

WFWP USA GWPN: Women's Leadership in Reconciliation and Peacemaking

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What will it take to build a world of peace? While many will speak of diplomatic, economic, or social justice initiatives, the arts and culture also plays a critical role in bringing about positive change in our minds and hearts. On Wednesday, October 20, 2021, the Global Women's Peace Network Forum (GWPN) series, "Women's Leadership in Reconciliation and Peacemaking," reconvened with a special panel discussion on "Catalysts for Positive Change - Arts and Culture." It was a dynamic, informative, and meaningful conversation attended by 44 women and men from across the country.

The evening program kicked off with WFWP USA President Angelika Selle introducing the theme, a very pertinent topic because of the shocking increase of mental illness, depression, stress, and hopelessness, especially as we face so many negative realities in the world today. However, she explained, art and culture has the power to transform even a toxic environment into a more peaceful one. Angelika also explained the vision of GWPN, which is to bring together NGOs, decision makers, leaders, organizations and governments to solve pressing social issues and to secure an environment for equitable human development through peace leadership based on the feminine aspect of human nature.

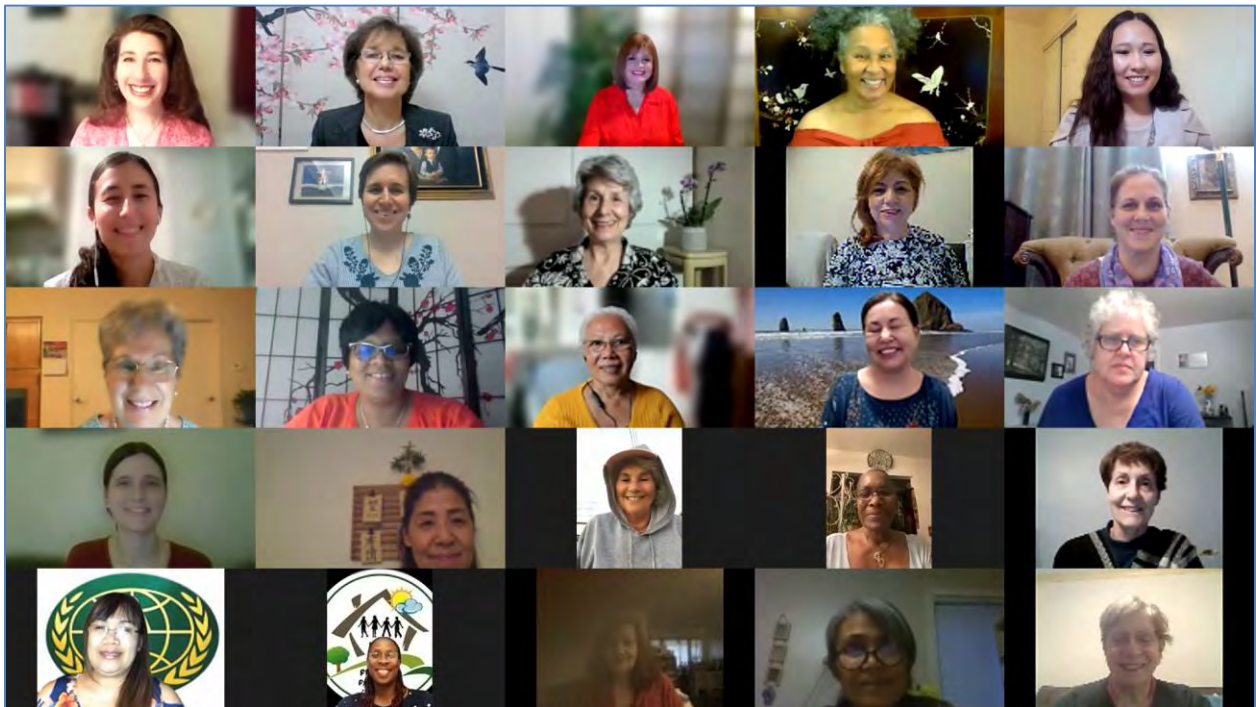
The panel discussion of three accomplished women in the arts started with Ms. Denise Lyles-Cook who presented on "Vanishing Authenticity in Entertainment Today: The Trend." Known as the Oracle, Denise brings to the stage a wealth of experience as a motivational speaker, published author, educator and artist and is well known as a healer of the heart, mind, body and soul. She shared very powerfully about the trend in the arts industries today of quick and easy entertainment with no connection to the heart, mind, and soul of another. She advocated for reversing the trends which artists are under pressure to follow in order to be noticed, and instead focus on channelling authenticity and the divine in artistic expression. Whether we are creators or consumers of art, we can have an impact on inspiring a new trend of authenticity: "what we do will inspire generations either towards or away from our authentic selves, the true selves God meant us to be, made us to be."

After this powerful advocacy for bringing our authenticity into our relationships with arts and culture, [Ms. Sarah Baumgarten](#), accomplished opera singer, shared her personal journey of creating music in her talk, "Why Create Music?" As a performer, teacher, and music director, Sarah has performed at The Kimmel Center, Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, Opera America, the Library of Congress, the Jewish Museum of Maryland, and World Café Live. Sarah shared about her own development as an artist and how she finds meaning and healing in music when there is a personal connection. In music and song lyrics there was a place where her deep emotions could resonate and be articulated. Now as a performer, she strives to create that for her students and audiences, where through the common experience of music we no longer feel alone, and connections of the heart are made. Those connections can also be built across racial and cultural divides through the power of music.

The panel discussion concluded with [Ms. Judi Moreo](#) who spoke on "How Art Can Help Us Overcome Toxic Cultures and Environments." Judi Moreo has informed, inspired, challenged, motivated and entertained audiences in 29 countries around the globe with her unique speaking style. She is an accomplished business woman, fine artist, and author. While the pandemic has brought to light many toxic realities, Judi also shared research that stated the average person hears five negative statements in the workplace every hour. This is quite an impact, especially considering it takes 14 to 20 positive statements to counteract only one negative statement. Judi shared her own story of overcoming toxicity

through art. While battling cancer, her doctor told her to take art lessons, and through that experience, she learned how art helps with developing our creativity, confidence, perseverance, focus, patience, problem solving, and more. Art also helps us to use our imaginations, especially in seeing the world and other people in a new way.

The panel discussion was followed by a lively Q and A in which the audience could pose their questions to the speakers and the speakers could share even deeper about their personal passions and motivations.



Finally, as a special surprise, participants enjoyed two very uplifting musical performances. The first was a duet between Sarah Baumgarten and fellow soprano Ms. Jocelyn Taylor who did a beautiful rendition of "For Good" from the musical Wicked. The message of the song fit perfectly with Sarah's talk about music and articulating emotions: "Who can say if I've been changed for the better? But, Because I knew you, I have been changed for good." We signed off for the evening with a spunky original song from folk-soul singer/songwriter, Ms. Michaela McClain, "[YOLO.](#)" Through the upbeat tempo and lyrics, we were encouraged to live life to the fullest without fear.

To watch the recording: [CLICK HERE](#)

Surely, at the end of this inspiring, uplifting, and enjoyable forum, we were challenged to look at arts and culture in a new way, and perhaps even develop latent artistic talents of our own. Read below for just a few of the many comments from participants.

If you would like to learn more about the Global Women's Peace Network and stay connected to this amazing network of women leaders, please click here. (www.wfwp.us/gwpn)

Comments from Participants

Thank you Sarah for such an amazing presentation! Music is really healing for the body and soul!

The overall theme of the event was very interesting, and I loved all the speakers because they shared authentic content and were inspiring.

The personal testimonies and stories were very powerful

Denise, What a great presentation! Now I understand authenticity!

Sarah, I'm very inspired by your clarion vision of the roles you want to embody.

Voice being a very personable and vulnerable instrument makes sense, and maybe because I love and get delighted by authentic singers, not necessarily the most popular ones from various styles.

Judi, you can really inspire! Thank you for the way you look at life, you can only put in a picture what you have inside... It all comes from within.