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From Christiaan’s Desk

A Few Words from our Executive Director

What to write about? The G6? The KIM-TRUMP handshake tomorrow? The raiding of institutions, homes, factories, football stadiums, by "law ENFORCEMENT" uniformed personnel, in search of (un)wanted persons or professionals, as in Hungary, Austria, USA, Turkey? The shocking experiences of outright, vitriolic racism that Africans and Muslims can report ad-nausea more or less across the whole Northern Hemisphere? Or the marvelous inroads that women seem to be making towards expanding the female pool in our houses of representatives? Or the shocking fact that the mortal disease of vertical corruption that has been breaking the backbones of so many national economies has now been unleashed in DC as well like a monstrous plague?

Instead of all that I think I am going to smile a bit, realizing that Roy Moore was stopped, just barely, in Alabama. Oh, how he must envy the state premier of Bavaria, Markus Söder of the Christian Social Union (CSU). Despite opposition from prominent members of the Catholic Church and leading theologians, he installed the Kreuzpflicht or “crucifix obligation” -- a new law requiring crosses in all public buildings --, to reinforce Bavarian identity after a surge in Muslim immigration.

Not to be outdone, this week the Austrian government is closing several mosques. It makes me smile wryly, because in most of these countries, Christian culture may be woven into the national identities (or so they claim), but in Europe the churches themselves by and large are empty houses. and I am afraid that much of these calls from state houses cater to a different negative streak, rightwing populism that feeds on "Angst vor den Fremden." I am using German to make a point.

Overall, throughout Europe there are grumblings and frustrations heard. Cultural habits that pertain to women’s dress, especially the Niqab, Chador, and Burqa are outlawed or regulated in many countries, as European (and several African I may add) governments claim that religion is not an issue regarding these outfits. They have no such problem with the Hijab and the Khimar, as these head covers fit well with the many cultural traditions in Europa regarding scarfs and hats and allow the face to be seen. Praying on a mat on the side of the highway is forbidden as well. Practitioners are asked to seek a parking facility. The call to prayer, the Adhan, is not forbidden, but the use of amplifiers certainly is. But that restriction goes for all religions.

Here, in the USA, in most state houses and in DC, we witness nothing of this. We are protected by the Bill of Rights, we all happily interact with each other. We have some racism, but that’s only about the coloration of the skin, and it’s dying off anyway. We may have bad education systems and bad health care systems, but they are bad for everybody poor and out, regardless of race of religion. Our housing laws make it clear that red lining is not allowed around race or religion, and only income and wealth are legitimate criteria. Everybody can check into a hotel, order a wedding cake, rent an apartment, or lease a car, and should have no fear about 911 calls from their neighbors. We live, perhaps not happy, but without any nasty calls about excluding groups of people from our national identity. We are a salad bowl indeed. We celebrate our diversity. We are the global example for how to strive towards a cosmopolitan mindset. Or are we?
Garden Party
Save the date!

Invitation
the ninth annual
FUNDRAISER
JULY 22; 4-7PM
Lovett Park, Philadelphia. 19119
Corner Sedgwick Ave and Germantown Ave.

+---------------------------------------------+
All members and friends,

Please join us for a late afternoon and evening of food, cool drinks, hot air, even hotter dialogues and plenty of opinions; music by DJ, with songs from around the globe. Raffle prizes. Bring your kids. Bring a friend (or two, three), make more friends and promote your cause. Bring business cards, banners, posters.

Create opportunities to talk & network between action groups, and discuss how to check which political candidates are GLOBAL CITIZENS. Let’s have a great conversation at each table!

Contribution: $20.00 at the gate
* Buffet-style, homemade food
* Donations at the bar most welcome

Please rsvp to info@una-gp.org

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TENTATIVE:
Plastic Pollution Problems: we need to take action; all of us, NOW.
The plastic pollution phenomenon globally is immense. Wildlife, ocean life, food supply, you name it, plastic waste is becoming as big a problem for survival as global warming. We cannot escape the need to make large changes as consumers, while also taking up a much more intense effort to clean water ways, oceans, lakes. The UN is sounding the alarm bell. Recycle, reuse, and integrate into new production systems. Develop alternatives and demand that major companies do away with single-use plastics. Can the sanctuary city of Philadelphia stand strong and lead the nation in tackling the Plastic Pollution Problem? Speaker: Christiaan Morssink

Goal: To make Philadelphia a global example of how to engage positively on plastic pollution.
Please visit www.una-gp.org for more info
Using Water to Make Peace
A Symposium during Peace Week 2018. West Chester University
September 20th, 9.00AM-2.00PM (times tentative)

From our friends at the Global Water Alliance:

Coming up in the fall, we are excited to be presenting a symposium to “dive” into how peace and water interact. After the UN published their report on the same subject, we are looking to locally get people equipped to think in terms of peace and building a regional network of water peace activists. Working alongside other dedicated organizations, the ultimate goal is to address peace and broad questions of social, cultural, and livelihood impacts of the implementation of water projects between communities and countries. For now, ponder this quote and the implications of water in international conflict:

“… here’s a small example of Shimon Peres’ mindset: “I approached Putin,” he told me not too long ago, when he was nearly 90, “and I told him this: in a few years Egypt is going to lose its rights to the Nile. The historic agreement with Britain and France will expire. Ethiopia is already demanding water, and that could spark war. Let’s go both of us together to Morsi [then the Egyptian president] and tell him: ‘we, Israel, will give you three Niles! We have the knowledge and the capacity to double Egypt’s water supply!’ ‘Morsi,’ Peres added, “won’t listen to me; but to you, Putin, he’ll listen. But we won’t come to him as part of an initiative of states, states are already passé, we’ll come through companies, through corporations, they’re the ones who run the world today …”

-David Grossman, 2016, in The Guardian

Cause of water conflict

- Not respecting existing or historical agreements.
- Water scarcity
- Increase water demands
- Water pollution
The ILO will be one hundred years old on April 11, 2019. One of the main documents of the ILO, the Declaration of Philadelphia, was signed on May 10, 1944. The United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia wants to create a project committee of interested parties to organize a spectacular event to highlight these milestones and put our city on the map, again. Labor and Social Justice both are always good causes, and in Philadelphia with some good memorable victories. We hope to use the event to bring the SDGs and the drive for justice again into the hearts and minds of Philadelphians. Stay tuned.

Did Temple President Johnson ever commission a plaque? Where is it in Mitten Hall? Please help us locate it. // Sorry for the blurry copy — old carbons are like that!
Ellen Firestone inducted into the National Council of the United Nations Association of the USA

Our member Ellen Firestone has been elected to the National Council of the United Nations Association of the USA and was inducted during the Annual Business Meeting on Sunday, June 10 at the Leadership Summit in Washington, DC.

Please note that Teta Banks, the new chair of the National Council, started her work in the UNA-USA in our Philadelphia chapter.

Pennsylvania UNA

Daniel Hoffman and reps from other UNA chapters of our Keystone State. Looks like they had business AND FUN in mind.
A Few Thousand Steps for Democracy

Tuesday, June 12th was the yearly UNA-USA lobby day on Capitol Hill. The lobbying comes as the finale to the 3 days of the annual meeting and this year brought about 200 eager lobbyists in UN-blue T-shirts to travel the halls of the Senate and House offices. The UNA-GP formed a good part of the small Pennsylvania group which visited the offices of Senators Casey and Toomey and Congressmen (Pennsylvania at the moment is all Congressmen) Evans, Fitzpatrick, Barletta, Brady, Perry and Thompson. The UNA-GP was represented by Dan Hoffman and Mary Day Kent. In discussions with staffers our group did our best to make a positive presentation on the value of the UN and the vital need to meet our financial obligations to UN dues, peacekeeping missions, and international agencies such as the World Health Organization, UN High Commission for Refugees, and World Food Program. It was a great strength to our group that we had UNA members from around the state, not just from Philadelphia. Everyone we met with was asked if they knew about the Sustainable Development Goals and to our surprise all the staffers except one claimed to have heard of them, a good sign for the future.

Even more than the statewide diversity we were very fortunate to have two participants from the Philadelphia area who were able to tell their stories of childhoods in UN refugee camps in Africa and the importance of being received as refugees to make new lives in the US. Matilda Sawie of Liberia was one of the refugee speakers at the UNA-GP Garden Party 2 years ago. She now lives in Delaware County (Rep. Bob Brady’s district), has graduated from college and works as a health educator for a community health program. She is now a US citizen and took the day off from work to get up well before dawn to catch the bus to DC for a long day’s walk on Capitol Hill. Also with us was Evrard Koffi from the Ivory Coast, grateful for the UN education program in the refugee camp which enabled him to learn English and travel to the US to study finance and petroleum engineering. A recent graduate of LaSalle, Evrard is also in Rep. Brady’s district, at least while he job-hunts.

There was a great sense of team spirit as we sought out the offices around the Hill, crossing paths with our fellow advocates in blue shirts and also several hundred other lobbyists on behalf of Clean Air and working on Climate Change. The wheels of democracy grind slowly, but they do eventually move!

Mary Day Kent
Board member, UNA-GP

Please contact me if you would like to become more engaged in congressional advocacy, whether in Philadelphia or DC at mdaykent@verizon.net

Mary Day and the team of activists on the Hill. Keep the ears of the representatives open to reason!!
We are going to change the world.

On June 9th, the day before the 2018 Leadership Summit of the United Nations Association of the United States of America, I would have said that, but only half believed my own words. But by June 12th, those of us who were feeling discouraged had rediscovered our faith in, and our hope for, humanity. Sixty percent of UNA’s members are under 25 years of age. Those young women and men aren’t wearing rose colored glasses. They are informed, connected, and resolute.

The summit opened with Hillary Corna’s warmup. Before sharing her inspiring success story, she woke us up a bit by playing, “Truth Or Dare”. She asked for a volunteer from the hundreds of us gathered in Washington, early on a Sunday morning, to come up on the stage play it with her. Teena Halbig, from the Kentucky contingent, gave me a gentle nudge. “Go ahead.” I raised my hand, and then went down the rabbit hole. The first leadership lesson is to encourage each other to step up. The second is to answer the bell when it calls.

In response to a question, Hillary provided us with this gem: “Find your space. Find the goal that most resonates with you. Then make it happen.” Over the next three days, we did just that. One example is a conversation I overheard between a couple of newly-made friends. Having been paired together in the same dorm, they acted like they had known each other for years.

“How long has there been a UNA chapter at your school?”

“Oh. We started it about a year and a half ago.”

“Huh. How did you do that?”

“The UNA-USA showed us how. We checked with the school, and just did it.”

The Pennsylvania contingent was waiting to meet someone on the steps to the Supreme Court. The UNA-USA’s professional media crew was nearby and they were interviewing some of the leadership training participants. Suddenly, another UNA-USA leader was born. “I’m going to start a UNA chapter.”, she announced. “It would help if I could post some videos of you guys saying why you think the United Nations deserves our support. Can I interview you? Just sit right here.” She lined them up. They practiced talking about the issues we had been prepared to address on Lobby Day. Her cellphone camera recorded it. And we will be getting a new chapter soon.

Another inspiring example came from a surprising source. Michael McCabe Jr., a Legislative Assistant for Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick, heard us out. Two members of our group had been refugees. The humanitarian work of the UN is among the things the UN does that we consider important. They were the ones who made the request for support on that issue. Mr. McCabe very frankly shared that he found it refreshing to get to hear about the help they received in UN refugee camps, the security they were provided by UN peacekeeping forces. He appreciated that they are contributing to America by the hard work they have put into making their lives a success. He told us that it was far more authentic and genuine to hear it from them firsthand.

Teena wasn’t there to nudge them. Kelli Meyer, our UN foundation guide was busy cat-herding us. It had to be my turn. After we posed for another round of photos, with Congressman Fitzpatrick’s placard behind us. I made sure the two of them understood the significance of what we had just been told. “You have more power to advocate for the refugees living in the camps or coming to America than any of us. You story can make a difference.” They felt empowered. They got better at sharing their experiences, and at making the request for support, as we went to more congressional offices. Even in the office of the Pennsylvania district least supportive of the UN’s founding principles, we saw the other members of the staff, besides the person we were there to see, stop what they were doing to listen to their stories. That was a victory. This is how we are going to win.

From our activist member: Daniel Hoffman
Launch of New UNA Forum

In an effort to improve our ability to communicate with chapter leaders and affinity groups, starting today UNA-USA is transiting from using Google Groups to a new platform, UNA Forum. This platform is an online community that allows you to create topic threads and engage with other members within your different groups (such as UNA Women), and includes features you can use to customize your messages (creating simple polls, uploading documents, etc.). It also allows individual users to change their email notification frequencies based on their personal preferences, which is not possible through Google Groups.

To assist you with this transition, we have created a Step-by-Step Guide as well as a training webinar. As a member you should have received an invitation email through the platform to join UNA Forum and set up your profile (as detailed in the guide).

Spotlight on Human Rights

The Fund for Global Human Rights has awarded over $85 million in grants to more than 650 groups around the world since its founding 2003. It has offices in Washington, DC and London. The Fund maintains a focus on 7 major issue areas: Women’s, Children’s and Migrants’ Rights, Justice/Rule of Law, Resource Rights/Corporate Accountability, support of Human Rights Activists as well as LGBTI/Sexual Identity/Gender Orientation Rights. Its website presents examples of “victories” achieved by groups that have received grants from the Fund. It outlines successes of these groups on a small scale such as a grantee in India who was able to rescue 3 children forced into bonded labor on a sheep farm and on a larger scale, e.g., support of a Honduran group's successful effort to stop international investment in a hydroelectric dam that threatened the heritage and livelihood of the Lenca indigenous community. The Fund also works directly at the UN on its initiatives. In conjunction with other groups, they successfully lobbied this past March to renew the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, who has been sharply vocal in denouncing governments’ efforts to suffocate civil society. The Fund's website provides an opportunity to receive regular updates on its activities and it can be followed on Facebook and Twitter.
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 UNAGP 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.

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