

UNA-Westchester Global Connection



United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA)-Westchester Chapter
<http://www.unawestchester.org> December 2012

Join Us for a New Year Event

*Featuring Award-Winning Author Joan Katen
Professor at Pace University and Chair, UNA-Westchester Advocacy Committee*

**Professor Katen will speak on her novel *Love at the Edge*
and the struggles of people trapped in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**



Harrison Public Library*

2 Bruce Ave., Harrison, NY

January 6, 2013

3:00–5:00 P.M. (Sign-in begins at 2:30)

*The program will be followed by a Holiday party.
Refreshments will be served.*

For information, contact unawestchester@gmail.com.

Also, do not miss:

***Memorial Service and Celebration of
the Life of Margaret K. (Molly)***

Bruce:

Saturday, January 19, 2013, 1:00 P.M.
UN Church Center Chapel
44th Street & First Avenue

***Mid-Atlantic Conference and
Members' Day: "The U.S. at the UN:
Opportunities for Renewal"***

Monday February 4, 2013, 9:00–5:00,
United Nations headquarters, New York,
NY (conference room TBD)

***Directions:** From Hutchinson Parkway, take Exit 25 to North Street Rt. 127 toward Harrison (turn right from northbound, left from southbound). Continue on North Street for about 2 miles; then turn left onto Heineman Place. There is a park and municipal building on the left, and the library is just visible behind the park. Make a left onto Bruce Avenue. Library is brick building directly ahead on your left.

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Editors: Marcia Brewster, Scott C. Monje

Letter from the President



Dear Friends,

As 2012 comes to a close, the board of UNA-Westchester wishes you joyous holidays and peace, prosperity, and good health for the coming year!

We were all extremely saddened by the passing of our long-standing and much-loved board member Margaret K. (Molly) Bruce, on November 22, at the age of 94. She made an invaluable contribution to the United Nations since its founding in 1945, especially to its human rights program, and to the UNA-USA, in which she held many offices and received a number of awards. She was a mentor and friend to us all, and she will be very much missed.

Remembrances are included in this issue and an obituary is on our Web site, www.unawestchester.org. You can send messages to the family c/o her daughter Anne Bruce at Molly's address: 58 Washburn Rd., Mt. Kisco, NY 10549. You may also (in lieu of flowers) send contributions to UNA-USA Westchester Chapter on behalf of Margaret Bruce (return address on this newsletter). The family will be notified of contributions in Molly's name. On Dec. 11, we will participate in a Human Rights Day event sponsored by the Eleanor Roosevelt Leadership Center at Val-Kill and the Southern NY State Division. It will feature an address by Gillian Sorensen on "Whose Human Rights?" and a tribute to Molly. We are also organizing a memorial service and tribute to her life at the UN Church Center on January 19, 2013, at 1:00 P.M.

Please plan to attend our New Year's event on January 6 at the Harrison Library,

featuring a talk by board member Joan Katen, who is a Professor of International Peace and Conflict Resolution at Pace University. We welcome all our members and friends to this extremely interesting program and holiday party. Our annual Mid-Atlantic Conference and Members' Meeting will be held at the United Nations on Monday, February 4, with the theme "The U.S. at the UN: Opportunities for Renewal." Last year, this exciting event was held in the General Assembly Hall, with many students attending. This event is the essence of our association and its alliance with the UN Foundation. We also invite all members to observe one of our board meetings, normally held on the first Monday of the month at the YMCA, 250 Mamaroneck Avenue in White Plains.

The UN Day celebration ("Sustainable Energy for All: Solutions for a Prosperous World") was an outstanding event, featuring Sustainability Awards to nine high school students who had done outstanding research and work with their communities on sustainability themes. A summary report of the meeting is in this newsletter. Photos and the full report can be found on our Web site, www.unawestchester.org.

Finally, I want to thank all the members of the board and other supporters for all their assistance during this very busy year. It is such a pleasure to work with a harmonious group of people so dedicated to the work of the United Nations and world peace.

—*Marcia Brewster*

Mercy College Model UN Program

A report of the successful Model UN training program for high school students is included on the Web site. The program was held for two weeks in July 2012 and was regarded by participants as extremely useful for Model UN programs and UN Clubs.

***Fond Memories of Margaret K.
(Molly) Bruce, 1918–2012***

At our December 3 Board meeting, Board members devoted the first part of the meeting to their memories of our beloved and much-missed Molly Bruce. Some of the heart-felt reminiscences follow:

Marcia Brewster: Molly was our mentor and institutional memory, besides being a lovely and elegant woman. During our frequent phone calls, she would express her concern about global human rights issues and anything that threatened the ability of the UN to function effectively (such as budget cuts). She carried the strength of her convictions to the UN and was a stalwart at the UNA-USA. She was a leader of our Chapter since its founding.

Joan Katen: Molly's interest in human rights began when she went to Germany as a student in the late 1930s. She saw the rise of Hitler and its consequences on people. When she saw swastikas painted on walls, she would paint over them. She was an activist and a colorful person, from her sparkling blue eyes to her personality. Her fierce determination had an impact on the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and on society at large.

J. Yuhanna Edwards: I only met Molly twice, but I will never forget her beautiful smile. I am so glad that we honored her at our ceremony with the County Board of Legislators in March.

David Finch: Eastern cultures talk about a person's afterlife. We can think of that as the life that you leave behind. Molly had a fabulous afterlife in the impact that she had on the world. In her modest way, she had a huge impact at the policy and human level in the United Nations. She was also recognized with the OBE in 1978.

Brenda Smith: I joined the board just at the time we celebrated Molly's 90th birthday at Siwanoy Country Club (May 2008), and I worked closely with her on that event. She

was a brilliant woman and an important part of Eleanor Roosevelt's legacy.

Claire Heskestad: At my first meeting of the Southern NYS Division, I noticed that Molly stood out in the crowd. She was so determined and soft spoken. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was really the work of Eleanor Roosevelt and Molly Bruce. We were so lucky to have had her knowledge and dedication at UNA. She also loved a party and a glass of red wine.

Karen Rockwell El-Badry: I remember Molly well from my earliest days in the UN in the late 1960s. She was brilliant and yet unassuming. She embodied the idealism of the UN, which was strong in those days. She had a strong belief that she should make a difference in the world; that always stood out for me. When I joined UNA, and saw her in the room, it brought tears to my eyes to remember the role she played in the UN for so long. She was dedicated, focused, and knowledgeable, and a genuinely good person. I will miss her!

Narinder Kakar: That we will miss her is an understatement. She was such a strong supporter of the UN system that she was an institution unto herself. As in the Hindu belief, the person who deserves your highest respect is your guru. We sat at her feet and listened for words of wisdom.

Lilli Schindler: I only met Molly once at the birthday party we had for her this summer. I had such a wonderful time sitting next to her and listening to her stories about the early period of the UN, especially since my parents were both UN staff. She was so clear-headed, articulate and full of life.

George Garland: Molly was all about explaining the mission of the UN to people. She embodied advocacy for the UN and how to explain the mission through advocacy.

Marcia Wallace: She was a strong voice in a small frame. She made us proud and thoughtful.

Opinion: Palestine in the UN

On Nov. 29, 2012—the 65th anniversary of a UN vote that was intended to create two states, one Jewish and one Arab, from the British mandate of Palestine—the UN General Assembly voted to upgrade the status of the Palestine National Authority (PNA) from “permanent observer entity” to “nonmember observer state.” The vote was 138 to 9, with 41 abstentions. Voting against the measure were Israel, the United States, Canada, the Czech Republic, Panama, and four tiny Pacific island states. Coming a year after the PNA’s failed effort to achieve full membership in the United Nations, the vote has created a considerable stir. Israel and the United States have stressed that the result is purely symbolic and changes nothing, which only raises the question of why they are so agitated over it.

Israel and the U.S. have been hard pressed to explain their opposition to the vote. They assert that it will hinder the bilateral negotiations that are the prerequisite to true Palestinian statehood, but that is only because Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said he would not negotiate with them if the vote was held. That is a tautological argument, and it is not universally supported in Israel. In fact, opinion in Israel (as well as among U.S. Jews) is highly divided on the issue. Ehud Olmert, Netanyahu’s onetime party colleague and predecessor as prime minister, said he would not have opposed the UN vote and called it “congruent with the basic concept of the two-state solution.”

The weakness of Netanyahu’s threat not to negotiate was that he has not negotiated all along. He has publicly endorsed the notion of a two-state solution, but has described the prospective Palestinian state in the same terms he once used for the interim Palestinian “entity” of the 1990s. Netanyahu blames the Palestinians for the lack of

progress, saying that he favors negotiations “without preconditions.” Sometimes he asserts that the Palestinians have no one capable of negotiating, although that argument was undermined by the news that Olmert and PNA president Mahmoud Abbas had nearly come to a final agreement in secret negotiations in 2008. At other times, he says that Palestinian objections to the construction of Israeli settlements on their territory constitute a precondition (albeit a precondition that previous prime ministers have accepted). The steady construction leads the Palestinians to believe that he is merely stalling for time until he is ready to annex large parts of the West Bank, for people rarely rush to build on land they intend to give up. (Remember, from the Palestinian perspective, they have already given up 80% of their land—Israel—and they see settlements eating up the 20% that is left.) Netanyahu believes that he met this objection by declaring a moratorium on construction in 2009–2010. While this move was unprecedented and difficult to pass through his cabinet, it was only partial (it did not affect any ongoing projects or any construction in East Jerusalem) and temporary, with new projects waiting for it to expire. On the issue of settlements, Netanyahu may be constrained by his governing coalition’s dependence on settlers’ votes, but he has shown little interest in resolving the issue and his party’s list of candidates for the upcoming elections is filled with outright opponents of a two-state solution.

The Israeli government has expressed concern that the Palestinians will use their new “nonmember observer state” status at the UN to gain access to the International Criminal Court, which they will then seek to use against Israeli leaders. (Under the Rome Statute, which created the ICC, settling your own people in occupied territory is considered a war crime.) Such questions, however, could presumably have been

addressed through negotiation and support the notion of further talks.

For their part, the Palestinians insist that they did not go to the UN to avoid talks with Israel, but rather to compel Israel to talk to them. Moreover, the Palestinians hope that the new status will strengthen their bargaining position. The Israelis, they hope, will have to deal with them as an occupied state rather than a vanquished people and to return to the 1967 borders (at least as a basis for negotiation) rather than the settlement lines. All the same, it does not appear that Fatah (the party that runs the PNA in the West Bank) has given a great deal of thought to how it will utilize this presumed leverage.

Netanyahu speaks as though he believes that anything that gives Palestinians leverage over Israelis is automatically illegitimate. Within a day, Israel responded to the UN vote with retaliatory moves, especially plans to build more settlements. In this regard, it has opened up an especially sensitive area east of Jerusalem (the E1 corridor), where construction reportedly could divide the West Bank into two separate parts. In addition, Israel will withhold tax revenues that it collects on the PNA's behalf. These moves have been condemned by the United States and several European countries as counterproductive. While the Obama administration has sought to downplay the significance of the UN vote, a bipartisan group of U.S. senators has also responded with threats of retaliation. Their threats, however, were more conditional than Israel's; they proposed cutting off financial assistance to the PNA (but only if it tried to use the International Criminal Court against Israel) and closing the Palestinian office in Washington (but only if the PNA refused to negotiate with Israel). That, at least, does not preclude the possibility of negotiations if handled deftly.

Politically, Fatah has seen its domestic position weakened by the eight-day battle between Israel and Hamas (the rival, hard-line group that runs Gaza). Hamas's rocket assault against Israel was viewed by Palestinians as an act of defiance. Many young people in the West Bank, including some Fatah activists, celebrated the action. Moreover, by attacking, Hamas succeeded in getting Netanyahu to negotiate, if only briefly, something that Fatah's peaceful efforts have failed to achieve. Some analysts have suggested that Fatah had to do something dramatic at this point or risk losing its political viability. Rather than resort to rockets, however, Fatah continued its push for recognition at the UN. And isn't that what the UN is for, to function as an alternative to rockets?

It would benefit Israel to respond to the UN vote positively rather than through retaliation. If Fatah's domestic position is weakening, the same is happening to Israel's international position. The settlements policy and the reluctance to negotiate have eroded European support for Israel, as demonstrated in the UN vote. Also, the Arab Spring has produced new governments in the region that appear much less willing to ignore public opinion on the Palestinian question. Finally, Israel should not act in ways that bolster Hamas's standing among the Palestinians at the expense of Fatah, the group willing to deal with it peacefully. It is time for progress in negotiations.

—Scott C. Monje

UN Day 2012: "Sustainable Energy for All: Solutions for a Prosperous World"

Sunday, October 21, 2012 - Celebrating the United Nations' 67th Anniversary, the UNA-USA Westchester Chapter organized an exciting event, with the above theme. The event celebrated the "2012: International

Year for Sustainable Energy for All,” and examined international and local sustainable energy solutions. It drew over 100 people, from local elected leaders to senior officials of the UN and a number of Westchester student award winners with their families and teachers.

As participants arrived at the Unitarian Church in White Plains, they encountered an outdoor exhibit of sustainable energy solutions set up by Groundwork Hudson Valley’s Science Barge. Once inside the room, sustainable energy exhibits by five Yorktown High School students captured the essence of the day. Their experiments on solar and geothermal energy and other sustainable solutions had already received awards at the national and international levels, and their exhibits were impressive. Other exhibitors included the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), Green Mountain Energy, Transition Westchester, the New York Power Authority, the Public-Private Alliance Foundation, and the Energy Project of the UNA Southern NY State Division. As people came in, they were entertained by the solar-powered rock band, Solar Punch.

The program was opened by **Marcia Brewster**, who welcomed exhibitors and guests and introduced keynote speaker, **Nikhil Seth**, the Director of the UN’s Division for Sustainable Development. Mr. Seth discussed the results of the recent UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20), for which he headed the secretariat. This was the largest UN conference ever held, with over 50,000 people representing a large number of civil society groups. He noted that we are facing a storm of environmental, economic, and social crises: “Only a mobilization of people will change things.”

He then described how important modern forms of energy are for economic and social

life, and that they are available only for people who are connected to the grid. Over 1.4 billion people, mainly in developing countries, do not have access to modern energy sources and are not connected to the grid. A large proportion of these people are desperate, illustrating the link between energy and poverty. The UN Secretary-General’s Initiative on Sustainable Energy for All, which includes: 1. universal access; 2. energy efficiency; and 3. renewable energy. Fifty developing countries are currently working with the initiative; more than \$50 billion in commitments were mobilized at Rio+20. Mr. Seth urged people not to demand change from others, but to contribute to a prosperous world. Quoting Mahatma Gandhi, he added: “Be the change that you want to see in the world!”

The second speaker was **Elizabeth Silleck**, Regional Coordinator of NYSERDA’s Energy Smart Communities Program. She stated that in New York, the energy issue is not access, but excess. She mentioned a number of actions that we can all take to reduce our consumption of energy in whatever we do. NYSERDA’s program aims to support investment in energy efficiency which yields high returns—getting the most of what we are already generating or using less fuel to obtain the same result. NYSERDA’s programs include incentives for high-efficiency lighting, for subsidized energy audits, and for the use of renewable sources of energy, such as solar.

The question-and-answer session was moderated by **Narinder Kakar**, Board member and representative of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) at the United Nations.

In his responses to questions, Nikhil Seth said that each country responds differently to renewable sources of energy and climate change, depending on its own energy security. In Europe, renewable energy has

entered into the national and political mainstream of most countries. In developing countries, the economics of energy is extremely important. Brazil is doing much better than most other countries in terms of clean energy, especially ethanol based on sugar cane waste. The only way to make the world sit up and take notice, he added, is to have a people's movement that forces change.

Elizabeth Silleck noted that natural gas is considered a "clean energy" because it results in fewer greenhouse gases than other fossil fuels. While NYSERDA is neutral on the issue of hydrofracking, the method of natural gas extraction is controversial because of evidence that it has the potential to severely threaten water supplies. She noted that there are a number of existing activist groups that interested people can join. She also mentioned that NYSERDA will soon have a contractor with knowledge of operational issues in schools to conduct school energy audits, mainly for lighting, heating, and air conditioning.

Sustainability awards were given to nine Westchester students by UNA-USA Westchester and the UN Division for Sustainable Development. The students also received certificates from the State Assembly (**Tom Abinanti** and **Steven Katz**), the County Board of Legislators (**MaryJane Shimsky**), Councilman **Vishnu Patel** of the Town of Yorktown, and Greenburgh Town Supervisor **Paul Feiner**.

Recipients of the Sustainability Awards:

Yorktown High School: **Elizabeth Crumley** for research on characteristics of bamboo; **David (Linus) Hamann** for his research on solar energy; **George-Timothy Khandji** for his research on bio-retention in agriculture; **Devon Rosh** for his research on internal heat gain; and **Tanvi Tiwari** for her research on optimizing geothermal wells.

Edgemont High School: **Sensen Chen** for his contributions to sustainable urban farming.

Hastings High School: **Berenice Tompkins** for bringing sustainable solutions to school and community.

Yonkers High School: **Sheikh Uddin** for his contribution to sustainable urban farming.

Pace University/Croton-Harmon High School: **Taylor Vogt** for bringing sustainable solutions to his schools.

A lovely reception followed the program with networking, refreshments, and music by Solar Punch. Feedback from participants was very positive.

Board Members, Officers, and Committee Chairs

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Ex officio: George Garland, Jeanne Betsock Stillman.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (this can also be submitted on line at www.unausa.org):

____ Please renew my membership

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

- | | | | |
|--|---------|---|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (one-time payment) | \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Member | \$40 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$ 500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Introductory (first year only) | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor | \$ 100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Student | \$10 |

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

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UNA-USA WESTCHESTER CHAPTER

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