

Minutes

Bi-monthly Envoy Conference Calls

December 15, 1pm and December 16, 5pm Eastern

- I. In attendance:
 - a. Tuesday, 1pm
 - i. Allison (UN Office, NYC)
 - ii. Barbara (Portland, OR)
 - iii. Debby (Toronto, ON)
 - iv. Eryl (Toronto, ON)
 - v. Holly (Salem, MA)
 - b. Wednesday, 5pm
 - i. Allison (UN Office, NYC)
 - ii. Monica (Frederick, MD)
- II. Office Updates
 - a. Racial Justice - UU United Nations Office hosted a fantastic event on November 3rd: Confronting the Silence: Perspectives & Dialogue on Structural Racism against People of African Descent. This was basically the first time that the UN has looked at racism (especially against people of African Descent) as a violation of human rights. It was a great start to the conversation; this topic has gotten a lot of discussion in the United States (Black Lives Matter movement) but structural racism and discrimination is faced by people of African descent across the whole globe. The main hope from participants was moving from discussing the problem to discussing solutions, which as we know is always the greatest challenge. This event sparked the desire for additional dialogue, including one follow-up event on December 2 sponsored by the Polish Mission to the UN on racism on the internet in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
 - i. Additionally in the realm of racial justice, we were very excited last week to have one of our UUA credentialed observers at the COP21 climate conference invited to speak on a panel co-hosted by the NAACP. Rev. Peggy Clarke is a member of the Commit2Respond steering committee, and she is very active in climate justice as well as racial justice. In this panel at COP21, the speakers addressed the how faith can play a part in responding to the convergence of racial justice and climate change.
 - b. Climate Justice - and speaking of climate change... The UU-UNO's delegation to COP21 made us very proud. There were 6 total UUA credentialed observers at the conference and they were very active in networking, participating in interfaith vigils, protests, etc, and keeping the UU world up-to-date on what was going on in the conference through their posts on social media and blogs. The "UUs in Paris" Facebook group is an especially great resource for those who are wondering (a) what happened at events they participated in, (b) what the overall debate was like at the conference (b) what was their response to the final Paris Agreement. The UU-UNO is happy with the outcome of the

conference with the caveat that this is only the first step. It is by no means a perfect agreement, but it is a starting point from which we can all launch forth in our activism and climate change mitigation efforts. Both governments of the world and civil society individuals and organizations have a lot of work to do to now make this agreement a reality.

- c. Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity - focusing on event planning. Our proposed workshop was accepted for the upcoming LGBT Task Force's annual Creating Change conference in Chicago in January. Our workshop will be in the faith section of the conference and it's on how places of worship can be of help to LGBTQ asylum seekers. We're working now on setting up panelists for this event including both faith leaders and asylum seekers or asylees themselves.
- d. Women's Rights - our LGBTQ program intern is working together with the women's rights initiative to put together an event for the Convention on the Status of Women forum in March. The proposed event will focus on lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women and sustainable development, especially how working towards the sustainable development goals can address issues faced by this community. Women's rights intern is also collaborating on the Every Child is Our Child program to address the topics of sex education and teenage pregnancy that are issues in the community where we work in Ghana.
- e. ECOC - the office had a great visit to the project. Allison (Envoy Coordinator), Anne (Office & Intern Coordinator), Tatiana (Women's Rights program intern), Justin & Ian (LGBTQ program interns), and Daniel (Climate Justice program intern) went on the trip. It was great to have such a large group visit each of the schools along with the program monitor, Joseph Kingham Ochill, because we were able to break up into pairs and speak to more teachers, students, administrators, & etc than otherwise. Also most of the interns are social work students, which was a big benefit since they all have experience talking about sensitive topics with clients. We did have to do a fair amount of this since we spoke with some families who have lost members to AIDS and are struggling financially, and we also visited the homes of some girls who have had to drop out of school due to teenage pregnancy. This is a huge problem in the communities where ECOC works. Girls are in a difficult financial situation, and have trouble getting enough money to buy food, and they meet a man who offers to pay for some things, but then he wants something in return and the girl ends up getting pregnant and has to drop out of school. Once pregnant, the man then abandons them and does not continue providing money to them or visiting. We're going to start a Peer Education program, in which the girls who have been affected by this problem speak to their peers, other girls currently in school who may be vulnerable to this same phenomenon, and tell them about what happened, and how they got into that situation, and how to avoid a similar thing happening to them.
 - i. Barbara: Is there anything being done to help girls go back to school after their babies are born?

1. Yes! The local Director of Education told us about a program that's been tested in a rural area that we could do a pilot program of in one of the ECOC schools - it's called Bring Your Child to School. The Queen Mothers and ECOC program administrators will determine the school where this program might be most effective.

III. Syria/ISIS

- a. Syrian refugees in Europe and the US are getting a lot of attention, but many feel that those in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq are basically getting forgotten about. They are in even worse condition than the others who have managed to get out of the area. Unfortunately UN programs, like WFP, UNICEF, and UNHCR have not gotten enough of the funding they need to be able to feed all of the four million refugees that remain in the area. Many congregations are hoping to see if there's some way they can help - they have the idea about sponsoring a Syrian refugee family to come to their town. This is a very good thing to do, but donations to UNICEF or UNHCR or WFP would be hugely appreciated to serve the population of displaced people in camps in the Middle East.
 - i. Eryl - Syrian refugees are arriving by the planeload in Toronto. This refugee situation has spurred a great national sense of compassion in reaching out to these people. In welcoming the refugees so warmly, the Trudeau government has really hit a chord with Canadians at large. It reminds Eryl of Canadians welcoming the Boat People fleeing Vietnam. Really wonderful - each of us can contribute money-wise and otherwise. If we don't do anything or if we do very little, terrible reflection on our humanity. We are all global citizens and the UN is the hub of our global village.
 - ii. Monica – Members of her church in Frederick will join with other faith groups to visit a mosque on Friday to demonstrate their support of the local Muslim community.
- b. ISIS is a big focus for the Security Council - it's basically the only thing that every country in the Security Council agrees on. UN Member States need to work together to combat ISIS and more and more recently the combined efforts are growing. With the help of France, the US and Russia are now actually working on the same side to address this very complicated region of the world.

IV. Intergenerational Spring Seminar -

- a. Upcoming Spring Seminar (April 7-9, 2016) is entitled "The Colors of Inequality: Costs and Consequences," and it will address income inequality and racism both globally and locally. Our keynote speaker will be Dale Jamieson, an NYU professor and expert on economic inequality as it relates to climate change and globalization.
- b. The Envoy gathering during the seminar will be in the form of a breakfast - it will be in a separate space so Envoys have a good hour to talk with each other and prospective Envoys can get to know what being an Envoy might entail.
- c. The planning committee is still working on finalizing many details of the event, including speakers for each panel and creative programming activities. We're doing what we can

to make sure this seminar has opportunities for those who are not able to come to NYC to participate in some way.

- d. Hoping to have a hip hop performer on Thursday evening! (NYC = birthplace of hip hop, which grew out of a context of economic hardship and inequality)
 - e. Monica thinks she will be able to attend the seminar this year
- V. Dana Greeley Sermon Competition -
- a. Deadline to submit sermons is February 1st. Requirements are available on www.uua.org/action/awards/greeley But this year's sermons must address this year's theme: International Criminal Justice: From Punitive to Restorative, and preference is given to those that highlight the work of the UN and the UU-UNO. If your UN Sunday speaker was especially inspiring and they addressed this theme, encourage them to apply! The winner will receive a prize of \$500 and have the opportunity to deliver the sermon at the next UUA General Assembly or CUC General Meeting.
- VI. Blue Ribbon Award - The deadline for Blue Ribbon requirements is March 31. In the new year, I will get in touch with everyone who's getting close but maybe missing a few donations or something. If you'd like to check on your status, feel free to email Allison at any time and she'll check and let you know how close you are to achieving 2015-2016 Blue Ribbon status!
- VII. Other topics to discuss?
- a. Communication between Envoys
 - i. Eryl: It would be beneficial for the office to solicit opinions and input from Envoys so they can help with some of the issues we're working on. Especially having avenues for communication between Envoys is important.
 - ii. Allison: In a previous call, we decided to use the UU-UNO Envoys Facebook group as a way for Envoys to communicate with each other. Allison will re-send the instruction sheet on using this group and would be happy to talk it over on the phone if anyone's having trouble accessing or posting to the group.
 - iii. Barbara: This type of communication would be very helpful. There's a lot we can learn from each other, especially from those like Eryl who have been Envoys/working with the UU-UNO or the UN for many years.
 - b. Eryl: LGBT rights and the other issues are very important, but the primary goal of the UN is to achieve the overriding goal of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war.
 - i. Others agree.
 - ii. The UU-UNO will continue working within the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace, & Security, and in the Security Council Working Group to promote peace, but we're also very focused on preserving human rights and the health of our planet, so will not decrease any advocacy in those other areas.
 - c. Debby: Is there a way to get information about the Every Child is Our Child program out to the schools? Just to churches? Are there presentations that can be used?
 - i. Great idea - Allison will talk to Anisha (ECOC program intern) about developing some materials (such as PowerPoint and handouts) for Envoys to use to talk

about the ECOC program in their congregations, local schools, community events, etc. We already have some poster-like materials that were developed over the summer to help RE classes learn about ECOC. Allison will put these online and share in the Envoy News.

- ii. Monica is very interested in receiving these materials so she can do a presentation at her church.

VIII. Adjourn