

WFWP Los Angeles celebrates its 25th anniversary with Bridge of Peace

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Keynote Speech



I am so honored to celebrate 25 years of WFWP with you today. This is a very simple bridge; but it is very beautiful to me and to many of the women who are gathered here today. This bridge is a memory we hold in our hearts, a symbol of Peace; and even more than that it is a holy ground; a place where the work of building peace has occurred over and over again.

The inauguration of Women's Federation for World Peace in the early 1990s was a call for peace, a call for reconciliation. These are the words of our Founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon on that historic day:

“History is calling for reconciliation, compassion, love, service and sacrifice. Today's problems cannot be solved by the logic of power. Our present problems can only be solved by the Logic of Love.”

All of us personally have been faced with times in our lives when the response of “love” was not “logical,” when it was just NOT LOGICAL to love: when we were hurt; when something was taken from us; when we were treated unfairly; when we found ourselves in a situation that was unjust. Loving the enemy, the person or institution that put us in pain, that hurt us, just did not make sense.

Maybe in our family, maybe at work, maybe in our church, or maybe we were hurt by a good friend. Maybe our impulse was to lash out, to strike back, and to hurt the person or the institution that had hurt us so badly. You hurt me — so I am going to hurt you.

So we all may have tried this (I can think of several occasions where I participated in this experiment), but the difficulty is that it just doesn't work. It actually never works. This is because NOTHING REALLY CHANGES through pay back.

I would like to share a few words from our co-founder, Reverend Sun Myung Moon. This is from a speech entitled “The Textbook of Love,” which he gave on February 5, 1984:

“When you have the spark of true love, it melts and purifies all evil things. Jesus told us to love our enemies. He forgave the Roman soldiers who hung him on the cross, but would you have done the same? If you were treated so badly, so evilly by someone, would you forgive him? This is the secret. When evil is forgiven and embraced, it is eventually melted and purified. It changes. This is the only thing that works.”

Resentment, hatred, anger, or revenge don't inspire anyone or anything to change. Look at history. These are the things that create a cycle of hatred and a spiral of war and more war. Look at the suffering in the world today. There is truly only one way to "win" over any enemy and that is to "win the heart" of that enemy.

What then does it mean to live by the "logic of love?" It means to live for the sake of others, to care for and consider the other when it may not be comfortable to do so. It means to consider the other, to put the other "first" in the moment, and to make this a habit in our daily lives.

In women, this intrinsic God-given impulse to nurture and care for the wellbeing of others is part of our feminine divinity. It's our divine right, the original nature that we are born with. It is who we are inside, who we are as women.

And this kind of divinity is the fundamental reason that women are not just a part of, but are actually central to the Peace Process. As women we have an incredible capacity to love, to care about the world's children, and even to love the children of our enemies. We in WFWP believe that in this century women will hold a pivotal role in leading humankind to harmony and peace.

The work of this bridge began in Asia. Shortly after the founding of WFWP in 1992 more than 179,000 Japanese women traveled to Korea to participate in a deeply moving "sisters of peace ceremony." Pair by pair, women crossed that bridge and pledged to heal the bitter wounds resulting from 40 years of Japanese occupation of Korea. The tears flowed freely. Among the speakers who told their stories were Korean "comfort women" who had been abused by Japanese soldiers during the occupation.

Then, beginning in 1995 more than 20,000 Japanese women traveled to America to cross the Bridge of Peace and celebrate 50 years of peace between our nations. Using a real bridge, this ceremony brings together elements of sincere repentance for wrongs in the past, together with the sincere desire to create a new sisterhood relationship, centered on heart. Throughout the history of WFWP, this bridge has been the center of incredible healing.

Here in Southern California many of us have deep memories of our participation in the Interracial Sisterhood Project (ISP). Building on the success of the International Friendship Conferences, the ISP grew out of a desire to expand the sisterhood experience to benefit women who represent the many different racial and ethnic backgrounds in America. To date, more than 10,000 women have crossed this bridge in interracial pairs, pledging their new "sister-ships" to the cause of ending racism.

In July, 1996 the ISP was honored to be selected as a "promising practice" by the Clinton Administration and was included in the President's Initiative on Race, "One America in the 21st Century."

To date, Bridge of Peace Ceremonies have been held around the globe, between women and nations that have been enemies. Some of you may have been present in Jerusalem when more than 300 Israeli and Palestinian Christian, Muslim and Jewish women crossed this bridge with each other, honoring each other, forgiving each other, and embracing each other.

And so today in celebration of 25 years of peace-making, we cross the bridge with each other. At its essence the peace process is about reconciliation.

At a conference in Pasadena about 10 years ago, Rev. Bernice King said "To end violence, to heal and eradicate racism people cannot stay separate, clinging to preconceived ideas of each other. It boils down to a bad relationship with hurts inflicted on both sides. To move beyond we have to be close enough to see the wounds and to forgive each other."

We need to be just this close to each other. We need to repent to each other, not just for our individual transgressions, but for the transgressions of our people. And we need to forgive each other. We need to embrace each other, to stretch the boundaries of our hearts and to make real and lasting relationships with each other.

Reconciliation is the process of repentance and forgiveness, and it gives birth to the possibility of love. If peace is possible, this simple truth that up until now has only been given in idealistic platitudes, must dare to become our daily working reality. We are part of the same global family and share a common heart, a common parenthood under God and a common home which we must protect and keep for the sake of that global family.

Let us meet each other, then, in true friendship, and work together to build a world of peace. I honor each of you for coming and for participating with us today. I am proud to be here with you.