

## Peacemakers and Bridge Builders: A Vision for the Human Family

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What will undo centuries of prejudice and division? What must we teach so today's children may see a more peaceful world?

Mamie Thompson, ambassador, educator, peacemaker, and bridge builder, shared her decades-long experience working toward solutions to these very questions during her presentation on December 7, co-hosted by the WFP UN Office in New York and the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) in celebration of the United Nations International Year of the Family.

In the University of Bridgeport (UB) Schelfhault Art Gallery, Mrs. Thompson took the audience on her journey from the struggle for civil rights in Alabama to post-apartheid school development in South Africa. After all she has witnessed and overcome, Mrs. Thompson concludes that we will continue to be divided by our prejudices until we understand that we are one human family.

Attendees were led through an activity called "I Know You," in which participants were asked to answer questions about each other's ethnicity and race. It became clear that the point of the exercise was not to properly guess people's origins but rather to look past our pre-judgements in order to have genuine, open dialogue with one another.

As Rodgers and Hammerstein put it,  
"You've got to be taught to be afraid, of people whose eyes are [diff'rently] made...And people whose skin is a diff'rent shade."

Nora Spurgin, former president of WFP USA, said of the event that she felt, "I am not hearing a speech. I am having an experience!"

University of Bridgeport professor Betsy Orman's takeaway from the night was for us not to give up and to continue teaching the right lessons, as young people are going to lead the way to peace.

Mrs. Thompson was fortunate as a young student to have a principal who encouraged her to dream big, work hard, and accomplish amazing things. Her new project is the DREAM educational program in New York City, which utilizes activities like "I Know You" to empower youth to build bridges and accomplish big things together. WFP hopes to create collaborations with programs like this one, where youth create the peace we all seek.