

UNA-SF Courier



The voice of the United Nations Association of San Francisco • una-sf.org • Fall 2008

United Nations Day 2008

Celebrating the sixty-third anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations and the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Association of San Francisco invites you to a reception honoring

Gillian Sorensen,

Senior Advisor and National Advocate of the United Nations Foundation, speaking on *Human Rights—the Possible Dream*.

UNA-SF will present awards of excellence to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch

Thursday, October 23, 5:30 pm

5:30 pm: wine and hors d'oeuvres

6:15 pm: program and presentations

7:15 to 9:00 pm: special screening of the award-winning film "The Visitor"

The Green Room, War Memorial Building
401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, second floor
\$50; \$35 for members of UNA or co-sponsor organizations. Advance reservations required. Checks should be payable to "UNA-SF". Contributions are tax deductible. Please respond by October 15 to UNA-SF, 3450 Sacramento Street, # 507, San Francisco, CA 94118, or to unasfo@gmail.com or 415-674-9701.

BEYOND BELIEF

Monday, October 6, 6:00 pm

Screening and discussion at Variety Preview Room
582 Market Street, San Francisco (see page 5)

PRESIDENTS' COLUMN

Pre-Election Politics

By Kimberly Weichel (President, UNA-SF and UNA-Marin County) and Herb Behrstock (President, East Bay Chapter)

With elections only a couple of months away, it's appropriate to ask: "Where does the UNA-USA and our San Francisco and East Bay Chapters stand?"

First, it's important to emphasize: UNA-USA has long been a non-political, non-partisan, and non-profit organization. It's one of the country's largest whose members share an affinity in international relations and interest to meet the priority challenges that face our planet through international understanding and cooperation. > 7

United Nations Foundation comes to San Francisco

The United Nations Foundation, a co-sponsor of the United Nations Day program (left) was launched in 1998 by Ted Turner's historic billion-dollar gift to help further the goals of the United Nations.

The Foundation is an independent public charity that seeks to inform and educate Americans about the United Nations and US-UN issues, with a focus on the environment, children's health, and human rights in the developing world.

The UN was founded as a platform for promoting peace and advancing human rights. In this capacity, it has helped to prevent deadly conflicts, rebuild countries emerging from war and support nations in

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democratic development. Sixty years after its adoption, the UN continues to champion the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' vision for realizing "the dignity and worth of the human person."



The Foundation's Senior Advisor and National Advocate Gillian Sorensen, a speaker at the UN Day program, has had a long career working with and for the UN. She will speak on the topic, Human Rights—the Possible Dream.

From 1997 to 2003, she served as Assistant Secretary-General for External Relations on appointment by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. She was responsible for outreach to civil society, including NGOs committed to peace, justice, development, and human rights.

From 1993 to 1996, she served as Special Adviser for Public Policy on appointment by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, where she led the global commemoration of the UN's Fiftieth Anniversary and the coordination of the UN50 Summit at Headquarters in New York with 180 Heads of Government participating.

Passion, Partnership, Human Rights

The 61st Annual DPI-NGO Conference

By Susan J. Zipp

UN Under-Secretary General Kiyo Akasaka chaired the opening and closing sessions of the 2008 UN Department of Public Information's Nongovernmental Organization (DPI-NGO) conference at UNESCO headquarters in Paris with encouragement for people everywhere to speak out and take action in support of universal human rights. He added that the gravest error is indifference—doing nothing when we see people suffering.

This conference honored the founding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) sixty years ago in Paris and included special keynote speakers who were motivated by Eleanor Roosevelt to join the UDHR preparation process and signing in 1948.

Participants and human rights pioneers convened in Paris for passionate and profound dialogues on the responsibility to protect against violations of human rights, and government accountability. 180 countries and 310 NGOs were represented.

Discussions ranged from the International Criminal Court (ICC) where individuals are judged for war crimes and crimes against humanity, to the Earth Charter, a source of prevention by cultivating a respect for life and a culture of peace. Additional topics included child soldiers, violence against women as war crimes, and overcoming discrimination to realize human rights and dignity for all. These discussions were held during three days of plenary, round-table, and small group dialogues, and informal conversations between sessions.

The closing ceremony was highlighted with the remarkable interpretation of the words "universal", "declaration" and "non-governmental" by the Ambassador of France Stephane Hessel, who at 90 reflected on his participation in the entire 1948 UDHR process. "Universal" was

included in the UDHR along with 30 articles and a number of "whereases" to clearly embrace all of the world. "The Declaration represents the spirit to fight against oppression, using the voice of the people. And "Non-Governmental" is found in article 71 of the UN Charter to signify the representation of not only governments, but the value, dignity and respect of all people. Mr. Hessel praised civil society for having the courage of our convictions, reminding us that nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something."

The upbeat mood was taken to a higher level with the videocast of Ingrid Betancourt live from UN Headquarters. In 2002 while a candidate for president of Columbia she was kidnapped and held prisoner for nearly 7 years. Her release in July 2008 left her traumatized and unaware of the strategy of fear which overtook the world. With relief and peace reflected in her face, Ms. Betancourt shared her experience of being silenced and isolated, and reminded us of the right we all have in using the power of our voices.

Dynamic energy and vision emerged from the meetings and expanded the hearts and minds of all who attended. It is fundamental to have the courage to continue advancing the principles and values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Our mission now is to live true to our mission and share this passion with everyone we meet.

[Susan J. Zipp is vice president of UNASF, an advisor to the Communications Coordination Committee for the UN, and DPI-ECOSOC representative for the Association of World Citizens. Contact: suezip@empowertheun.org]

UN BOOKSHELF

John Bolton, the UN, and the Collapse of the Bush Doctrine

Chris O'Sullivan

John Bolton, *Surrender is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations and Abroad*, Threshold Editions, 2007.

John Bolton is perhaps best remembered for the extraordinary way he became ambassador to the United Nations. In the spring of 2005, President Bush made it clear that he urgently wanted Bolton at the UN. When Bolton failed to obtain Senate confirmation, the president took the extraordinary step of a recess appointment to send him to the UN. Bush argued that such a radical maneuver was absolutely necessary for achieving his administration's second-term foreign policy agenda. Bolton was understandably flattered. Few appointees in American history have received the honor of a president going to such extreme lengths on their behalf.

It may then come as a surprise to learn that Bolton and Bush have recently had a very acrimonious breakup. At a recent White House gathering of neoconservative activists, Bush was attacked for abandoning the cause. In an op-ed in that day's *Wall Street Journal*, Bolton criticized the administration for betraying the true path. "Nothing can erase the ineffable sadness," Bolton wrote, "of an American presidency, like this one, in total intellectual collapse."

His indictment of the administration was directed at its recent embrace of the diplomatic track in North Korea. At the White House meeting, Bush grew increasingly testy at the very mention of Bolton. "Let me just say from the outset

that I don't consider Bolton credible," Bush said, bitterly. "I spent political capital for him." One can understand Bush's frustration.

More than five years after pushing for the war in Iraq, Bolton and many of his associates are now castigating the administration for its supposed timidity.

Moreover, an unpopular war and occupation has exposed the contradictions of the Bush doctrine, which the administration has now largely abandoned. Bolton may not realize the irony that an issue he so passionately advocated—a war in Iraq—has done much to undermine his efforts to redefine American foreign policy.

In his memoir of his year at the United Nations, *Surrender is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations and Abroad*, Bolton's displeasure is a constant theme. It is not clear, however, whom Bolton is most displeased with: the United Nations or the administration that sent him there?

Recent conservative and neoconservative criticism of the Bush administration has focused on its exploration of the diplomatic path in North Korea and Iran and also on its reluctant consideration of a timetable for withdrawal in Iraq. But, while the Bush administration will soon come to an end, the UN will endure. For Bolton, a man who has spent much of his life criticizing the UN, this must be a bitter realization.

Bolton is uncomfortable with the neoconservative label, but his story will be

familiar to anyone with knowledge of the neoconservatives and their worldview, particularly their hostility toward the United Nations.

Bolton makes no effort to disguise his dislike of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. He charges that Annan's commitment to UN reform was merely cosmetic and that he was insufficiently supportive of Israel.

Bolton is particularly critical of Annan for not supporting the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq. This charge obscures the fact that the Security Council, as well as the vast majority of the members of the General Assembly, opposed the invasion from the very beginning. This opposition stemmed, not, as Bolton implies, from anti-Americanism, but from the fact that UN weapons inspectors had documented that the foundation of the Bush administration's case for war—Iraqi weapons of mass destruction—was completely fraudulent. Despite that, after the American occupation, Annan established a UN mission in Iraq headed by Sergio Vieira de Mello, who was subsequently killed in Baghdad along with 22 others when UN headquarters was bombed. Undeterred, the Secretary General later dispatched a high-level envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, to rescue the Bush administration's floundering political strategy for Iraq. Bolton's decision to ignore the contributions and sacrifices of these two envoys is the most serious omission in the book, and the fact remains that the biggest obstacle to greater United Nations involvement in Iraq was the Bush

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administration's ideological hostility toward the UN, not Kofi Annan.

The book's other weakness is a misunderstanding of American diplomacy and its relationship to the United Nations. American diplomacy can succeed at the UN when Washington seeks to lead, but not when it's perceived as aiming to coerce or dominate. Bolton's account reveals confusion about the UN's role and its relationship to the United States. The UN's origins are not rooted in some sinister scheme to undermine American sovereignty, but in the realities of the first half of the 20th century, when more than 75 million people died in two cataclysmic world wars. The founders of the United Nations did not believe it could eradicate war but they did believe they could create a system where many conflicts might be avoided, and those conflicts that did ignite might have a forum for resolution. Perhaps Bolton needs to be reminded of the words of former Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, who warned that the UN was not created to help mankind ascend to heaven, but rather to prevent mankind from descending into hell.

If the United States is genuinely interested in working with the United Nations, Washington might want to send its most effective advocates to the UN, not its most prickly ultranationalists. To be successful there, the post requires someone with the ability to work well with others while also making a compelling case for American objectives. Thomas Pickering, George H. W. Bush's ambassador to the United Nations (1989 to 1992), is one successful example. Bolton, on the other hand, often proved incapable of working co-operatively with others, sensing slights where they often never existed, and suspecting those who disagreed with

him of having the worst possible motives. Much like his neoconservative associates, Bolton's "enemies" too often tended to be anyone who disagreed with him, demonstrating an inability to distinguish between those who truly wished the United States ill and those who merely disagreed with it over specific issues.

With Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld replaced by Robert Gates, and key neoconservatives discredited and now attacking the administration (and one another), the Bush administration has taken an increasingly realist approach to diplomacy in the last few months, particularly over North Korea, Iran, and Iraq – all nations once formerly known as Bush's axis of evil. The administration's relations with the United Nations have also improved. Bolton is not happy with this recent turn of events and he has stepped up his criticism of Bush. He has also recently criticized the foreign policy proposals of both Barack Obama and John McCain, this despite being mentioned as a possible secretary of state in a future McCain administration. Bolton's criticism of both candidates is true to his independence of mind and philosophical consistency. Whether you agree with Bolton or not, he has often demonstrated a greater commitment

to ideas than to the powerful patrons he has served, and he has never shrunk from publicly speaking his mind – quite unlike his former state department boss, Colin Powell. But McCain might want to reconsider Bolton for another reason: While promoting *Surrender is Not an Option* at the recent Hay literary festival in Wales, human rights activists attempted a citizen's arrest of Bolton, accusing him of war crimes related to the war in Iraq. The former American ambassador to the United Nations had to be spirited away by a phalanx of security guards. The human rights activists said they were undeterred and might try again during Bolton's next trip abroad. With the prospect of similar encounters on the horizon, Bolton might want to re-consider future appointments requiring overseas travel.

[Chris O'Sullivan, a fellow at the Center for International Studies, teaches international history at the University of San Francisco. He is the author of *The United Nations: A Concise History* (2005); *Sumner Welles: Postwar Planning and the Quest for a New World Order* (2008), and the forthcoming *Colin Powell: American Foreign Policy From Vietnam to Iraq* (2008).]

THE ADVOCACY CORNER

A regular feature of the *Courier*,
The Advocacy Corner for this issue
is available at una-sf.org.

2009 National High School Essay Contest on the United Nations

by JoAnn Aviel

UNA-SF will be participating in the 2009 national high school essay contest on the United Nations. Since 1986, the National High School Essay Contest on the United Nations has inspired students to engage in global issues and the work of the UN through scholarship and critical thinking. Each year, UNA-USA publishes a topic and question of particular importance to the international community. Students then conduct research and write a response to the question, based not only on the information they have found, but also on their own views and opinion.

It is vital to engage high school students in learning about the UN's role, especially as it becomes ever more apparent that all people must think of themselves as citizens not only of a particular town or country, but of the world as well.

This year's National High School Essay Contest on the United Nations focuses on Millennium Development Goal Seven, and asks students to tackle the challenge of ensuring environmental sustainability. Students will write a letter to the President of the United States answering the following questions:

1. Why is ensuring environmental sustainability so important?
2. What should the United States do to ensure that the UN's *Millennium Development Goal 7* will be reached by 2015?

Students will submit their essays electronically by midnight January 5, 2009. Essays must be no longer than 1,500 words, typed and double spaced. The Essay Contest is open to all US students in grades 9 through 12. One first place winner will receive an honorarium of \$2,000, as well as airfare and accommodations for him/herself and one

parent or guardian to attend UNA-USA's Members' Day, held at the UN Headquarters in March 2009, as an honored guest.

There, the winner will receive his or her award in a formal ceremony before UNA-USA's members. One second place winner will receive an honorarium in the amount of \$1,500. One third place winner will receive an honorarium in the amount of \$750. Each winner's essay will be sent to the new United States President through appropriate UNA-USA channels.

Our local chapter will provide judges to select semi-finalists from this area. The names of semi-finalists from our area will be forwarded to UNA-USA headquarters for review and selection of finalists by January 30, 2009. Qualified judges of the UNA-USA staff will evaluate the submissions of the semi-finalists using the national judging criteria.

From these evaluations, the first, second and third place national winners will be selected on or about February 27, 2009. UNA-SF will honor the semifinalists from our area at our annual meeting in May 2009. For more information on the high school essay contest, you can contact JoAnn Aviel at javiel@sfsu.edu.

[JoAnn Aviel is Professor of International Relations at San Francisco State University and a member of the Board of Directors of UNA-USA.]

Beyond Belief

Monday, Oct. 6, 6:00 pm

Screening and discussion at Variety Preview Room

582 Market Street (at Second Street)
San Francisco

UNA-SF is cooperating with Search for Common Ground and the Rotary Club of San Francisco to present a special screening and discussion of the award-winning film, *Beyond Belief*, on October 6 at The Screening Room, 582 Market Street (at Second Street) in San Francisco. Registration will begin at 6:00 pm with light refreshments available. The film will be shown at 6:30 pm, and will be followed by discussion. Tickets will be available at \$10. Seating is limited.

Beth Murphy is the Director and Producer of the 92-minute film. The film describes the actions taken by Susan Retik and Patti Quigley, two ordinary soccer moms living in the affluent suburbs of Boston, after tragedy struck on September 11, 2001. Their husbands died in the airplanes that struck the World Trade Center.

Rather than turning inwards, grief compelled them to focus on the country where the terrorists who took their husbands' lives were trained: Afghanistan. During the following years, as they coped with their loss and struggled to raise their families as single mothers, these extraordinary women dedicated themselves to empowering Afghan widows whose lives had been ravaged by decades of war, poverty and oppression—factors they considered to be the root causes of terrorism.

As Susan and Patti made the courageous journey from their comfortable neighborhoods to the most desperate Afghan villages, they discovered a powerful bond with the widows halfway around the world, and a profound way to move beyond tragedy.

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Second, UNA-USA undeniably operates in the framework of long-standing beliefs and values, concrete goals and policy perspectives.

UNA-USA engages in substantive issues, not personalities nor political parties.

Consequently, UNA-USA and our Chapters unabashedly support policy positions and programs that focus on what is needed for the betterment of both the world and our country. Moreover, we take a stand about how to enhance results-oriented collaboration – particularly to support the United Nations and optimize ways that it can function most effectively.

More specifically, UNA-USA's national board and our 175 chapters have adopted policy positions on some 20 important international goals and issues. Of course, it's inescapable that subjectivity enters into the adoption of national policy positions. Not every member agrees with every word or policy that is adopted through consultative processes – though they're based on inputs from UNA-USA chapters, divisions and the national leadership. However, there's a clear consensus among thousands of our members and participants in our programs.

Objectively, for nearly 8 years, American leadership in the White House and on Capitol Hill has deviated from many of these values and positions. Why assert that point in a non-political organization? Because unilateralism, polarization, opportunism and abuse of international conventions and treaties have too often characterized American policy and action – as perceived by other governments of UN member countries and undeniably by a high proportion of Americans.

Now, candidates for President and Congress are either aligned with the values and positions that UNA-USA supports, or they aren't. For many of us, this is a highly significant set of issues and yardsticks among which to measure candidates. The elections present an opportunity to decide who will steer our nation and strongly influence how the world's future will be addressed.

For more information about UNA-USA's positions, visit UNA's national website: unausa.org/elections2008. Also, check out our local Bay Area websites at una-sf.org and unausaeastbay.org.



The City College of San Francisco offers Introduction to the United Nations

Jay Sayed, instructor • Course IDST 7
September through December 2008
3 units, UC and CSU transferable
All course sessions open to the public
City College of San Francisco
50 Phelan Avenue, San Francisco

This course will study the mechanism of the United Nations Organization and suggest measures for improvement in certain fields. Diplomats and other experts in international relations will make special presentations before the class.

In addition to studying the theory and practice of international diplomacy, students evaluate the successes and challenges of collective security, peacekeeping attempts, and technological cooperation. Instructional materials include a textbook, DVDs, films, and current articles.

The City College of San Francisco has an open-door registration policy. Anyone interested in taking this class is welcome to sign in through the CCSF Admission Office at Conlan Hall, City College of San Francisco, 50 Phelan Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94112; 415-239-3000.

For more information see ccsf.edu or contact instructor Jay Sayed at uncourse@yahoo.com.

Northern California Division Report

Lyndie Kahanek

Since our last *Courier* issue, the UNA Northern California Division (NCD) had a successful board meeting held in San Francisco. UNA of San Francisco hosted the event at the German Consulate General's beautiful office/residence.

Larry Levine, UNA Regional Director, discussed national UNA issues, including a concern that several high-level staff members have resigned in response to a national UNA restructuring process. The meeting continued with Rita Miran, VP of Programs and Advocacy Chair UNA-East Bay, who discussed the presidential campaign and advocacy. In addition to nominations, budget and chapter "Highlights and Best Practices" reports, board members broke into small groups to explore specific topics. The "Interest Groups" were in five categories:

Structural, Environmental, Education, Chapter Leadership Empowerment, and Advocacy.

UNA-USA celebrates their 50th Annual Global Leadership Awards Gala honoring outstanding champions of the Millennium Development Goals on Wednesday, October 1, 2008 in New York City at The Waldorf Astoria.

Academy Award winning actor and UN Goodwill Ambassador Michael Douglas will host the Global Leadership Awards Gala.

For more information about UNA-USA and UNA-NCD, please visit www.unausa.org/northerncalifornia.

[Lyndie Kahanek is Vice President of Communications for the Northern California Division of UNA-USA and Vice President for UNA-SF.]

The Rotary Peace Symposium

The Rotary Club of San Francisco, in observance of its Centennial year, will hold a Peace Symposium in San Francisco, California on March 15 and 16, 2009.

The symposium event is dedicated to building world peace and understanding, a core mission of both Rotary International and the United Nations. Several partner organizations will be co-sponsors including several United Nations Associations in the Bay Area, the University of San Francisco, and the Rotary Peace Fellows of the University of California at Berkeley.

Persons interested in working on the program or having questions may contact Cecile Chiquette at 415-777-4488, Peter Lagarias at 415-460-0100, ext. 111, or Eric Schmautz at 415-547-3384.

YPICs Meet in Colorado for Training, Planning

By Jette Winckler

On September 21, as the UN and organizations worldwide observed the International Day of Peace, Young Professionals from UNA chapters all over the USA came together in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

These dedicated young peacemakers for the UN met for a weekend of trainings, networking, and strategic planning to expand the YPIC movement. The retreat included advocacy trainings, learning about UN issues, discussions and skills-building and was made possible through a 2006 grant from the Ford Foundation to mobilize young Americans. The main goal of local YPIC groups is to educate, inspire and motivate young professionals to take action in support of the Millennium

Development Goals. This effort is also an integral part of UNA-USA's mission to encourage strong US leadership in Washington for the UN system and also advocate locally for responsible US participation in the UN's vital work.

Andrea Hightower of UNA-SF's YPIC group attended the retreat as a delegate in place of Jette Winckler who has served as National Leadership Council Member and developed its training seminars on Accountability, Transparency, and Governance. Sultana Ali, Alexandria Faiz and Fabrice Pierre of the Executive YPIC committee along with other YPIC leaders had put together a training program in Colorado. Andrea will bring back new tools and information to the local YPIC group and work to increase YPIC activities.

YPIC advocacy events are an important part of the UNA-USA's programs and Lifelong Service Learning about the United Nations – a term I continue to promote to be incorporated in UNA-USA mission statements and resolutions! Young Professionals must strive to stay as committed to peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding as the Babyboomer generation and our grandparents, the Greatest Generation have. In the spirit of the International Peace Day, tell someone about the United Nations and, ask not what the UN can do for you; ask what you can do for the UN.

[Jette Winckler is a UN-accredited NGO representative to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, and a former Vice President of UNA-SF.]

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The United Nations Association of San Francisco (UNA-SF) is the San Francisco chapter of the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA, unausa.org), a national, nonpartisan, and nonprofit organization.

UNA-USA is a center for innovative programs to engage Americans in issues of global concern, from education and HIV/AIDS to peace, security, and international law. Its educational and humanitarian campaigns, including teaching students in urban schools, clearing minefields, and providing school-based support for children living in HIV/AIDS-affected communities in Africa, allow people to make a global impact at the local level. UNA-USA encourages United States leadership in the United Nations and is a part of the World Federation of United Nations Associations.

UNA-USA has more than 175 chapters and divisions across the country and nearly 20,000 members. These members carry out programs and campaigns at the local level through events, educational promotions and fundraising. The Association also has a Student Alliance—a nationwide network of students, from elementary school to college, that makes students' opinions regarding global challenges heard amongst their peers, within their communities, across the nation, and around the world—and a young professionals network called Young Professionals for International Cooperation (YPIC) with more than 1,500 members. For membership information see unausa.org.

Please send mailing address corrections to UNA-USA, Membership Services office, 801 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017, or contact Heather Reine, hreine@unausa.org.