

Pomona Valley UNA of USA
Minutes of Board Meeting – Porter Hall, May 17, 2008

Present: Mel Boynton*, Dean McHenry*, Harry Hood, June O'Connor, Crolee & Jack Monroe, Harry and Marilyn Brunger*, Gloria Reynolds*, Bob Smith*, Lois Thompson*, Art Sutton*, Laura Bouamrane, Betsy Coffman, Lako Tongun*, and Nancy Oostmeyer. * indicates Board Member.

Refreshments were provided by Lois Thompson. Meeting was called to order by President Mel Boynton at 5:35 pm.

Secretary Marilee Scaff had provided minutes of the meeting of April 15th via email. Minutes were approved as presented.

Mel reported for treasurer Emily Burch indicating the chapter treasury is above \$2000.

Vice President Richard Harris is not with us today as he is going through chemo and radiation treatment which leaves him without energy. He looks forward to seeing us at our next meeting.

Mel reported that our planned program presenter for July will be out of the country and, thus, we will not have a meeting on July 15th. He reported on the successful Global Classrooms gathering in Los Angeles on June 6th at USC, including nearly 1000 L.A. school children. Mel, Emily Burch, Wendy & Ardi Rashidi represented the chapter and division at the national UNA-USA meeting in Washington D.C. between June 7th and 11th. They attended issue sessions, the SoCal division breakout, and lobbied our members of congress (including a meeting with David Dreier) for the UN. The UN is held in higher regard today than it was in 2006. A report on the D.C. meeting and pictures from Emily & Mel will be posted to the website.

Speaker: Claremont Graduate University Professor Dean McHenry on “Seeds of Ethnic Conflict.” Dean was introduced by Mel and the following summary is not all inclusive.

The UN began as an organization most interested in member nations or “states” following WW II. As the UN grew - from independence for African nations and the breakup of the USSR - there was more need for attention to ethnic conflicts. Ethnicity originates from the concept of who we are - our identity. If our identity is primarily centered in our ethnicity, then ethnic entrepreneurs can use our identity to manipulate us for movements – including conflicts with other ethnic identities.

Several theories of group identity and conflict are in the literature and offer potential explanations and seeds of conflict, including: 1. Primordialists say that our racial and other biological features are the source of our identity and conflicts although primordialism has gone out of favor in recent years. 2. Instrumentalists say we unite around common goals – as instruments toward that goal. In a related theory, 3. Constructivists say we unite behind ideas and “imagined community” toward common goals. Theorists use the term Ethnic Entrepreneurs to describe leaders (such as most politicians) who use our sense of identity who rally our ethnic concerns to a higher level – perhaps in conflict with other groups. Many use constructivist phrases to describe imagined communities where our group has a better outcome. 4. Situationalists say a particular situation triggers our sense of identity and conflict. Not all ethnic entrepreneurs are self-seeking - some have the greater good of the group in mind.

Dean McHenry summarized several recent examples of ethnic conflicts which drew world attention. Yugoslavia broke into Serbia, Croatia, & Kosovo territories following lines of ethnic identities. Ruwanada's genocide was focused on the ethnic group Hutus attacking another ethnic group, the Tutsis, taking some 800,000 lives. There was a UN force in Ruwanada and they, and the US, failed to stop this genocide. The Kurdish people have long been pressured to give up their ethnic identity within the states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Groups such as the PKK have pursued violence to redress the lack of an independent Kurdistan while other Kurdish groups have tried to achieve independence without violence. Others, such as Turkey, have tried forbidding the teaching of the Kurdish language, co-opting or assimilation to reduce the ethnic conflicts. In Sri Lanka, the Tamil minority has a long standing conflict with the Sinhalese

majority. The Tamil Tigers – the LTTE – have tried unsuccessfully to have their own independent state and recently the Sinhalese government has used military force to put down Tamil control in eastern areas.

Potential solutions to address ethnic conflicts include: suppression – as in Sri Lanka; federalism – as in India - giving separate powers within a region; consociationalism – including the group within the power structure; and removing the entrepreneurs to weaken the group. Combinations of the techniques have been tried. We all need to think of ways to address ethnic conflicts and how the UN can be more effective. Darfur is another example of the several ethnic conflicts that have occurred in Sudan, taking millions of lives and creating even more refugees. Suggestions from the audience included: having more UN experts on conflict resolution, controlling and collecting fees on international trade routes to reduce the flow of arms, taking religious differences into consideration, and analyzing why ethnic conflict seems to occur in developing countries while nationalism seems to predominate in Europe. Attendees greatly appreciated the discussion.

The program concluded at 6:45 PM and the meeting was adjourned.

Remember, there is no July or August meeting. Next meeting: September 16th. Program: Inland Valley Coordinator for Progressive Christians Uniting and Pilgrim Place resident, Charles Bayer, will speak on “A Liberal Christian Perspective on World Events.” Author Charles Bayer has published eight books and is a life-long community activist.

Respectfully submitted, Mel Boynton, President