



UNA ★ USA
Johnson County Chapter

News and Events

c/o JC UNA
308 E. Burlington St, #245
Iowa City, IA 52240

July 2020

UN Rallies Cooperation for Global Health and Racial Justice

by *Jim Olson*

The United Nations is addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and racism, even as the United States undermines these efforts.

Over the past three months, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has issued a series of statements and reports to put the pandemic in a broader context by showing the impact of COVID-19 on migration, food security, mental health, and vulnerable populations, including women and children. An April 2020 report called on member nations to view the pandemic through a human rights lens and to ensure that responses to their public health policies are inclusive, equitable and universal so that no one is left behind.

In June, after the death of George Floyd, senior UN officials who are African or of African descent issued a statement supporting the Secretary-General's initiatives for racial justice but urging that more must be done. Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammed called this work a "sacred duty."

UN deliberative bodies have also

been seized with these issues. In May, the U.S. blocked a Security Council resolution – negotiated over several weeks – calling for a worldwide ceasefire during the pandemic. The U.S. objected to an indirect reference to the World Health Organization (WHO) in the text. Earlier the U.S. criticized the WHO for deferring to China and for a slow response to the emerging pandemic and later President Trump announced that the U.S. would terminate its relationship with the WHO.

In June, the UN Human Rights Council – from which the U.S. has withdrawn – unanimously adopted a resolution calling on the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on "systemic racism and violations of human rights law against Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement agencies."

Meanwhile, in the field, UN agencies are working to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The WHO is training health personnel around the world in best practices for mitigating the pandemic and

sharing information on the development of a vaccine. UNICEF is delivering medical supplies and working to devise ways to help children continue to learn in the face of pandemic-related school closures. The UNHCR is providing health, water, and sanitation services to protect the 71 million refugees and forcibly displaced persons worldwide.

The Trump administration's proposed FY2021 budget calls for a 34% cut in funds for global health and a 100% cut in the U.S. contribution to UNICEF. In addition to withdrawing from the UN Human Rights Council and the WHO, noted above, the U.S. has also withdrawn from two other UN agreements, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Global Compact on Migration.

As the UN marks its 75th year, the U.S. – as one of the original 51 members, a major financial contributor, a permanent member of the Security Council, and host to UN Headquarters – ought to join with others to make the UN even more effective.

From the President

by Jim Olson

Dear UNA Members,

The past three months have presented many opportunities for action: publicizing the UN's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the global movement for racial justice, communicating our support for the World Health Organization (WHO), and marking the 75th anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter on June 26.



Working through the Iowa UNA's Advocacy Committee, we call for continued U.S. financial support and leadership in the WHO, especially during a global pandemic. On May 28 several chapter members met via conference call with aides to Sen. Charles Grassley on this issue. We took part in UNA-USA's Week of Action, June 22-26, participating in virtual meetings with Rep. Dave Loebsack and aides to Sen. Joni Ernst calling for U.S. support of the UN.

Virtual events are on the horizon, perhaps even a virtual Night of 1000 Dinners in 2021. We are continuing to work with the UI Campus Chapter, which now has 40 members (see article at right).

Our voices calling for constructive U.S. leadership in the UN are more important than ever. Thanks for all you do.

UI Student Group Adapts

by Carolina Herrera

For the past three months, every single person has been forced to adapt to a new reality. Life as we know it has been changed for a long time or maybe indefinitely. This pandemic has affected many aspects of our lives.

As a member of the UNA Campus Chapter, I often think we are extremely fortunate to have started the new chapter this past year. More importantly, it is inspiring seeing so many young people showing interest in the mission of the United Nations. This proved to be true when we had a high turnout for our first meeting. It was a great inauguration for the chapter and a perfect opportunity for all the members of the executive team to get to know our new UNA members.

We discussed our plans for the Spring semester and played a get-to-know-you bingo, making it easier to socialize in the future.

As the semester progressed, we were able to put forth our plans. The first event we held was Red Hand Day, which is an international day devoted to stopping the use of child soldiers. Our mission as a chapter was to bring awareness of the issue to other students by providing statistics regarding the use of child soldiers around the world.

One goal we had this semester was to collaborate with the Johnson County UNA chapter. We were able to collaborate on Night of 1000 Dinners, an event the Johnson County chapter has sponsored for years. Campus members were able to volunteer and be a part of the event.

We did have one more final event planned, as well as two fundraisers, but these had to be canceled due to COVID-19. But that didn't mean we were going to give up on our mission. Instead of finding ways to fundraise for our chapter virtually, we used our social media platforms to ask people to donate to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics instead.

Fortunately, we are able to return to school this fall and use our platforms to generate involvement by



the younger generation. Of course, our stay at school will be accompanied by unprecedented changes, but the power of passion and the fight for human rights doesn't end.

(Carolina Herrera is President of the UI Campus Chapter of UNA-USA)

Multilingual Newspaper for Refugees & Immigrants

By Jean Paul Mugesuzi

These past three months have been difficult throughout East Central Iowa, but one of the things I love most about being an Iowan is our ability to come together during a crisis.

Ever since COVID-19 struck, the uncertainty of where to locate reliable information has been a main concern for the refugee and immigrant community, especially for those who cannot yet speak or read English. To address this, and to continue strengthening this wonderful place we all call home, the Refugee and Immigrant Association (RIA) is launching *Refugee and Immigrant News*, Iowa's multilingual and multicultural newspaper.

We have several goals for this project. First, with an ever-growing ethnic population in Iowa, the RIA has found that there is a need for more longstanding locals to become better acquainted with their newer neighbors as well as for them to become more educated about the vibrant mixture of cultures, religions, and traditions that make the Iowa City area truly special. *News* will be one such opportunity!

Second, the RIA's periodical will provide easy access to information for non-English-speaking community members. We will provide news and information in languages such as French, Swahili, Arabic, and English so that all members of our community can be aware of the issues, concerns, and events

happening around East Central Iowa.

Third, as one of only a few multilingual papers in Iowa focused on refugee and immigrant populations, we believe *Refugee and Immigrant News* will serve as a bridge between the aforementioned groups of people, providing a new platform for locals of diverse backgrounds and interests to speak to and hear from one another. We plan

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to invite special guests to publish news, stories, and opinion pieces.

As our community reopens, people are looking for ways to get outside and safely reconnect with their favorite people and places. Information is key to keeping the number of COVID-19-related cases low in the coming months. And, it is another avenue to learning about all the amazing ways to engage with the broader East Central Iowa

area. The Refugee and Immigrant Association is open to inquiries, suggestions, and articles about the pandemic and other topics.

Refugee and Immigrant News is free! You can pick up a copy from the RIA Center located at 1566 S. Gilbert St. in Iowa City, or find a list of other locations on Facebook at Refugee & Immigrant Association or at:

www.refugeeimmigrant.org.

For more information about *Refugee and Immigrant News*, please contact the Refugee and Immigrant Association at refugeeiowa@gmail.com or call 347-414-1121

Our thanks to the UNA-Johnson County Chapter, Community Foundation of Johnson County, West Liberty Foods, and the City of Iowa City for supporting the launch of *Refugee and Immigrant News*.

Further, we encourage any persons, groups, or organizations of goodwill to support this project which is so beneficial for the interest and wellbeing of our communities.

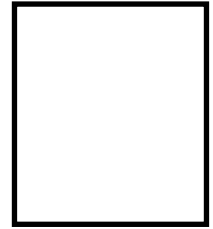
(Jean Paul Mugesuzi is the executive director of the Refugee and Immigrant Association and a member of the Board of Directors of the Johnson County UNA.)



JC UNA News and Events

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308 East Burlington St #245
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Address Service Requested

Night of 1000 Dinner Highlights

The 20th Annual Night of 1000 Dinners, March 11, marked International Women’s Day by honoring three local organizations advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The event raised funds for implementation of the SDGs by UN agencies and Johnson County groups.

The event, supported by 23 local business and non-profit organizations, featured an international buffet. Former mayors Naomi Novick and Jim Throgmorton, as well as current mayor Bruce Teague, were among the 80 attendees.

The Johnson County UNA Chapter and the University of Iowa Campus Chapter honored three

organizations for their work to implement the SDGs: the League of Women Voters of Johnson County, the Combined Efforts Theater, and the Iowa City Student Climate Strikers.

Night of 1000 Dinners raised \$3,500, which was donated to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Fund, the Center for Worker Justice, the Refugee and Immigrant Association, and the Iowa United Nations Association.

Did you miss the event? You can view it by going to citychannel4.org

Johnson County UNA Membership Renewal Form

Please be certain your membership is up to date!

Membership Rates: \$50 Regular Member, \$25 Introductory Member

Student memberships are free if application is made through GenUN at <http://genun.unausa.org/>

Please return the information below with your check to the address below. **Make check to: UNA-USA**

Name(s) _____

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