

# UPF/WFWP Summer Gathering

Peace Embassy, Thornton Heath, UK, 5. July 2014



Some 70 people, representing a vibrant local and diverse community, attended a superbly harmonised summer gathering organised by the Universal Peace Federation and Women's Federation for World Peace at the South London Peace Embassy on Saturday 5th July 2014. The event was showcased by the presentation of Ambassador for Peace awards to eleven members of the public who had made outstanding contributions to their communities through various charity works and skills.

Keishin Hoshiko, co-ordinator for the Youth Women's Federation, acted as Mistress of Ceremonies and gave an elegant introduction to the programme, which included wide-ranging speeches on the aims and activities of the hosting organisations and a repertoire of song and dance that truly delighted the audience, followed by a seasonal buffet of a high standard.



With a background in theology and politics, **Zara Colville**, who has been working in the European Parliaments in Brussels and Strasbourg, offered a sincere message on behalf of Syed Kamall, a member of the European Parliament who is based in Kingston. As one of eight elected London MEPs and leader of the Conservative faction, Mr Kamall successfully retained his seat in the May election.

Mr Kamall's message opened with the statement: "I would like to extend my support for all the good work

that you do here and also my congratulations to those of you receiving awards today". He continued with a plea for freedom, which he believed lay in a grassroots approach to local issues. Personal freedom was sustained by human energy, he declared, and he passionately supported individuals and local communities who quietly and unassumingly achieved their responsibilities. He was committed to the quest for human dignity, freedom and democracy. Zara added that Mr Kamall was a champion of community-led solutions and that he would work with any Londoner who wanted to help their community.



**Robin Marsh**, Secretary-General of UPF in the United Kingdom, offered a PowerPoint display on UPF activities that focused on overcoming discrimination, peace visits to the Middle East, interfaith outreach, family and marriage issues, good governance and the prevention of sexual and domestic violence. The essence, he said, was to live as one family under God. The slides demonstrated landmarks during the course of the year, ranging from the presentation of Youth Achievement awards, including one to Jermain Jackman, winner of "The Voice", to genocide prevention, human rights and conflict minerals. Often events were held in Parliament. One of the UPF highlights was a fund-raising concert for North Korean children.



Helping children in North Korea through the supply of clothing and educational materials was one of the activities of the Women's Federation recounted by **Mitty Tohma**, president of the organisation in UK.

"The project provides a basis to build trust and to win the hearts of the Korean people," she said. Mitty also outlined several projects of the Women's Federation, which included the "Bridge of Peace", a new and effective way of healing the wounds of abuse, misunderstanding, intolerance, prejudice and war.

The "Women of Faith" initiative, launched in 2001, brought women of different faiths together for the purpose of developing understanding and respect for women's traditions. They took the opportunity to explore different faiths through testimonies, the study of sacred texts, prayer breakfasts and visits to others' places of worship. Meanwhile, humanitarian aid and service projects aimed to find ways to relieve suffering and eradicate poverty. Mitty added that "women are the guardians of the family, the cornerstone of every healthy society and an essential part of the peace-building process of our time."



**Dolores Read**, chairwoman of the Women's Federation, and Lance Gardiner, co-ordinator of UPF in South London, introduced the members of the community who received the Ambassador for Peace awards, and these were presented by Robin and Mitty. The recipients of the awards were Leah Levane, Lucy Njomo, Mumtaz Hayas, Norma Thomas, Nanette Frederiksson, Trudi Khan, Theresa Lanzalaco, Mary Afful, Belinda Pykes, Saroj Gujral and Pria Shabu. Keishin spoke of them as peace leaders from all walks of life who promoted reconciliation, overcame barriers and worked to build peace founded on universal moral principles.



A beautiful entertainment programme included an opening duet entitled "Stop Crying Your Heart Out", based on the Oasis anthem, offered by Mia and Miranda Gardiner. This was followed by a classical Indian dance by Lakshmi Shabu and an operatic aria by Denise Kay Christie. Minds were tested by Nigel Barrett in his inimitable quiz and the show closed with Mia Gardiner singing "Through the Rain" by Mariah Carey. It was, as all agreed, a magnificent night to remember.

*Report by Colin Gardiner*