in the works (yet)</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 22:</td>
<td>World Refugee Day. We hope to work with the International Rescue Committee and create a seminar around the refusal of the USA to sign on to the treaty on Migration and IRC’s analysis of “2017: a year of unwelcome”</td>
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<td>July 17:</td>
<td>World Day for International Justice: The Sunday following July 17 is the date for the Annual Fundraiser, also called the Garden Party; the theme to be established, but always related to a Justice issue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 21:</td>
<td>International Day of Peace. Collaborating with several organizations such as the Harmony for Peace Foundation, the PeaceDayPhilly Network and others, a series of activities will be planned: Stay tuned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 1:</td>
<td>World Habitat Day. Theme not yet announced. Events not yet planned</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 16:</td>
<td>World Food Day. Theme not yet announced. Suggested event: Local (Community) Farming Summit: issues, future, scaling up or bowing out?</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 24:</td>
<td>UN Day.</td>
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<td>November 10:</td>
<td>World Science Day for Peace and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 19:</td>
<td>World Toilet Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 10:</td>
<td>International Human Rights Day</td>
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### 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.
Spotlight on Human Rights

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that promotes lasting peace with justice. They see this as a practical expression of their religious faith in action. Founded in 1917 to allow young men a chance to serve as conscientious objectors while being ambulance drivers in World War I, AFSC has a rich history. It promotes human rights within five general categories: ending discrimination, building peace, defending immigrant rights, building economic justice and ending mass incarceration. They have a global focus in most issue areas with offices located in 15 countries. In addition, they have 35 offices in U.S. communities including their administrative headquarters in Philadelphia. AFSC also has an office in New York devoted to activities of the United Nations. AFSC's website contains a number of blogs, such as one on combating Islamophobia, where anyone can join the discussion. Those interested can receive a regular newsletter by signing up online.

AFSC encourages people from all walks of life to get involved in social justice demonstrations and action.

UNA-GP 2017 Board Members

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

Manisha Patel, President
Carol Jenkins, Vice-President
Ed Gracely, Secretary
Barbara Nolan, Treasurer
Enid Adler, focus area ICC
Ron Bednar, focus area Habitat III
Louis Bolling, focus area PR and Sports
Megan Doherty, focus area Global Health
Gillian Gilhool, focus area Advocacy
Bob Groves, focus area Human Rights
Cynthia Hyler, focus area Education
Mary Day Kent, focus area Advocacy
Carol Parkinson-Hall, focus area Education
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
Tomoko Torii, focus area Peace
Christiaan Morssink, Executive Director
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.