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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 just read about Vice President Pence staying seated when the combined Korean Olympic Team passed by during the opening of the Games. Good for him. Express yourself and show your colors. Sadly, he seems to take affront when football players take the knee and refuse to come to the White House. They express themselves; they show their colors. Double standards at play obviously. Also, calling the non-applauding members of congress “treasonous”? and never condemning the name calling from the floor when Obama was labeled, “you liar” or told, “you lie”. What kind of standards are those and how incredibly wicked the mindsets behind them? The American Dilemma is shifting among the next category of victims—currently hesitating between Latinos and Muslims—, but that dilemma is very much alive, as in “the struggle between accepting the privilege of whiteness and accepting the values of a full democracy.” That is, a full democracy that embraces the human rights and the mindset underscoring those rights. Yes, that dilemma isn’t dead, not by a long shot. Moreover, in all democracies there is a constant need to be vigilant on the rights and responsibilities of all, fully inclusive. No country can claim they don’t have a possible dilemma still hidden in the closet. Too easily those closet doors open, as we now see with the populist, ethnocentric movements in many countries.

There is also tribalism, populism, that is well maintained and fun to engage in. We witness it at the Olympic Games, and oh boy did we witness it in Philadelphia this week. It is great to let go of one’s rational self and dive deep into that feeling of …of….of what? Of belonging and celebrating the tribe of course. Never mind that the team consists of well-paid modern gladiators, they do wear our symbols and our colors. Never mind that a little bit of boasting went into it and some schadenfreude for the Patriots. And I admire those fans who stayed back, hard as it was, because there are more important issues to underwrite, like the boycott of the NFL, whether from a perspective of Public Health or a perspective of Black Lives Matter. Express yourself and Show Your Colors, positively.

In a few weeks, several Philadelphians will be attending the UNA event in New York at the UN. Kudos to Anastasia Shown and Carol Parkinson Hall (and her team) for getting a large contingent together. Reports will be in the next newsletter. The next day, February 24, a newly formatted Model UN of the Rule of Law for high schoolers is to be held on the campus of UPenn. Elsewhere you will find a flier. Another flier about a Model UN on Water Stewardship is the found “elsewhere” as well.

Great projects are undertaken by some of our student workers. Grace Boroughs is working on an interschool workshop on gun control and prevention. We hope to work with and via the Northwest Parkway High School for Peace and Social Justice but are quite open to entertain the options of more workshops. The mass media and politicians may neglect nowadays the current dramas about gun violence, but we will not. Moreover, Ariana Hurtado is working on an educational project loosely labeled “the Sustainable Development Goals and the future of Philadelphia”. We hope to present a complete set of materials ready for the next academic year that can be used by clubs, honorary class rolls, advanced learning classes, and any teachers who want to vary and expand the rigid materials of the standard curriculum with new and global materials. We will need volunteers and money to make this all possible. Ariana is almost ready to get a proposal out for approval by the board.
From Christiaan’s Desk (cont.)

My feminism is not your feminism, or is it? UNA-GP has donated a few dollars to a major event on “feminisms” on March 1 at the Perry World House at UPenn. Elsewhere in the newsletter you will find an announcement. A most important event, that puts a great lens on women’s issues worldwide, including the impact of the #metoo movement.

Also, on March 24, I am going to walk, for water, at the Fairmount Water Works, on behalf of UNA-GP and supporting the work of the KSM in Kenya. That is happening at 9 AM. There will be hot coffee from our friends of High Point Café. “see elsewhere in the newsletter”. What is not elsewhere, is that that afternoon I will be at the UU church on Lincoln Drive, at 2PM, to attend an event about racism. I just was invited by none other than Marietta Tanner, our honorary board member for life. She wants a lot of UNA-GP folks to show up. She promised refreshments as well!!

Now, I am going to New Zealand. Good bye.

ND: After Christiaan wrote this text, the horrifying school shooting in Florida happened. And it saddens us deeply that the same political rhetoric is dished; thoughts and prayers, the "correct" reading of the 2nd amendment, followed by more stirrings in the teapot of opinions. Nobody is ready to take the step of blowing up the teapot. We also not. But we do believe, that with so many guns and so many hesitations in the communal parenting of our youth, it behooves us to educate our young people how to support each other, how to "de-fang" each other, and how to handle and work with or around guns in our lives. The guns are there. They are not going away. Let's become real, regardless of the words from the US Capitol or from 11250 Waples Mill Road • Fairfax, VA 22030.

Celebrating 70 Years: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

An Educational Opportunity

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a monumental document outlining inalienable rights that ought to be guaranteed to ever person on our blue planet. Adopted on December 10th, 1948, the UDHR has become a cornerstone in all that the UN does, playing a role in international treaties, national constitutions, and aid programs around the world. Later in the year, we will be celebrating not only the document itself, but also the amazing influence that is has had in shaping the modern world.

While we wait for the upcoming festivities, you can bring the UDHR into your classroom (or home, I suppose) with some fantastic posters, courtesy of Human Rights Educators USA. You can find the posters here; they are available for order or they can be printed out at home. They will make a great addition to any discussion about human rights while looking great on a classroom wall.
Day Zero is Coming Fast for Cape Town

Kavi Munjal

Day Zero is now Day Negative Ten. On January 22, Cape Town officials announced that Day Zero has been moved up to April 12 from April 22, as dam levels fell by 1.4% over the last week. The mayor’s office accuses Capetonians of not adhering to their 87-liter daily consumption limit, saying that “it is quite unbelievable that a majority of people do not seem to care” about the city’s impending doom. Beginning February 1, the limit has been tightened to 50 liters per day, slightly over 13 gallons.

How is it that a major international city, the second-largest in South Africa, is on pace to run out of water in under three months? Contributing factors have been slow but incredibly steady. Foremost, the region has been experiencing its worst drought in over a century. It has now been three years since Cape Town’s reservoirs have been sufficiently replenished, and the next rainy season is not due to start until June. That’s assuming that the rainy season comes, of course. Climate change is real, and a major city running out of water is a solid piece of cataclysmic evidence. As the water runs low for Cape Town, however, the disaster is compounded by the fact that the population is also running high. The metro area’s population is at four million people and rapidly rising. Furthermore, not nearly enough of this population seems to be doing its part to conserve water to the extent necessary. Water usage has been recorded at 86 million liters above the city’s target goal. The government has been forced to lower the water pressure in its mains to coerce the population to use less water.

As Grace Boroughs keeps up with the news from her hometown, she mostly hears jokes about ways to save water and about the impending Day Zero. The Penn sophomore knows, however, that those jokes mask genuine worry; it is no secret among Capetonians that it could take 15 years for water levels to return to what they once were. Grace points out that while the water shortage is by far the most dramatic, there are a host of problems that have resulted from a lack of government planning. The failure of officials from Cape Town and South Africa to foresee the population explosion and institute adequate infrastructure have caused Grace to experience issues such as frequent power cut-outs when she is home.

Consequently, there is a political element to Day Zero as well. Cape Town is one of the few cities in South Africa run by the progressive Democratic Alliance (DA) party. The African National Congress (ANC), South Africa’s ruling party since the end of apartheid, has been using Day Zero as a political tool against DA leaders in the city. While Grace does not believe that the ANC is holding out on helping the DA in Cape Town, she says that the water shortage was seen for a long time as a “Cape Town” problem and much of the country was slow to react.

Mayor Patricia de Lille has been clear in declaring the Cape Town has reached a “point of no return”. She did not want the government to have to physically impose constraints on the public, but her hand was forced when it was revealed that more than sixty percent of Capetonians were not adhering to the daily limitation of 87
Day Zero is Coming Fast for Cape Town

It is difficult to imagine the obstacles that will be posed by the new 50-liter limit. Consider that a person uses an average of 15 liters for each minute that they shower, and the same for each flush of the toilet. People are urged to collect greywater, the waste water that is a by-product of bathing, cooking, or other activities. This water is to be used to flush the toilet, rather than the tap of toilet cistern. Capetonians are not to shower more than twice a week.

The biggest concern at this time is the safety of ingesting the liquid that every member of the human race needs to survive. City officials claim that the tap water is safe to drink, but many residents have reason to believe otherwise. Instead, they must travel to the nearest spring to receive their allotted liters. If Day Zero arrives, and there is little reason to believe that it will not, then this travel will become normal practice for every resident of Cape Town. On Day Zero, the water will be shut off for everyone except hospitals and schools. Capetonians will need to go to one of around two-hundred distribution points throughout the city to receive their daily ration of 25 liters, or less than 7 gallons.

When Grace was in Cape Town last summer, she saw with her own eyes the changes in the daily lives of her friends. Very short showers, buckets to collect the greywater, even being forced to switch to a different water grid. She hopes that Day Zero never comes. Today is Day 55.

Spotlight on Human Rights

Bob Groves

In the Midst of Winter, published in 2018, is at once a mystery, love story and revelation of human rights tragedies by Chilean author Isabel Allende. Ms. Allende, who is now a U. S. citizen, is a cousin of Salvador Allende, the President of Chile who died as a result of the 1973, U.S.-supported, military coup against his democratically elected government. This latest novel, Allende's 23rd work of fiction, explores the complexities of human relationships alongside both historical and present day struggles of Central and South Americans. There are some clear autobiographical elements in the bumpy love story that unfolds between two of the main characters, Lucia and Richard, who live and work in Brooklyn. The third main character, Evelyn, is a young woman from Guatemala who makes it to the U.S. in precarious ways due to threats to her life at home. Evelyn winds up in an exploitative household in Brooklyn and is confronted with the challenge of dealing with the death of another woman working in the same household. In spelling out the tale, Allende reveals to readers the current perilous conditions faced by many Central Americans who are forced to migrate. In addition, we are transported to both 1970s Brazil and the upheaval in Chile. The realities of human rights abuses, and the courage required to face them, are inescapable in the novel. Along the way Allende offers insights, sometimes humorous, on romantic relationships between older adults in today’s world. This provides a nice balance to what are, at-times, life-threatening challenges faced by the characters.
Global Water Alliance’s Water Conference

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. Panels will cover topics such as the state of the resource, management approaches, and careers in water resources. Continuing Education Credits are available for engineering. 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. Student registration is only $15 and there is an early-bird discount if you register before March 1st, 2018. Registration includes breakfast, lunch, and a reception afterwards.

Update on our High School Conferences:
Rule of Law and Water Conferences to Take Place in February and March

The UNA-GP student team is actively planning the Rule of Law Conference and the Water Conference to take place on February 24, 2018 and March 24, 2018 respectively. These conferences will be held in Huntsman Hall at the University of Pennsylvania from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm. This year, the Rule of Law Conference is focusing on the rights of the child, and topics of discussion will include poverty, access to education, and health and employment. This conference aims to identify the biggest problem areas plaguing youth across the United States, paying particular attention to how these specific issues affect the youth of Philadelphia. Our team is hoping to get three guest speakers, each to address the different topics concerning the rights of the child.

Likewise, our Water Conference, rescheduled to late March, will be focusing on efficient water use across cities. Namely, this conference will inform students about problems and issues surrounding water use on a global and local level. Students will then debate the overall issue of water catchment and storage (rain and grey water) for use in urban farming, whether indoors, like farm towers, in open spaces, like roofs or abandoned real estate, and/or vertical, like using existing walls or fences.

These conferences are both free and open to all high school students of the Greater Philadelphia area.
Update on our High School Conferences (cont.):

**Gun Violence and Gun Control**

The United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia is planning a workshop at the high school level on topics relating to gun violence and gun control. The issue is consistently in the news, has global dimensions, and is very relevant to the youth of Philadelphia. Interpol is reporting underlying problems of international illegal gun smuggling and the UN tries to tackle that illegal trade through the Small Arms Trade Treaty. We want to encourage dialogue and positive involvement by youth on this issue, by connecting the local problems of gun violence and control with the global dimensions of trade and economic reasonings. We always encourage policy and political action, based on rational analysis and understanding of the “policy arena”. We hope that the workshop can bring about such behavior and attitude.

The UNAGP is gauging the interest, knowledge and level of participation high school students want and hopes that students from the NW Parkway high school for Peace and Social Justice are willing to host. Discussions are ongoing. Work study student Grace Boroughs has scripted several breakout sessions of topics ranging from the black market to ways to get involved in the work of NGOs that focus on gun violence prevention. The most “in your face” part will be a “drop off” table at which participants can hand in guns without fear of legal repercussions. Another “in your face” part may very well be a table with free gun locks, ammunition lock boxes, and a good old fashioned “rifle cabinet”.

The UNGP is excited about the possibilities this conference can unleash due to its re-focus on glocalizing the problem and the interface of gun and gunner. We will analyze the reactions of the participants and if positive, repeat this workshop in the coming years.

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**Legitimizing the International Criminal Court**

*Luis Bravo*

In November 2018, the International Criminal Court (ICC) made headlines by deciding to investigate the United States for war crimes and potential crimes against humanity in Afghanistan. A report by the ICC’s Chief Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, alleges there is reasonable basis to believe the United States’ army subjected at least 61 prisoners to torture. It also states the CIA carried out similar actions with at least 27 other detainees. [1] This latest move comes amidst allegations the ICC fails to prosecute wealthy, industrial nations, but focuses its efforts on African countries. While the investigation is not expected to result in charges, a more assertive International Criminal Court has the potential to bolster the failing institutions’ legitimacy and establish the ICC as a powerful deterrent against war.

The ICC is an international court that prosecutes crimes against the international community like genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. [2] It was established in July 2002 after the adoption of the 1998 Rome Statute which outlines the jurisdiction of the ICC as well as its rules and procedures. [3] The ICC is not meant to replace national courts. Instead, it is designed take action on crimes it feels the country in question has failed to reasonably address. While over 120 countries have signed the treaty, the United States has failed to ratify it.
Legitimizing the International Criminal Court (cont.):

During the Clinton administration, the treaty received a considerable amount of support by the executive. This changed during the Bush administration which refused to support the institution, and changed again during the Obama era, which demonstrated a greater commitment to support the court. Still, neither Clinton nor Obama were able to pass the Rome Statute through Congress, leaving the United States able to comply with the ICC’s requests or reject the requests at will. [4]

The lack of support is only one of the multiple challenges the ICC has faced throughout the years. Critics of the ICC argue the institution promotes neocolonialism by serving as an extension of Western influence, much like the United Nations. Many cite the disproportionate amount of African autocracies prosecuted as evidence of this notion. While recent hearings have attempted to counter this trend, many feel cases against countries like the United States have been long overdue. Moreover, others criticize the structure of the ICC which lacks an appeals process and prevents more widespread action. In fact, since its establishment (and nearly 1 billion dollars in funding) only 23 cases have been prosecuted. But perhaps the greatest concerns stem from the existence of the court itself. Many countries have been hesitant to support an external international judiciary system because of the perceived threat to state sovereignty. [5]

Even though many large countries have failed to ratify the Rome Statute, it is clear there is widespread support for an international peacekeeping system to prevent war and secure peace. In spite of the many disagreements with the United Nations, the United States will undoubtedly continue supporting the institution in years to come. While the investigation into war crimes in Afghanistan committed by the US might hinder support for the organization, this could bolster the ICC’s legitimacy overall by proving it is truly an independent organization, free from the influence of Western countries. This could be especially reassuring for many African nations who have led the opposition and in many instances, even threatened to withdraw their support from the court. Yet, for the ICC to be viewed as a truly vital organization it must demonstrate its power in the international community to serve as a broker for peace. To do so, it must take a more assertive stance in investigating and prosecuting crimes outlined in the Rome Statute. While this process will be facilitated once the court’s powers are expanded with the adoption of Article 8 which outlines “crimes of aggression,” being more transparent about its procedures and conducting wider investigations could be beneficial in garnering support in the short term. Only by establishing itself as a vital component in achieving global stability will the International Criminal Court convince countries like the United States to support its existence. Until then, the ICC should do everything in its power to continue surviving and hope advanced industrialized countries recognize its important purpose in the future.
Dear UNA Colleagues,

Most regrettably, the U.S. Administration’s 2019 budget delivered February 12th to the U.S. Congress proposes devastating budget cuts to almost every UN account and agency. The cuts range from 20 percent from UN Peacekeeping; 100 percent from agencies such as UNDP and UNFPA; the UN Environment programs and UN Women; and 50 percent from the World Health Organization, and the Food and Agriculture Organization. Overall, the State Department and U.S. foreign affairs budgets – which include the U.S. funding for the UN – would be a cut by 23 percent while the Pentagon’s budget would increase by 15 percent. See statement from the Better World Campaign.

The budgets for programs of the UN and U.S. foreign aid assistance will also be cut to those countries which have made votes against or expressed disagreement with the U.S. on its foreign policy. While the administration says it will not use this barometer for deciding on humanitarian assistance, already it has cut 2018 UN funds required to operate the refugee programs in the West Bank and Gaza by 50 percent.

The implications of these cuts for all Americans is a drastic reduction in the programs that stand for long-term global peace in addition to fair and equitable support of peoples’ basic human needs. These are reductions of critical programs that help spur social and economic development and enable the most vulnerable to succeed in helping themselves. In the grand scheme of budget planning, full funding of U.S. support to the UN and its agencies would be less than half of one percent of the U.S. budget. The U.S. can well afford to meet these commitments to the UN and world peace. However, the U.S. can ill afford the high costs of slower global development, more wars and violence, and the increases in pressure for migration that will plague years to come if the UN is not adequately funded.

UNA-NCA, with its members’ support, will continue to join in the significant efforts being made by civil society organizations in the U.S. and globally to stop these excessive roll backs of U.S. engagement for peace and long-term security. Take action today!

Sincerely,

Stephen F. Moseley

Stephen F. Moseley, President

United Nations Association - National Capital Are
Taking Stock of ‘Feminisms’ Today and Looking Ahead

March 1st, 2018

The Middle East Center is leading this year’s International Women's Day program. This year it will take place at the Perry World House on Thursday March 1st for a whole day of programming 11:00-7:00. Each panel will be hosted by a different, diverse group of women on Penn's campus or from the surrounding community. To end, Moushira Khattab will join in a conversation about what feminism looks like today in an international or transnational perspective and what it might look like tomorrow. Moushira Khattab is the former Minister of Family & Population of Egypt, Former Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador of Egypt to South Africa, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. She is a human rights activist advocating the rights of children and women and the former Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

KSM Ministries: Walk for Water

March 24th, 2018

On March 24th, our friends at Keiyo Soy Ministries will be hosting their annual 5k Walk-a-Thon, “Walk for Water – Walk for Life”. Come join us in raising money to combat the urgent need for clean water in Kerio Valley in the Rift Valley Province of northern Kenya. Registration is available here, and it includes a free t-shirt. More information is available on the KSM website.

Candlelight Vigil Kicks Off Surge for Diplomacy Not War in Korea

February 9th, 2018

Philadelphia is on a roll, and not just with the World Champion Philadelphia Eagles!

On Friday, February 9th, as the Winter Olympics were opening in Korea, Philadelphia activists, led by the Coalition for Peace Action and partners, were opening a Surge for Peace. At City Hall, we held a spirited tolling of the Peace Bell, a candlelight vigil representing some 11 area organizations, and we finished off the event with a rousing chorus of “Take Me Out of the War Game”, led by Ellie Rader of the Granny Peace Brigade Philadelphia. Thanks to all!

This was the first of many actions that will occur in the Delaware Valley—along with vigils and services in Princeton, New Jersey, Aston, Langhorne, and Allentown, PA on Opening Night. Similar events were held by members of the Korea Peace Collaboration in dozens of other cities, often led by Peace Action affiliates CFPA calls on all people of good will to call Congress at (202) 224-3121 to strongly urge their elected representatives to advocate for Diplomacy, Not War. The two Koreas are now talking with each other, a good start. But the US Administration needs to join these talks, and get serious about negotiations, not just bluster and make threats to the peace of the region.

Co-sponsors for the Philadelphia Candlelight Vigil for the Olympic Truce included: the American Friends Service Committee; Brandywine Peace Community; CFPA Philadelphia, and SJU Students; Committee for Peace and Justice in Asia; IAC Philadelphia; The Germantown Friends Meeting; Granny Peace Brigade Philadelphia; Physicians for Social Responsibility; the Shalom Center; and the UN Association of Greater Philadelphia.

If you want to get involved in these efforts in the Philly area, please call or contact Ed Aguilar, CFPA director for PA, at 215-480-7744, or aguilarcfpa1@gmail.com. Soon we will visit Congress to lobby for a peaceful resolution without pre-emptive attacks, or war, in Korea; watch for coming events! For more information or to join the Peace Coalition, go to www.Peacecoalition.org.
Celebrating the 110th Anniversary of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

In honor of the 110th Anniversary of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. the UNA of USA held an awards reception at the United Nations Foundation Headquarters in Washington, DC on Friday, January 12, 2018. The reception was held to recognize one AKA graduate chapter from each of the ten regions and five overall undergraduate chapters for their exceptional demonstration in promoting the work of the United Nations through Global Classrooms with the ASCENDSM programs, and all activities that increased the global perspectives for the individuals living in the communities served by Alpha Kappa Alpha. The North Atlantic Region’s award was given to Omega Omega Chapter for their partnership with the UNA-GP and their outstanding Global Classrooms Program.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (AKA) is an international service organization that was founded in 1908 on the campus of Howard University in Washington DC. AKA is the oldest, Greek-lettered organization established by African-American, college-trained women. AKA's history includes a legacy of service and focuses on health, education, family, leadership, economics, humanities, business and the global community. Since its humble beginnings the sisterhood has flourished into a globally-impactful organizations of nearly 300,000 with 1012 chapters bound by the bonds of sisterhood and empowered by the commitment to servant-leadership promoting effective advocacy and social change.

Pictured below: Carol Parkinson-Hall, Omega Omega Chapter President and UNA-GP board member and Charlene M. Collins, Omega Omega First Vice-President and Program Chairman.
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 America (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

Connect with us!

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.

Join the UNA-GP page or group on LinkedIn to meet and connect with other global citizens.