



# UNA-USA EAST BAY

*"We the peoples of the United Nations (are) determined to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors..."* — United Nations Charter, 24 October 1945

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# Obama, the UN, and UNA

BY HERB BEHRSTOCK  
UNA EAST BAY CHAPTER PRESIDENT

Challenges and opportunities confronting the United Nations and our United Nations Association-USA have been among the frequent topics of this column. Here's a short, important update.



Herb Behrstock

Bush's replacement by Obama, and these first couple months of the new Administration have already turned many foreign policies around, bringing the US closer to the United Nations, its mission, and international agreements concluded under the aegis of the UN. That's a highly encouraging palette for supporters of multilateral cooperation and the United Nations.

Even a selective list of specific breakthroughs or turn-arounds is awesomely impressive: Obama's decision to comply with UN Conventions on torture, resumption of financial support to the admirable UN Population Fund, application to actively engage in the UN Human Rights Council, request for Congress to fully

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## Chapter Welcomes New UNA-USA President



Tom Miller, President-designate of UNA-USA (center), and his wife Bonnie (front left of Tom), with 12 UNA-USA East Bay leaders.

BY HERB BEHRSTOCK  
UNA EAST BAY CHAPTER PRESIDENT

The future of the United Nations Association-USA was on everyone's mind when 34 leaders and members of eight Northern California chapters met on April 26 with the Association's President-designate, Tom Miller.

Everyone, including the 12 participants from the East Bay, was impressed by Miller, his extensive leadership experiences with the US State Department and most recently with an international London-based NGO, as well as his ideas, enthusiasm, and approachability.

Miller, accompanied by his wife, high-school sweetheart Bonnie, scheduled the stopover of his West Coast trip to join the Northern California Division meeting that the East Bay chapter hosted in San Leandro.

Miller asserted he's "very passionate" about becoming President of UNA-USA—the post he'll assume in mid-May. Noting that UNA is like many other NGOs facing challenges in the current economic downturn, he enthused about the "great opportunities" for UNA's future.

Participants were encouraged when Miller emphasized that "the heart and strength of this

## Meet Tom Miller

- Ambassador Thomas J. Miller had a distinguished career with the US State Department, academia and NGOs.
- Tom was born in Chicago. He has a Ph.D in Political Science from the University of Michigan, and later taught Diplomacy and International Relations at George Mason University.
- He joined the US Foreign Service in 1976, and served as Ambassador to Greece for three years under George W. Bush. In 2004, Tom became CEO of Plan International, an NGO in England working to improve children's lives in developing countries.
- He's returning to the US with his family to begin work at UNA-USA in May.

organization lies with the chapters" to carry out UNA-USA's mission to educate, mobilize and inspire people in the USA to support the principles and vital work of the United Nations. "We don't have to reinvent the wheel," he said. There's a lot in UNA to build on, but "We need to focus."

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## Women's Issues Take Center Stage

A special initiative by the local UNA chapter to commemorate International Women's Day in early March brought together 300 people in six East Bay cities for ten events during an intensive four-day period. Each program featured Jane Roberts, a UNA member and a

grassroots activist from Southern California, who focused on women's rights, population, family planning, and the effective activities of the United Nations Population Fund.

SEE PAGE 2 FOR MORE

# UNFPA Protects Women's Rights Around the World



Jane Roberts (fourth from left) spoke in Danville at an event hosted by UNA member Homa Khamisi (fourth from right). This was one of ten events organized by the East Bay chapter that attracted 300 people in six cities to celebrate International Women's Day in early March. Jane Roberts, a UNA member and activist from Southern California, focused on the vital services provided by the UN Population Fund and the plight of women worldwide living in poverty and deprived of the family planning services they desperately want.

BY ANOUK MACKENZIE  
UNA-USA EAST BAY CHAPTER VOLUNTEER

From Bolivia to Bhutan, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provides basic healthcare to some of the world's poorest women.

So when Jane Roberts, a retired school teacher from San Diego, heard the US government had withheld \$34 million in Congress-approved funds for UNFPA's life-saving services, she co-founded 34 Million Friends to help bridge the gap with donations from people across the country.

In March, she was the keynote speaker at our chapter's International Women's Day celebration, speaking before ten groups convened by chapter members in six cities.

Her statistics shock.

Every minute a woman dies from pregnancy-related complications—that's more than 500,000 preventable deaths every year—and a million children lose their mothers. Motherless newborns are also at a greater risk of dying. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 1 in 16 women dies during pregnancy or childbirth. (Compare that to 1 in 4,000 for women in industrialized nations.) Maternal death rates have changed little in the last few decades. To make matters worse, increasingly AIDS is becoming a disease that disproportionately affects young African women.

Why are so many women and infants dying? Because they lack access to basic healthcare services.

UNFPA helps to meet those critical needs. As the world's largest family plan-

ning service, UNFPA offers sex education, contraception, HIV/AIDS education and testing kits, birth control, and maternal healthcare to more than 140 countries. It distributes "safe-birth kits" to remote villages lacking medical services, as well as training in basic emergency obstetric treatment. It leads campaigns to eradicate obstetric fistula, a debilitating childbirth injury, now rare in the US but that still affects two million women globally. It also improves quality of life by allowing women and their families to choose the number, spacing and timing of their children—a human right for Jane Roberts. For, as she argues, how can women be empowered if they can't control their own fertility?

According to the Population Fund, the United States is the only country in the world ever to deny funding for non-budgetary reasons. In mid-March of this year, however, shortly before Jane visited the East Bay, President Obama formally reversed the block on funds, and Congress restored \$50 million to the UN Population Fund. Yet \$244 million was lost during the Bush Administration.

Since 2002, the grassroots group has raised \$4 million, thanks largely to Jane's tireless advocacy. Her passion to help women and girls in need around the world continues to drive 34 Million Friends to make up for lost funding.

Find out more about UNFPA's mission directly from their website [www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org).

To make a donation, visit [www.34MillionFriends.org](http://www.34MillionFriends.org).

## Boxer Reaffirms Support

UNA-USA East Bay enjoys excellent relations with Senator Barbara Boxer. At least once a year, a team of chapter directors and members consults in California or Washington D.C. with the Senator's staff on UNA priorities. Boxer continues to support the UN, UNA-USA, and our East Bay chapter; this year, she was an honorary sponsor of the chapter's 4-day International Women's Day celebration.

In March, she wrote to the Chapter, commending its role in promoting human rights and advocating for women's issues. Recently, she was appointed Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy and Global Women's Issues. As Chair of the Subcommittee, and a long-time proponent of UN efforts to protect women's rights, Boxer also renewed her commitment to urge the US Senate to ratify the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). "The U.S. effort to promote health and equality for women around the world," she wrote "will be much more effective and credible if we join with other nations and ratify CEDAW without further delay."

Of the 192 UN member states, only eight have not yet ratified the UN Convention adopted 30 years ago: Sudan, Somalia, Qatar, Iran, Nauru, Palau and Tonga—and the United States.

Learn about the Convention at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>.

## Welcome Tom

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He emphasized strengthening the relationship between UNA Headquarters and the chapters as one short-term objective.

Looking more broadly at UNA's role, Miller said "We have a fantastic opportunity with the new Obama Administration" to revitalize the constituency in this country that supports international cooperation and the role of the UN in addressing the most important global challenges. People increasingly recognize that "We (the USA) need the UN. We can't waste that opportunity."

Northern California chapter leaders expressed strong interest in attending UNA's annual National Convention, June 12-14, in Washington D.C.—when Tom Miller will resume the dialogue in greater depth.

## MEMBERS' CORNER

## In Memoriam: Carol Pulcifer 1911-2009

Carol Pulcifer, who passed away on April 8, 2009, was admired for her many years of service to the UNA. She was President of the East Bay Chapter in 1983 and President of the Alameda County Chapter in 1977.

Carol helped plan UN Day events at Jack London Square beginning in 1966. For 25 years she also seeded and expanded arts, music and camping programs with the Oakland Recreation Department.

To read her obituary online or to enter a remembrance, please visit [www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com).

*UNA-USA East Bay Mission: To educate, mobilize and inspire people to support the principles and vital work of the United Nations, to strengthen the United Nations system, and to press for constructive United States policies and activities in that system.*

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## Indigenous Peoples' Forum to Meet in May

BY MARIJA SPASIKOVA  
BOARD MEMBER

The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), established in connection with the UN Declaration on The Rights of Indigenous Peoples, will hold its 8th Annual Session on May 18-29, 2009, at the UN Headquarters in New York.

After 20 years of efforts by more than 370 million indigenous peoples in some 70 countries, the General Assembly in September 2007 adopted the UN Declaration on The Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 144 in favor, 4 opposed, and 11 abstaining. Of the four member states that voted against the Declaration—Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States—Australia changed its position and endorsed the Declaration's principles and rights in April of this year.

With the Forum's upcoming session in mind, and mindful of the efforts of East Bay indigenous peoples on behalf of the Declaration, the Peace & Justice Commission of the City of Berkeley approved a resolution on May 4, 2009, recommending that the Berkeley City Council declare its support for the Declaration; that the Council so notify the US government; and that the Council recommend the US government revisit its earlier opposition.

The UN describes the Declaration as an "important standard for the treatment of indigenous people" and a "significant tool towards eliminating human rights violations," helping them combat discrimination and mar-

ginalization. The declaration calls on states to prevent or redress the forced migration of indigenous peoples, the seizure of their land, and their forced integration into other cultures. It also grants indigenous groups control over their religious and cultural sites and the right to manage their own education systems, including teaching in their own languages. While declarations are not legally binding under international law, the Declaration on The Rights of Indigenous Peoples represents the expanded development of international legal norms on behalf of indigenous peoples worldwide, and gives unprecedented prominence to collective rights.

Before the Declaration was adopted, a number of African countries and the final four that voted against it, expressed concern over the lack of a clear definition of the term *indigenous*. "We're not standing against the issue," said Benjamin Chang, a spokesman for the US Mission to the UN. "We want one that is universal in its scope and can be implemented. What was done today is not clear. The way it stands now is subject to multiple interpretations and doesn't establish a clear universal principal."

During his campaign in 2008, President Obama showed support to the indigenous peoples while visiting the Crow tribe in Montana. He stated that as part of his campaign policy on Native American issues, he would create a tribal presence in the White House.

For more information, visit <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/>.

### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

## New Era for US-UN?

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fund UN Peacekeeping operations, initiative to support enhanced stages of UN-brokered global warming treaties, as well as measures to strengthen UN-supported agreements to control and reduce nuclear weapons.

With so many global challenges for both the US and the rest of the planet, there's still a long way to go for the US to resume the traditional 'constructive leadership' role that the UNA-USA mission calls for. And a hefty challenge remains for the UNA to build a solid

constituency of support for the UN's unique mandates and potential—especially among the younger generation.

In sync with these changes, UNA-USA has recruited a splendid new national President to lead the Association, Tom Miller. Our Chapter's leaders had the genuine pleasure to meet with Tom in late April during an extended meeting he specially made to the East Bay. We're highly encouraged, and request that you join with us for a meaningful journey.

For more info visit our website or go to [www.unausa.org](http://www.unausa.org).

# United Nations Association - USA

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ■ 9TH ANNUAL UNA FILM FESTIVAL

Saturdays, June 6, 13, 20, & 27, 7:30 pm.  
International House, Berkeley  
Go to [www.unausaeastbay.org](http://www.unausaeastbay.org) for details.  
See films on contemporary international issues followed by  
speaker discussions.

### ■ 11TH INTERNATIONAL RUN FOR PEACE

Sunday, September 20, 9:00 am.  
Cesar Chavez Park, Berkeley

### ■ UN DAY & 4TH ANNUAL GLOBAL CITIZEN AWARDS

Friday, October 23, Celebration dinner and award ceremony  
for support of UN MDGs.  
See our website and the next UNA-USA East Bay Chapter  
newsletter for details.

### ■ The United Nations Association–USA, East Bay ANNOUNCES The 4th Annual GLOBAL CITIZEN AWARDS, 2009, for Public Health Achievements.

Multiple awards will be presented on October 23, 2009, in  
honor of United Nations Day, for outstanding actions to  
advance the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

### SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATIONS!

Deadline: July 31, 2009. For more information, visit  
[www.unausaeastbay.org](http://www.unausaeastbay.org). For questions, contact Prof. David C.  
McGaffey, (510) 521-6372, or [dcmcgaffey@jhu.edu](mailto:dcmcgaffey@jhu.edu).

### ■ INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES now available!

Join our new UNA Student Internship Program. Learn about  
the UN and international issues, develop professional skills  
for managing a non-profit, and help us expand the chapter's  
programs. For details and an application form, email Suzanne  
Llewellyn at [llew@berkeley.edu](mailto:llew@berkeley.edu).

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