

UPF USA: Women Leaders Promote Development of a Sustainable Economy

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United States -- The world economy has been under great stress due to the global pandemic, disruptions to local communities brought by globalization, pressures on families, a growing wealth gap, and the like. Many feel that women in leadership roles are much needed to help businesses meet these challenges in a balanced way. An online program, co-hosted by the International Association for Peace and Economic Development (IAED) and the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) on March 25, 2021, brought women business leaders together to address the challenges of business in promoting mutual prosperity, interdependence, and universally shared values.



The power of women gathering for a cause was evident as the moderator began the conference, "The Role of Women Business Leaders in Creating a Healthy and Sustainable Economy," with nearly 80 participants online. The event was live streamed on Facebook to the IAED, UPF, and WFWP Facebook pages, tripling that number to about 250.

Mr. Alan Jessen, Coordinator of IAED-North America, gave opening comments and welcomed the panelists. In recognition of International Women's Day, this event was conceived and planned as a collaboration between the [IAPD](#) and WFWP-USA. The topic attracted many women, but men were also present and recognized by the moderator.

Moderator of the program was Ms. Audra Hajj, kept the flow of the conference tight and upbeat throughout the roughly 90-minute program. Ms. Hajj is the CEO of Angel Investors Network, which has helped nearly 3,000 businesses launch, grow and scale for success. She expressed that her passion and energy was conceived from her early childhood to make humanity better. She encouraged the audience that success in making money is a byproduct when working to do "good" for others.



Mr. Tom McDevitt, President of Magnolia USA Foundation, was introduced as the global chairman of IAED to offer his encouragement. He reminded the panelists that one year ago, the IAED was inaugurated at the UPF World Summit in Seoul, Korea as the newest pillar association within UPF. He commended UPF for its "grand strategy" to make a difference in the world. all the way from the local to the global level by bringing together leaders in the business, government, academic, interreligious, and media sectors of society. His final key point: The world is in a fragile state, and it is vital for women to step forward into leadership roles.

Ms. Angelika Selle, President of WFWP-USA, also spoke briefly and expressed her appreciation for the collaboration, saying that it is good for women to be invited into these opportunities. She told of a story at the United Nations where one delegate -- recognizing that the resolution to an issue was stuck -- suggested that women and youth were an untapped resource and that getting them involved would surely help them get somewhere! Why? Because women have a different way of looking at things that comes from the heart, using their intuitive nature and life experiences.

Sometimes women offer out-of-the-box recommendations to solve world problems including economic crises, said Ms. Selle. She went on to say that Mother of Peace Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon is the inspiration for WFWP and that the vision is not for men and women to compete with each other but to complete each other. Both are needed.

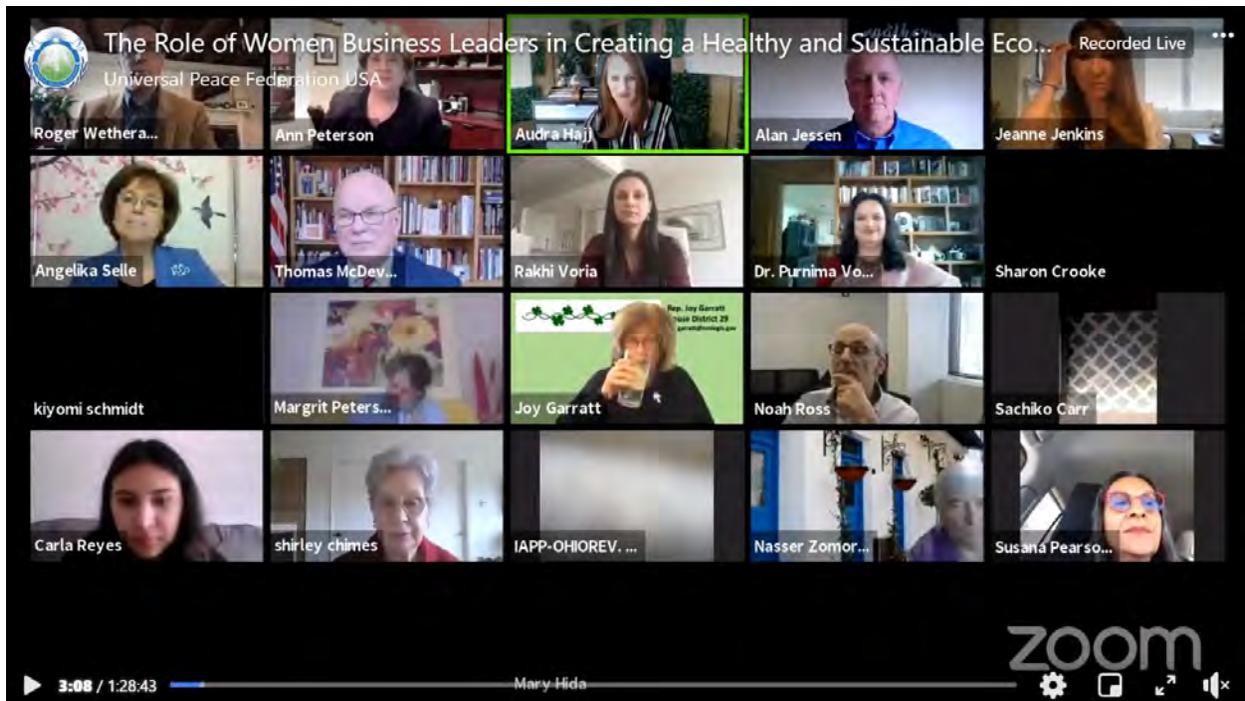
The first panelist was Dr. Purnima Voria, Founder and CEO of the National U.S. and India Chamber of Commerce (NUICC). Born in India, she grew her successes in America. She shared her early struggles as a single mother, rising above the challenges to become recognized worldwide as a model for successful leadership in developing bilateral trade between the United States and India.

Through a lifetime of challenges, Dr. Voria developed her own power and purpose by applying principles and values inherited from her father, a successful businessman in India. When she recognized the fears that many in the United States had with doing business with India, she saw an opportunity and founded NUICC. She has continued to expand these opportunities and has worked successfully with many U.S. administrations and other nations with the goal of improving international relations as a contribution to world peace. One can imagine after observing her that her poise, grace, and bright and warm smile gave plenty of leverage in opening many doors in her lifetime. At the QandA portion of the conference, Dr. Voria echoed the sentiments of Audra Hajj that passion is the key to success.

Rakhi Voria was introduced as the daughter of Dr. Purnima Voria. Ms. Voria is the director of IBM Global Digital Sales Development. Previously, she was vice president for Worldwide Sales at Microsoft. Rakhi paid tribute to her mother for her influences through her life. It was easy to see that her mother's strength was as an obvious component to Rakhi and her progress in the world of business.

Ms. Voria's underlying passion is for advancing women in business. She stated that women are

underrepresented in every profession, but especially in technology. As a woman, millennial, and non-white, her obstacles were multiplied. Her belief is that a first step to attracting and keeping more women is to re-create recruiting and job descriptions to better reflect women's values (even word choice, for example). Re-creating work environments is another area for improvement. Women can be as assertive and competitive as men; however, they often bring a consultative approach toward leadership, which runs counter to the male-dominated norm.



Dr. Ann Peterson is the President and Managing Director of the New Yorker Hotel in New York City. The hotel boasts 1,050 beds and is prominently located in prime Manhattan real estate near Madison Square Garden, Penn Station and adjacent tourist areas. Dr. Peterson is a no-nonsense leader but gracefully adept with superior people skills, as observed by her peers. After hotel consultants tried to influence a pyramid management style, she soon returned back to a more collaborative style, which has been the more effective recipe for success and her most comfortable formula.

Dr. Peterson has made a team of leaders out of her 300 employees from 23 different cultures. During the COVID pandemic, the hotel went from 93% occupancy to zero. However, her team made the decision to house 900 nurses, and the hotel to date has survived well. Other major hotels in Manhattan are closed still to this date. Ann stated that women have different skill sets at managing and tend to be more open and flexible than men -- which is especially valuable during times of crisis.

The final panelist was the lovely professional Jeanne Jenkins, who is Vice President for the Mid-Atlantic region of Wells Fargo's Commercial Bank. She is very passionate about increasing women's presence on boards of companies. Although she herself serves on different boards in the commercial banking world, she remarked that boards are predominantly all men, especially privately-held boards. She wants to increase the representation of women in small and medium-sized business boards.

Ms. Jenkins said that women who know and are true to themselves are successful as who they are and bring a special value in the right opportunity. As an example of the different focus that men and women in business have, she presented a matrix called PIE -- Performance, Image, and Exposure. While women spend 80% of their focus on Performance, men spend 80% of their time and focus on Image and Exposure. For women to advance, they need to be stronger advocates for themselves, increasing exposure while remaining true to their core values.

The stories the women shared how they built the foundations of their successful companies and organizations by leaning on the vision of a culture of heart to serve the needs of others. Their stories were inspiring because in this day and age one does not tend to hear such messages of positivity. Dr. Vorias's statement about the importance of courage was touching because heart-driven courage produces great leaders who help change the world for good. The courage of great leaders cannot be measured, yet these leaders were and are fearless to ignite change to create a more peaceful existence for humanity.