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The Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office serves UU congregations as the center of information, advocacy and action at the United Nations and its affiliated agencies in New York City. The UU UN Office provides UUs a locus to join hands with the international community to build world community with peace and justice. Faith and action intersect for UUs in the global arena of the United Nations and its affiliated non-governmental organizations. The UU UN Office joins about 400 other faith-based organizations with consultative status at the United Nations; each exercising influence to foster the values of their faith. The UU UN Office has succeeded in helping to set up the International Criminal Court and to ensure that the rights of women and the GLBT community are on the UN agenda. The office has partnered with other NGOs to advocate major reductions in military spending and global reductions in both nuclear and small arms production and sales at the UN Disarmament Conference in Mexico City in September 2009. The UU UNO has played a major role to end criminal sanctions based on sexual orientation.

### **Courage in Uganda, Courage of Our Faith**

- The UU-UNO sexual orientation/gender identity human rights officer, Rev. Patricia Ackerman went to Uganda to support Unitarian Universalists in Uganda who are protesting the anti-gay bill in the Ugandan Parliament. The UU-UNO has become media savvy orchestrating media spots on CNN and other news outlets to expose the role of American fundamentalists in provoking homophobia around the world.
- The UU-UNO gained credibility and respect within the international community, speaking out for the rights of those who are often jailed and tortured for nothing more than their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- The UU-UNO proudly maintains the only faith-based sexual orientation/gender identity advocacy program at the United Nations...a sad commentary on the deafening silence of other denominations on this critical issue.
- As a result of UU-UNO advocacy (and the courage of our convictions), the UU-UNO was asked by the UUA to advise and support our congregations in Uganda who are risking their lives in protest to yet another anti-gay bill which would imprison and slaughter countless innocent victims of prejudice and bigotry. To add insult to injury, the current bill would imprison anyone who helps a gay person or who fails to report gays and lesbians to the police. The UU-UNO has led the faith-based community against this bill since March 2009 and it may have succeeded derailing this horrific legislation.
- The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) asked the UU-UNO to lead the American faith group against homophobia.

The UU UN Office is vigilant and active in looking for ways to implement the principals of our faith at the United Nations and around the world. A network of more than 450 UU UN Office envoy members in congregations across the U.S. and Canada fulfill their commitment to the 6<sup>th</sup> UU principal of world community by conducting programs and workshops about the work of the United Nations. Via e-mail, Action Alerts are sent to over 2,600 UUs on what the UU UNO is doing and how congregations can stop the kill-the-gays bill in Uganda. As of this writing the UU-UNO led activism seems to have ensured the Ugandan kill-the-gays bill will not become law. The UU UNO also keeps members informed of current UN Resolutions and information of where and how the UN System is intervening in international crises around the world. The [www.uu-uno.org](http://www.uu-uno.org) website offers up-to-date UN news, the calendar of the UU UN Office events and projects, UN conference opportunities, and organizational information about the UU UN Office. “Window on the World,” this UU UNO newsletter is published three times a year (online twice a year with one hard copy). “Window on the World” includes articles on the activities of the UU UNO, especially the unique work it does with young people in intergenerational programs. This publication also highlights the work the UU UNO does to promote the United Nations Millennium Goals, especially those to improve human rights, ensure education for all our children, end genocide and war.

The UU UN Office Internship Program offers a unique opportunity for young people to have direct work experience at the United Nations. The UU UN Office provides these experiences to students attending or graduates of senior high school, college, and post graduate programs. UU UN Office interns learn skills in international affairs. Gaining a global perspective at a young age serves to inform future career choices. One proud mother recently told the Executive Director, “My daughter went to Law School because of her internship with the UU UNO.”

Every Spring, the Annual Intergenerational Seminar brings together Canadian and U.S. UUs of all ages to the United Nations for a UN-focused three-day conference. UN staff, diplomats, lobbyists, media political commentators, interfaith experts and leaders from the NGO community lead study and discussion on important UN issues. In 2010 the topic was, “Climate Change: Head, Heart and Hands Around the World.” An Action Plan is created by conference attendees is implemented in the weeks and months following the conference.

#### **Climate Change. End Violence Against Women. Promote Multiculturalism**

- Through the work of UU-UNO Board Member, Dr. Jan Dash, we were active in the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. Dr. Dash continues to serve on the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development
- The UU-UNO led the UN community efforts to ensure a permanent end to gender based violence in Sudan.
- The UU-UNO expanded its work to protect the rights of women globally through education, equal job opportunities and health care including family planning and reproductive rights.
- The UU-UNO commitment to ending racism and promoting multiculturalism are grounded in our vision of a world of peace and human dignity.

#### **Educating HIV/AIDS Orphans in Africa**

In the area of education and international community development, the UU UN Office is partnering with a community group from the Manya Krobo District in southeastern Ghana. The UU UN Office program in Ghana insures 10 years of primary and junior-secondary education to 135 girls (in the majority) and boys who have been orphaned by AIDS. The Executive Director, Office Coordinator and donor/volunteer Rick Jacobsen visited this inspiring project. The program is a model of partnering with local communities in ways that help without imposing.

As an Associate Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the UU UN Office is an independent, non-profit organization, funding by individuals, congregations, task force groups, and occasionally grants from foundations.

Executive Director: Bruce Knotts

UU UNO Board President: L. Marilyn Mehr, Ph.D. until April 10, 2010

New UU-UNO Board President Elected April 10, 2010: Catherine Onyemelukwe