

UNA-Westchester Global Connection



United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) Westchester Chapter

<http://www.unawestchester.org>

December 2008

*An Invitation to a Special Event: Celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

**“The Responsibility to Protect: Should the United Nations Intervene in Sovereign
Countries to Protect Human Rights?”**

Sunday, December 7, 2008, 4:00–6:00 P.M.
Community Unitarian Church, 468 Rosedale Avenue
White Plains, New York 10605



Featuring Guest Speaker Craig Mokhiber, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Also featuring: The Youth Band of the United Nations and a video presentation of a Special Human Rights Art Exhibit

On the same day please join UNA-Westchester at a:

Holiday Luncheon to Celebrate Margaret (Molly) Bruce

And commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Molly Bruce helped draft

Holiday Luncheon:

Sunday, December 7, 2008, 1:00–3:00 P.M.
Siwanoy Country Club, Pondfield Road
Bronxville, New York 10708
Cost: \$50 per person
Make checks payable to UNA-Westchester

Please reserve by December 1st: Call Julia Bolton at (203) 542-0652.
Directions available at
<http://www.siwanoycc.com>

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<i>Editors: Marcia Brewster, Scott Monje</i>	

Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

In addition to educating, inspiring, and mobilizing Americans to support the principles and work of the United Nations, UNA-



Westchester is dedicated to “promoting constructive US leadership” in the UN system. We pride ourselves in being nonpartisan. Nevertheless, following the election of Barack Obama as the next US President, we can be inspired by the hope that, in line with his platform, our country will join other countries through the UN in dealing with the major issues of our time, including:

- World Peace—through paying our dues for the UN and UN Peacekeeping and supporting the UN Emergency Fund;
- Terrorism—through supporting various UN treaties and the International Criminal Court;
- Overpopulation—through releasing Congress-approved funds for the UN Fund for Population Activities;
- Climate Change—through supporting the follow up to the Kyoto Protocol;
- Human Rights—through joining the new Human Rights Council;
- Development—through creative support to UN agencies dealing with health, hunger, and poverty through the Millennium Development Goals.

Our country and the UN can do many wonderful things together!

In this issue, our Secretary, Scott Monje, provides welcome elaboration on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is the subject of our major event on December 7. Mr. Aaron Glazer, a teacher at

Mt. Vernon High School, has contributed an article about the interesting trip of his ninth-grade class to the United Nations. We appreciate receiving opinion pieces, and will feature at least one in our next issue.

As we look forward to a new chapter in US-UN relations, I would encourage each member of UNA-Westchester to reach out and invite a friend to join us. In line with our revised brochure, which you can see at www.unawestchester.org or by requesting a copy from me, you can tell them that in UNA-Westchester, some lead, others attend events that interest them, and many join simply to become part of the national constituency for positive US leadership in world affairs and at the UN.

Good luck!

Phil Reynolds
President, UNA-Westchester

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Each year, people around the world celebrate Human Rights Day on December 10, commemorating the day in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although some of the principles dated back to the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, The Universal Declaration marked the first time that international recognition had been granted to the notion that *all* human beings share fundamental rights and that these rights lie at the foundation of a free, just, and peaceful world. The document was drafted by the UN Commission on Human Rights, which was then chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, the widow of the late president. Among the commission staff members who aided in the drafting was Molly Bruce, a current member of the UNA-Westchester Board of Directors.

During World War II, the Big Four—the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the Republic of China—originally conceived of the United Nations in terms of geopolitical necessities. However, a large coalition of NGOs and a number of Latin American governments maintained that this was insufficient. The atrocities of World War II, they argued, had undermined the notion that the protection of human rights was a domestic concern of sovereign nations. As a result, the United Nations Charter included a commitment to inalienable human rights that belong to every man, woman, and child. It did not, however, specify what these rights were. The Nuremberg Trials carried the notion further by the simple fact that they treated the victims of atrocities—individual human beings—as appropriate subjects of international law. Conventionally, international law had concerned only the rights of states vis-à-vis each other.

The Universal Declaration was thus viewed as a complement to the UN Charter. It was hoped that a guarantee of rights to all individuals everywhere would help forestall atrocities such as those that had been perpetrated in World War II and prevent the sort of injustices that give rise to war and rebellion. The consideration of proposals began with the first session of the UN General Assembly in 1946. These were transmitted to the UN Economic and Social Council. The Commission on Human Rights, which was established in June 1946, took on the task when it began meeting in 1947. The Commission had 18 members led by Eleanor Roosevelt (United States), chair; P. C. Chang (China) and René Cassin (France), vice-chairs; and Charles Malik (Lebanon), rapporteur. The staff was led by John P. Humphrey of the UN Human Rights Division. The Commission appointed a smaller drafting committee that included Roosevelt, Chang, Malik, Humphrey, and representatives of Australia, Chile, France,

the Philippines, the Soviet Union, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia.

Members of the drafting commission were selected for geographic and cultural diversity to avoid the accusation that one group was forcing its view on others. This later proved problematic, for there were limits to the degree of diversity that could be achieved. For instance, large portions of Asia and nearly all of Africa were still under colonial rule and, therefore, not directly represented in the United Nations. Some governments would later dismiss the document as the imposition on them of a set of “Western” values. The shortcomings notwithstanding, the drafters endeavored to produce a document of universal validity.

The Commission’s task was to decide not only which rights to enumerate but also what the nature of the document should be. Debates ensued over whether they were to produce a morally persuasive declaration or a legally binding treaty. The United States government preferred the former in the hope of avoiding the Senate vote necessary for a treaty. It was eventually Mrs. Roosevelt’s solution to do both: a morally persuasive declaration, which would guide and be backed up by a series of lower-profile, but legally binding, conventions.

– Continued on page 6

In case you missed it: Happy 63rd birthday to the UN

Wow! Did UNA-Westchester have a great celebration for the 63rd birthday of the United Nations! It was held in the beautiful Gottesman Room at Pace University, where we had wonderful speakers and delicious refreshments, including a birthday cake dedicated to the occasion.

Professor Bruce Bachenheimer, a professor of management at Pace's Lubin School of Business and a faculty fellow at the Wilson Center for Social Entrepreneurship, welcomed us to the university. Our Chapter president, Phil Reynolds, introduced Gavin Power, the deputy director of the UN Global Compact Office. He described the role corporations can play in helping developing nations, preserving our environment, fighting corruption, and ensuring human rights and fair labor practices.

The notion of corporate responsibility, he told us, emerged in the 1990s in reaction to problems of a moral and ethical nature. It meant the integration of environmental, social, and governance policy issues into business strategy. Mr. Power noted that the Global Compact began with 50 companies willing to participate, and it grew to 5,000. The UN has de-listed 600 corporations that have not adhered to the principles by practical efforts.

Board member Patrick Sciarratta then introduced our main speaker of the evening, Michael White, Vice Chair of PepsiCo and CEO of PepsiCo International. Mr. White, who majored in Russian in college and earned a master's degree at the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, always dreamed of traveling throughout the world. He and his wife Susan have done just that. Mr. White pointed out that "business has come to play an ever more important role in bringing countries together." Commercial activity lifts people out of poverty. He believes that business can help solve global problems by fostering global trade, serving as an engine of economic growth, helping diverse cultures find common ground, and helping to establish and maintain the rule of law.

Mr. White said that international trade in 1993 totaled \$3.7 trillion, while in 2006 it

was \$11 trillion. He said that one lesson we can learn from our present global financial crisis is that we are all interconnected. We need a bold commitment to "sustainability and responsibility" to put this crisis behind us. PepsiCo had \$39 billion in revenues in 2007 and employed 185,000 persons worldwide. "Why should a profit-driven business like PepsiCo care about sustainability and responsibility?" he asked. Answering his own question, he argued that you cannot have long-term profits unless you base profits on the long-term sustainability of society. Long-term economic growth creates the consumers who buy our products. We cannot succeed if climate change provides less of what business needs.

Also, he said, "consumers see spending as a way to make a statement in the world." They judge a company by whether that company produces safe products, treats its employees and others with consideration and fairness, and is respectful of the environment—leaving it no worse, and perhaps even better off, as a result of the business transaction. He sees nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as also pressuring businesses to be accountable. Companies are held to a higher standard now than when he joined the workforce in 1976. Businesses now aim, he said, for financial success while leaving a positive imprint on society.

Most of us left the "Birthday Party" with more positive feelings about how the United Nations and businesses can work together to make our world a better place for all—through the catchwords "social responsibility." Thanks to Gavin Power and Michael White for making our evening so engaging, to Doris and Bob Benson for planning the evening, and to Pace University for hosting us all.

Joan Katen, Board Member

UN Day Proclamations

UNA-Westchester greatly appreciates and deeply thanks the following Westchester county and municipal officials for responding favorably to our Board members' requests that they observe United Nations Day with us this year.

The county executive of Westchester County, Andrew Spano, issued a proclamation declaring October 24, 2008, to be United Nations Day in Westchester County. Similarly, town supervisors Paul Feiner of the Town of Greenburgh and Valerie Moore O'Keeffe of the Town of Mamaroneck proclaimed October 24 to be United Nations Day in their towns, while Mayor Joseph M. Delfino of the City of White Plains and Mayor Clinton I. Young of the City of Mt. Vernon declared October 24, 2008, to be United Nations Day in their cities. Mayor Elizabeth Feld of the Village of Larchmont, Mayor Kathleen Savolt of the Village of Mamaroneck, and Mayor J. Michael Cindrich of the Village of Mt. Kisco proclaimed October 24, 2008, to be United Nations Day in their villages.

Westchester Television Features Going Global with the UN

TV channels throughout Westchester are showing award-winning video programs about the United Nations. The 2008–2009 Going Global with the United Nations videos include several overview pieces about the UN and its work, one on peace, several on education, plus a series of interviews conducted recently with UN officials and others associated with the UN.

The communities, TV stations, and time of viewing are listed below. Let us know what you think unasa@stratdev.com or mtswal@optonline.net.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Channel</u>	<u>Day, time</u>
Greenburgh	75-76	
Harrison/ Port Chester	18	Thurs., 9:30 pm
Hastings	77	Daily, 11 pm
Larchmont/ Mamaroneck	77 Cable	
	34 Verizon	Thurs., 8 pm
Mt. Vernon	18	
Rye	76	Friday, 10 am, 1, 4 and 7 pm, alt. wks
Scarsdale	75	Check schedule
White Plains	76	Sunday, 5 pm
Ossining	15	Sunday, 8 pm
Peekskill	15	Sunday, 8 pm
Yorktown	74	Monday, 9 pm

An Expanded High School Trip to the United Nations

Expanding the horizons of Mt. Vernon High School's freshman class was the order of the day on May 28, 2008. Because of essays they had written about reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the ninth-grade class of Mr. Demetrios Mihailidis and Mr. Aaron Glazer was invited to the United Nations to join Mr. Mihailidis's United Nations Club in expanding their perspective from their backyards in Mt. Vernon to a global outlook, exploring the manner in which nations interact.

The day began with a look at the socio-political outlook of Germany. At the German Mission to the United Nations and the German Consulate, students were treated to a presentation about how countries interact with one another and with the UN. After this presentation, through questioning and the viewing of German art, the students were made aware of the similarities and the differences of life across cultural barriers. The students expressed great interest in German culture, with many wanting to learn

more and to visit Germany one day to see first hand what they had learned.

Next, the students were welcomed to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), which is dedicated to protecting the human rights of children the world over. This was especially poignant to the students, who in addition to having studied this for their MDG essays, are of the same age as many of those affected by wars, diseases, and other cruel conditions. “Hearing about how children around the world suffer from those who have seen it really makes me appreciate all I have,” said ninth-grader Taynara Giandoso.

The final stop of the students’ tour of international workings was, appropriately, a tour of the United Nations itself. While visiting the Security Council, students heard explanations of the history of the UN, along with various resolutions and actions taken at the Security Council. They also saw the General Assembly, where people from the African nations were rehearsing for a festival they would be performing for the rest of the nations of the world. The surprise of the day, however, was in the effect and power that art had on the students; who were in awe of various pictures of amazing sights taken around the world. Of special effect were the gifts of member nations to the UN. These were marvelous and rare works of art, ranging from tapestries to models and sculptures. The favorite of many students was an AK-47 turned into a guitar, making an instrument of violence into one of artistic expression.

The day was an astounding success. Students not only got to study the workings of various cultures throughout the world, but learned how countries interacted and the ways the world is still in need of aid. This being the second trip for many of the upperclassmen, they had the opportunity to show the freshman class a positive role

model of a similar age, allowing the freshmen—who in the Ninth-Grade Academy at Mt. Vernon High School do not usually encounter upperclassmen—to observe how they can improve and grow into positive parts of both the world community and their own, bringing the lessons of the day home to better serve the Mt. Vernon community. Ultimately, the lessons of the day are best summed up by ninth-grader Sunane Johnson, who said, “I feel more educated than when this (day) began and realize how much there is still left to learn.” Through the UN Club and further enriching experiences, the teachers of Mt. Vernon High School look forward to providing just that opportunity. Students were presented a plaque and a letter of recommendation for their efforts in educating themselves and expanding their horizons, efforts that this distinction will only help to continue.

The following students went on the UN Trip. Ninth-Grade Freshman Academy: Charleesa Alford, Ann Marie Allen, Stephon Barnett, Michael Bell, Kerry Ann Collins, Vinicius De Paula, Jared Dendy, Taynara Giandoso, Sunane Johnson, Taniqua Mighty, Janice Mullings, Erica Saintil. Upperclassmen: Shanice Drakes, Jaqueline Graham, Erica Jackson, Jarrett Semarley, Andrew Kandhai, Joshua Kellowan, Daniel Lee, Denise Marmolejo, Kay Peat, Gerals Simpkins, and Isiah Williams.

Note: This project is generously funded by the Verizon Foundation.

Aaron Glazer, Mt. Vernon High School

Universal Declaration (Cont’d from p. 3)

Responsibility for the first draft of the Declaration was assigned to René Cassin. (A noted humanitarian and legal scholar, Cassin later served as president of the European Court of Human Rights and, in 1968, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.) This draft

was distributed to all UN members for comment. More than 50 member states participated in the final drafting. The General Assembly adopted the declaration during a session in Paris (the headquarters complex in New York City not yet having been completed). Although the tensions and divisions associated with the Cold War were beginning to emerge at the time, no state voted against the declaration. (Eight states abstained—six Soviet bloc nations, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia—and two were absent.)

As noted, the Declaration is not a legally binding document, but it has inspired and guided a series of more specific conventions, which have gone into effect after being ratified by a requisite number of states. The first of these the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was actually adopted by the General Assembly one day before the Declaration itself, on December 9, 1948. (The United States ratified it 40 years later.) Among those that followed were: the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951); the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979); the Convention against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (1984); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990). The Declaration itself, however, is the clearest and most comprehensive articulation of the fundamental principals of international human rights and serves as the cornerstone in human rights law.

Scott C. Monje

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Our Mission: *The UNA-USA is dedicated to educating, inspiring and mobilizing Americans to support the principles and vital work of the United Nations, strengthening the United Nations system, promoting constructive United States leadership in that system, and achieving the goals of the UN Charter.*

Our Vision: *A world in which humanity is spared the scourge of war, human rights are honored, the natural environment is protected, and the United States is a constructive member of the United Nations for the well-being of all humankind.*

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD! Join UNA-USA Westchester Today!

____ Please renew my membership

____ Please enroll me as a member of UNA-USA at the following level:

- () Lifetime (one-time payment) \$1,000 () Member \$40
- () Patron \$ 500 () Introductory (first year only) \$25
- () Sponsor \$ 100 () Student \$10

In addition to my membership dues, I would like to contribute to:

- () Westchester Chapter \$ _____
- () National Office \$ _____
- () Total enclosed \$ _____
- () My company matches employee contributions. (My company's matching form is attached.)
- () Please send me information on making a Planned Gift.

Name _____ (Please print)
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
 Tel: _____ E-mail: _____

Please make your check payable to UNA-USA.

Or Charge payment to your Credit Card: VISA MC Am. Express

Number: _____ Exp.Date: _____

Signature _____

Please circle areas of interest: Program, Advocacy, Education, Membership, Newsletter

Return this, with your payment to UNA-USA, to:

UNA-USA WESTCHESTER CHAPTER
 5 Robin Hill Road
 Scarsdale, NY 10583