



UNAGP

January 2018

NEWSLETTER

United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia

Table of Contents:

(Click to jump to topic)

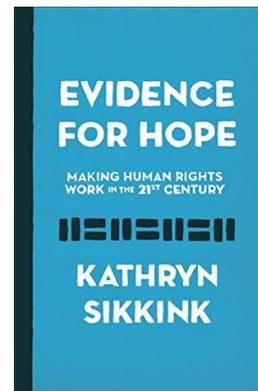
- 2—From Christiaan’s Desk
- 3—Tentative 2018 Calendar
- 3—GWA Annual Conference
- 4—Spotlight on Human Rights
- 4—2018 Board Members
- 5—Support the UNA-GP

In this Issue:

Spotlight on Human Rights

Learn more about our human rights book of the month: Evidence for Hope: Making Human Rights Work in the 21st Century

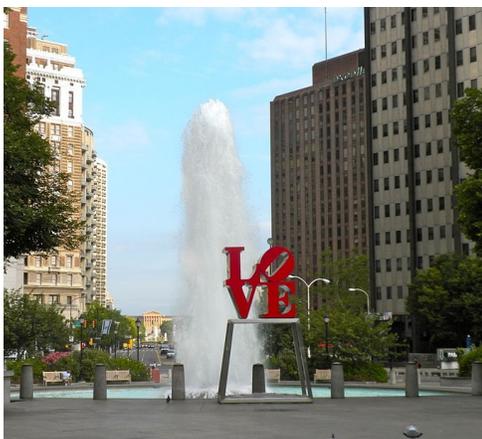
Page: 4



From Christiaan’s Desk

Read a reflection from Martin Luther King, Jr. Day that touches on how the famous reverend embodied the spirit of the SDG’s

Page 2



GWA Annual Conference

Looking forward, one of our partner organizations will be hosting an academic conference in

April. Page 3



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From Christiaan's Desk

A Few Words from our Executive Director

I am writing this morning with a sense of stress; time management stress, not political stress. My to-do list is long and my assessment of what's involved in tasks is too often off. Take, for example, my participation at the MLK day event at Girard College. On that day, I was there at 6:45 AM and left after 1:15 PM with my car loaded. On the Sunday before I spent four hours bringing stuff and setting up, plus another three or four hours printing, cutting, prepping, and loading up. On Friday I spent four hours getting instructions, waiting in line to get a parking pass and figuring out where I needed to be. That's about 19 hours of physical work. On top of that, as a Philadelphian I had to express my tribal social needs (according to Maslow) by watching the Eagles. Given the enormity of rules that have been invented for that American Football Game, we decided to watch that game under the guidance of my son-in-law, at whose nest we watched. He knows a lot about football, a whole lot.

So, I am behind again. Good intentions notwithstanding. This text must go out today, and I will get back to it after my breakfast meeting.

Dr. King's legacy of social justice, of activism in the cause of undoing wrongs, is inspiring and guiding; and not only in this US of A. In today's jargon, he was a champion in the fight for social equity, or environmental justice, with a strong belief that societies can be organized, structured and acculturated around dignity for each and all, around individual freedom and liberty and social responsibility, and, in politics, the participation, in full, by all for all. I like to approach my volunteer work, "charity" the IRS calls it, in his spirit. Yes, we want to close the gap in education, in childhood mortality, in access to water and sanitation, but we shall not do that where the structure or culture calls for inequity. We cannot have water fountains for Catholics only, or Hindus only; we cannot take on sanitation projects among Sunnis at the exclusion of Shiites, or Sufis. Schools for boys only, with the exclusion of schools for girls? Not acceptable. And so it goes.

The United Nations as an institution and movement follows many of these same principles that stimulated MLK and which he emblazoned for us. As laid down in its charter. Very relevant is the dignity of each nation, the "sovereignty" so to speak; and the rule of law that should govern the relations between and in nations. And when nations sign the charter of the UN and sign the treaties, we activists can work along the notions of social equity and environmental justice, and implore for principled collaboration among many, across borders. In most countries, NGOs, many from "abroad, do great work, not always with high effectiveness and efficiency, but nevertheless great work. Some, especially religious ones like Mother Theresa's, have been doing work "in the colonies" even before there was a United Nations. The globalization of markets, of scientific endeavors, of cultural fusions in food and music, it is all happening rather fast, and NGO's work across borders pushing most of the time equity issues.

However, and in line with this sovereignty as a label for national dignity, in some countries some NGOs are not welcome; when, for example, the evangelical methods of a missionary church are deemed too feverish or too threatening. In some other countries, even health care workers have experienced threats to life and limb as happened in Afghanistan and Nigeria. Most recently, the Quakers found themselves on the list of "external" groups, that are banned by the government of Israel. Yet almost all of these organizations, including the Quakers, are doing service as envisioned by Martin Luther King on a global scale, and reflecting the spirit and ideals found in the UN charter and several global treaties that emanate from the declaration of human rights. They work in the service of all of humanity, regardless of the sovereignty of each nation, so that we all can have equity in the social forces that shape our lives. I applaud the work of those service-oriented NGO's. The ideals of universal justice and equity, as so eloquently expressed by Martin Luther King, should guide all of us as we labor to create a better world, everywhere. Hence, be involved in 2018, join the cause, make sure that you are registered to vote. And Vote! MLK demands it!!

Upcoming Events

Tentative Calendar of 2018 UNA-GP Events:

Jan 27:	International Holocaust Remembrance Day. No concrete plans in the works (yet)
March 8:	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 and/or the #MeToo movement?
March 22:	World Water Day; collaborative work with Keiyo Soy Ministries, Global Water Alliance and Fairmount Water Works.
April 22:	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.
May 8:	International Red Cross/Red Crescent Day. No concrete plans in the works (yet)
June 22:	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”
July 17:	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.
September 21:	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.
October 1:	World Habitat Day. Theme not yet announced. Events not yet planned
October 16:	World Food Day. Theme not yet announced. Suggested event: Local (Community) Farming Summit: issues, future, scaling up or bowing out?
October 24:	UN Day.
November 10:	World Science Day for Peace and Development
November 19:	World Toilet Day
January 10:	International Human Rights Day

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](#). The last day to submit an abstract is February 1st, 2018. 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.

Registration for the conference is now available [here](#).

Upcoming Events: at a Glance

Spotlight on Human Rights

Evidence for Hope: Making Human Rights Work in the 21st Century

Bob Groves

Katherine Sikkink has made a valuable contribution to human rights scholarship with her book, *Evidence for Hope* (2017). Sikkink, a Professor of Human Rights Policy at Harvard, is also associated with the university's [Carr Center for Human Rights](#). She offers an excellent primer for both the academically inclined as well as activists. For academics she provides an interesting history of how the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was developed and challenges those who believe the document, and rights in general, reflect only so-called Western values. She outlines the strong role the global South played in the UDHR's early phases and the development of new institutions such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. She also shows the connection between the human rights movement and successful struggles against Apartheid and colonialism in Africa. Sikkink tackles how rights advocacy efforts, laws and institutions can be evaluated, offering insights on measuring effectiveness and recommendations for future initiatives. This analysis might be useful to activists who would like to feel more grounded in determining if their passionate efforts are having an impact. Sikkink is an optimist on the future of human rights. Her book is a welcome resource. It includes extensive references and suggestions for further reading.



Katherine Sikkink

UNA-GP 2018 Board Members

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

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Christiaan Morssink, Executive Director

The United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia



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

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