

WPWP USA: Youth Discovering Spirituality in Everyday Life

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Marie-Justine Torres speaking during the webinar

The youth are our future spiritual leaders. However it is not always easy for parents to pass down their own faith traditions to their children. On November 29, 2021, three youths presented on how they found spirituality within their own respective faiths with the support of their family and community.

Hosted by the Global Women's Peace Network (GWPN) this webinar was the third in a series devoted to faith and families. "Youth Discovering Spirituality in Everyday Life" was moderated by Evelyn Stewart (WFWP Chairwoman Hamilton Chapter) with an introduction by Lilly Tadin (WFWP Canada President).



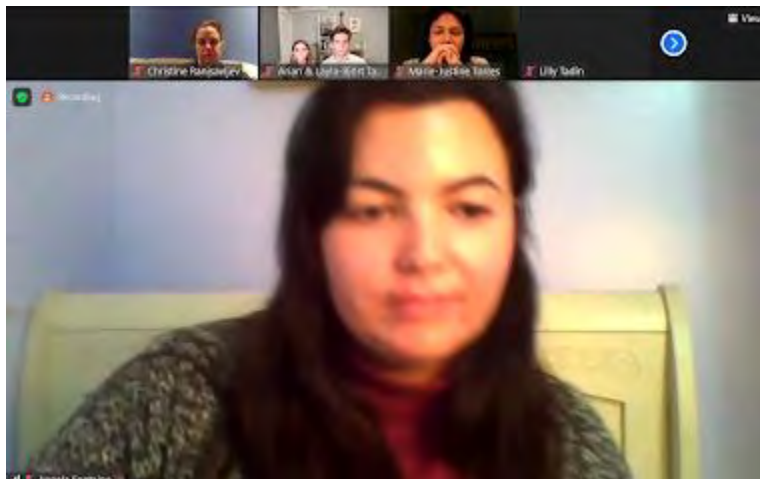
Arian and Layla Bjorn-Taherzadeh sharing about their faith and faith based activities.

The event opened with a song by Jaeden Vaifanua called [That's what family means to me](#). Lilly introduced the speakers by commenting on the challenges that youth today face during the Covid-19 Pandemic. "The more difficult the situation the more they need to realize the purpose for their creation." She remarked that it is in handling the doubts of youth during difficult times that we can nurture their

faith.

The first speaker, Marie-Justine Torres (Masters in Political Science, University of Montreal) grew up in a single parent family and benefitted from the extended family experience. Her mother, an educator and Catholic never forced her into their faith. She encouraged her to have an open mind. Looking back, she realized that it was unconditional love that she was given by her mother that nurtured her faith. "One of the problems is that people are so busy that we do not take the necessary time to invest in our children. Instead of giving them technology it would be better to give children an instrument or some physical activity."

The next speakers, Arian and Layla Bjorn-Taherzadeh (a young entrepreneur from Ottawa and his musician sister) presented the Baha'i faith into which they were born. They stated the importance of developing spiritually at the family level since it is the key to establishing world peace. "Family provides the context of oneness of mankind and puts this into practice." The brother and sister team run the [Junior Spiritual Empowerment Program](#) in their community for kids 12-15. The aim of the program is to build an environment that fosters positive relationships while taking action and personal initiative. They have raked leaves for the elderly in their neighborhood, baked cookies for teachers who were on strike and cleaned up a local park. The siblings say it is rewarding to see youth beginning to understand the concepts of their teachings other than from a clergy or church-like institution.



Angela Fontaine talking about her experiences

The third speaker, Angela Fontaine, was born into her faith community. She was encouraged to learn and explore faith by her parents who are Unificationists. She was told her foundation of faith is hers. "Religion is about cultivating love with one another. I should make an effort to open myself up to others. We are all on this earth to connect." When asked how to bring oneness between the faiths, Ms. Fontaine responded, "We can focus on our similarities instead of our differences. The biggest similarity is our love for one another."

In conclusion, it was really the encouragement, love, and faith in the youth that can allow them to inherit and discover spirituality in their life. Please love and encourage the youth in your faith community and give them as many opportunities as possible to practice their faith and share their talents.