

UNA-Westchester Global Connection



United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) Westchester Chapter
<http://www.unawestchester.org> January 2016

Coming Soon to a UN General Assembly Hall near You!



The Eighth UNA-USA Mid-Atlantic Conference and Members' Day

"From Road Blocks to Building Blocks: Global Crises and the Role of the UN"

Friday, February 19, 2016, 9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M.

UNA-USA Members' Day will take place in the UN General Assembly Hall. All are welcome. In the past we have had a turnout of over 700 persons, including many students. Keynote speaker: Ambassador Susan Power, Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations (invited). Panels will cover: Climate Change, Refugees, Global Development Goals, and the Security Council. The event is free for students and UNA members. There is a special \$25

introductory fee for new members. For more information and to register, go to: <http://unausa.org/membership/una-usa-events/members-day>.

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Celebrating UN Day 2015



The United Nations Association's Westchester chapter had an amazing October weekend celebrating the UN's 70th anniversary. On Friday, October 23, Mayor Thomas Roach of White Plains graciously presided over a ceremony to raise

the UN flag at City Hall. UNA board members and UN Day partners from the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the Links, Inc., and the YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester attended the ceremony. Mayor Roach honored us with a proclamation recognizing Saturday, Oct. 24, 2015, as UN Day in White Plains and stated that he appreciated the work of the UN and its many partners, including those who participated in the ceremony at City Hall. Marcia Brewster, President of UNA-Westchester, noted that, "We are celebrating the 70th anniversary of the United Nations this year and our chapter is involved in raising awareness of the good work of the UN. This includes the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will shape the global agenda for development, peace and security, and human rights over the next 15 years. UNA has its greatest impact at the local level, working with partners such as those present here at City Hall."

The main celebration of UN Day in Westchester took place on October 25 at the YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester. The theme was "Fostering Global Citizens to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals." Over 140 people attended the event, representing communities throughout Westchester, including high school students from several Westchester schools. MaryJane Shimsky, County Legislator, presented the chapter with a proclamation resolving that "... the members of the

Westchester County Board of Legislators take great pride in joining with their esteemed colleagues ... as we celebrate United Nations Day" and that "the 24th Day of October 2015 be proclaimed Westchester United Nations Day in all of the county." Cosponsors of the event were Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (Zeta Nu Omega, Xi Chi Omega, and Pi Iota Omega chapters), The Links, Inc. (Westchester County and Greater Hudson Valley Chapters), and the YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester.

Maria Imperial, CEO of the YWCA, and Marcia Brewster, President of UNA-Westchester, welcomed all the participants and thanked all their partner organizations. Ambassador Thomas Gass, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, was our keynote speaker. Ambassador Gass provided a broad overview of how the SDGs were negotiated and what they mean to each of us as global citizens. He noted that we can all be involved directly in achieving the goals and that they are not only for governments or for developing countries. These goals apply to everyone—governments, civil society organizations, and individuals. His presentation was followed by an exciting personal account related by Martha Perez, cochair of our Young Professionals Program, about the practical application of the SDGs in renewable energy projects she has undertaken in Westchester and the Dominican Republic. The two presentations were followed by a Q and A discussion moderated by Narinder Kakar, Vice President of UNA-Westchester, who has also been directly involved in the negotiations and drafting of the SDGs.

The highlight of the event was presentations by seven high school students on individual SDGs and ways in which individuals and communities can contribute to achieving the SDGs. Aliyah Dinkins, Shadae Leslie, and Brianna McLaughlin from Mount Vernon High School; Avery Williams and Celine Bills from White Plains High School; Chanya Holness

from Woodlands High School; and Amanda Guy from Valhalla High School presented their visions on how to take action locally on one of the SDGs and contribute to the good of their communities.

It was inspiring that the overview of the SDGs given by Thomas Gass and Narinder Kakar was so directly linked to actions we can take at the household and community level, as articulated by Martha Perez and the seven students. Besides the action examples given by the students, participants were able to view and discuss sustainable energy solutions as demonstrated at a table outside the room. These included a bio-digester, a solar stove, and an ethanol stove. We all enjoyed the reception where high-level UN officials interacted with the students and community participants—all speaking the same language. If we all work together, we can achieve wonders!

The UN Day event showed a high level of collaboration and consensus on the importance of the new UN agenda, Transforming Our World. We truly had a great team of UNA board members, partners, and volunteers. We want to express our appreciation for all the contributions of everyone, especially the YWCA, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and the Links, Inc., who participated from the very beginning. We would also like to thank our speakers and student participants as well as Troy Wolfe and Rachel Pittman, from UNA-USA headquarters, who helped with the education and membership components. Our interns, Nao Shimizu and Samantha Hernandez, and the team of volunteers did an outstanding job.

—*Marcia Brewster*

Advocacy Corner—“Great Decisions”

How many times have you said to yourself, “I wish I could have input into making U.S.

foreign policy”? Well, you now have a chance to do just that. The Foreign Policy Association has designed a program called “The Great Decisions Series.” Groups of Americans are meeting all over the United States to study foreign policy and send their decisions on what actions our nation should take to those who design our foreign policy in Washington, and they are doing it through the Foreign Policy Association. The association tallies the results of ballots filled out by participants in the discussion groups and sends them to the decision makers.

I hope you will take this opportunity to join the “Great Decisions” group being formed at the Main Harrison Library at 2 Bruce Street, Harrison, NY. We will look at eight topics, one topic each month beginning February 9, 2016, at 12:30 p.m. The topics are: “Shifting Alliances in the Middle East,” “The Rise of ISIS,” “The Future of Kurdistan,” “International Migration,” “Korean Choices,” “The United Nations Post-2015,” “Climate Geopolitics: The Road to Paris and Beyond,” and “Cuba and the United States.” Each member of the group will receive a free briefing book in which each topic is discussed and background information given in about 8–10 pages. When we get together to discuss the topic, we will review a short film produced by the Foreign Policy Association or have a guest speaker give us background on the topic. Then we will have a discussion. All views and comments are welcome and appreciated.

I will be the moderator and my intention is that you have a meaningful and enjoyable experience, get to know some very interesting people, and enjoy getting together once a month to learn and make your views known. I’ve taught political science at Pace University for fifteen years, and attended Columbia University’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences studying public law and government, and Middle Eastern politics. My book *Love at the Edge* concerns the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and I received the Thomas Jefferson

Award in Washington for my book and my work in peace and justice studies. I'm honored and excited to lead the discussions.

A free pizza lunch will be provided for the first session. After that, we can bring lunch. Coffee will be provided.

If you decide to join us, please pick up your free briefing book at the Harrison library before the first session so that you can read the first article before February 9, and do let me know that you've decided to join us at 914-698-7060.

Hope to see you there!

—Joan Katen

Mount Vernon Endorses CEDAW

The Mount Vernon City Council continues its support for “Cities for CEDAW”—a campaign that encourages municipalities to adopt women’s rights ordinances in keeping with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

In September 2015, the Mount Vernon City Council passed a resolution that provided a framework for the city and community to (1) examine policies and practices in relation to women and girls, (2) work to rectify discrimination based on gender, and (3) implement measures to promote the development and advancement of women and girls within the community.

Councilman J. Yuhanna Edwards, Chair of the Public Safety and Codes Committee, was the catalyst for the resolution and is proud that the City of Mount Vernon was the first city in Westchester County to act on “Cities for CEDAW” legislatively. “I firmly believe that the City of Mount Vernon is a place where women and girls can find the opportunity and

support to reach their full potential,” says Edwards. “However,” he continues, “it is always important to keep the concerns of women and girls on the forefront of the legislature and community as a whole. That is what this resolution seeks to do.”

Marcia Brewster, President of the Westchester Chapter of the United Nations Association of the USA, adds, “The U.S. is one of only six countries in the world that have not ratified [CEDAW], which came into force in 1981. Recently, over 100 mayors, including Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York City, have committed to supporting this ‘Cities for CEDAW’ campaign. [The Mount Vernon City Council’s action is] an important step to support women’s rights in our towns and is a role model for other cities in Westchester.”

City Council President Marcus A. Griffith remarked that, “Mount Vernon continues to be the first in legislation that considers the importance of international relations and rights for all individuals.”

Since its adoption, Councilman Edwards has been hosting a series of meetings with city staff, community members, and members of the Westchester County Human Rights Commission to further implement the resolution and the underlying CEDAW principles.

At the Social Studies Conference

One of the activities of the Westchester Chapter’s Education Committee for over a decade has been to present a display table at the annual conference for social studies teachers of Westchester and neighboring Lower Hudson counties. This year the Westchester–Lower Hudson Council for the Social Studies held its conference on December 11 at the Renaissance Westchester Hotel in West Harrison, and three members of our

chapter were there, along with two UN staff members from the Secretariat's Department of Public Information (DPI).

Armed with pertinent materials published by DPI, the volunteers offered a variety of useful information to many of the conferees, who expressed interest in incorporating UN-related topics into their programs. UN posters and lists of good resource websites were among the many popular items, as well as information about Model UN. It is our hope, through outreach such as this, to encourage awareness and understanding among young people of the UN's goals and work in today's world.

—*Karen Rockwell El-Badry*

Civil Society and the Climate Summit

The Paris climate summit of November–December 2015 was widely known as COP21 (because that is easier to say than its official name, the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change). In total, 45,000 people participated, directly or indirectly, at COP21 including country delegates, observers, civil society, and journalists. Some 20,000 people were officially accredited and had access to the conference itself; others took part in debates, saw exhibitions, and attended talks or screenings in the civil society area.

Before the conference, 184 countries had submitted Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) to limiting greenhouse-gas emissions. These “climate actions” outline how, and by how much, countries will reduce their emissions and the actions they will undertake to strengthen climate resilience.

These countries represent about 90% of global carbon emissions. (Some developing countries submitted two versions: one stating what they would do on their own, and one what they

would be able to do with financial help.) The objective is to limit temperature increase to 2°C, but the level of commitment actually offered will not meet that goal, leading perhaps to an increase of perhaps 2.7°C–3.5°C. This will mean crossing “planetary boundaries,” entering the zone that risks irreversible environmental damage.

China leads all nations in emissions, with 23.6% of all global emissions, followed by the United States with 17.9%. The European Union as a group is close to the U.S. level. China's earlier development efforts added the equivalent of one coal-fired plant per day for many years, which succeeded in lifting 200 million people out of extreme poverty but also produced lots of emissions. Moreover, after a U.S.-China joint plan on climate change was announced earlier this year, reports came out telling us that China was actually burning 17% more than it had reported.

The next largest national emitter is India, accounting for 5.5% of all emissions. India, however, is about to launch development plans for much greater electric power. A key question is whether India opts for coal or renewables to meet the energy needs for a billion people.

Fulfillment of the U.S. commitment at Paris depends on the implementation of President Obama's Clean Power Plan. Yet 24 state attorneys general are suing to stop implementation of the plan, and Congress voted to defund it. Most of the Republican presidential candidates have denounced the Clean Power Plan.

So this is where we are. Civil society's engagement has been critical in setting and advancing the climate agenda. In addition to serving as the world's conscience, civil society is essential for taking climate action.

The U.S. effort, which only goes part way toward what is needed, has opposition. Action

on the Clean Power Plan now rests with the states, which are preparing their action plans. You can follow up on Paris by asking your state government to implement a robust Clean Power Plan! Here are some further ways in which civil society can affect climate change:

- In 2009, McKinsey and Company, a global management group, produced a study showing that the greatest source of electric power in the United States is efficiency! They documented efficiency measures for the residential, commercial, industrial, and government sectors that could reduce demand by 20%! Promoting efficiency is an important strategy, but the adoption of efficiency measures has been slow.

- The Water Environment Federation, an organization of wastewater treatment plants, estimates that such plants currently use 3% of the electricity generated in the United States. If anaerobic digestion were added to treat wastewater, biosolids, and food waste, which is the largest part of the U.S. solid waste going to landfills, this could generate 12% of U.S. electricity. That equals the share of electricity currently generated from renewable sources.

- In September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals, number 13 being “Climate Action.” The Social Good Summit, which is sponsored by the UN Foundation for young social media participants and convenes alongside the UN General Assembly, featured the Sustainable Development Goals this year. One item was the need to break down “silos” to allow new paradigms. The silos of wastewater management, solid waste management, and electric power generation must be combined to realize renewable energy from waste.

- The UN Foundation is sponsoring “Earth to Paris” to allow civil society to participate in the follow-up to Paris. Your voice is needed!

- The UN Sustainable Energy for All Initiative has generated significant momentum since its

launch in 2011. Developed and developing countries have partnered with the Initiative to advance over 50 High Impact Opportunities (HIOs) with a wide range of stakeholders undertaking actions with significant potential to advance Sustainable Energy for All.

- Post-Paris we may hear about massive geoengineering schemes to add materials to the atmosphere or oceans to ameliorate global warming. Dr. Vandana Shiva, an Indian scholar, environmental activist, and antiglobalization author, argues instead for attention to the way in which we treat our soils, as healthy soil takes up carbon, absorbs water for groundwater recharge and flood control, and supports food production.

- Biocycle Magazine* published an article on the state of composting in America. It notes that 30% of damaged U.S. land could be used as a huge carbon sink if remediated with compost.

- The U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Energy and the EPA have a biogas roadmap that shows sources of manures and other organic feed-stocks that could provide energy from biogas. The sun’s energy is captured in organic matter every day!

- Organic matter from wastewater treatment plants is currently incinerated. That takes energy for disposal instead of extracting energy for life. Civil society can urge change.

At COP21 and future conferences, in our daily lives here in the United States, civil society provides the voice that can put pressure on leaders to come to an agreement. We know we are at a critical juncture in climate change policy, and we need civil society, you, to help our leaders move in the right direction for our planet, for our children’s future.

—George Garland

Selecting a New Secretary-General

Ban Ki-moon's second term as secretary-general of the United Nations concludes this year. Although no formal rule limits the number of terms that a secretary-general may serve (or how long the term is, for that matter), two five-year terms has become the norm.

The selection of a secretary-general entails few formal rules. The process resembles the appointment of a Supreme Court justice more than the election of a president. A single candidate is nominated by the Security Council and then approved by the General Assembly. The General Assembly has never rejected a nominee. Traditionally the real choice has been made behind the scenes by the permanent members of the Security Council. Their veto power gives them an outsized voice. The relevant meetings are actually held outside the Security Council Chamber so that participants can avoid the rules about precise record keeping. Yet the choice must also be generally acceptable to both the larger Security Council and the General Assembly, and the tradition of rotating secretaries-general from different geographic regions must be respected as well.

Reform of the system has been a topic of discussion at the UN in recent months, and this year a modest change has been made. For the first time, all members of the General Assembly will be consulted before the Security Council begins its deliberations. A December 2015 letter from the president of the Security Council and the president of the General Assembly solicited suggestions from the member states. The candidates may then engage in "informal dialogues or meetings" with member states, during which they can discuss their positions on UN priorities.

Some have suggested that, after 70 years and eight secretaries-general, it may also be time

for a further change. The presidents' letter encouraged member states "to consider presenting women, as well as men, as candidates for the position of Secretary-General." Since it is Eastern Europe's turn, one possibility could be Irina Bokova, the Bulgarian director-general of UNESCO. Of course, the permanent members of the Security Council will still have the biggest say.

—*Scott C. Monje*

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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 | FREE |

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

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- Lee Bloom Memorial Fund \$ _____
- National Office \$ _____
- Total enclosed \$ _____
- My company matches employee contributions. (My company's matching form is attached.)

Name _____ (Please print)

Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Tel: _____ E-mail: _____

Please make your check payable to UNA-USA.

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