

Hak Ja Han's Universal Peace Federation hosts worldwide virtual 'Rally of Hope'

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The Universal Peace Federation hosted a worldwide virtual 'Rally of Hope.'

Global health crises, economic turmoil and racial divisions threaten to bring out the very worst in humanity, but those challenges must be met by love and respect for the unifying principles that bind all nations together, faith leaders and top political figures said Saturday evening at a major international rally.

The "Rally of Hope," organized by the [Universal Peace Federation \(UPF\)](#) and partner groups, drew about 1.5 million participants from around the globe for a virtual gathering and provided a powerful platform in the fight against poverty, racial and ethnic divisions, environmental degradation and other issues that fuel conflict and discord.

Its speakers included current and former heads of state, along with powerful U.S. politicians and prominent voices from across the religious spectrum, all joining together in a call for peace and togetherness at a crucial moment for the planet.

Amid those calls for unity and acceptance, former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper argued that it's equally important for all freedom-loving people to confront nations that bully their citizens and routinely violate human rights -- an apparent jab at the Chinese Communist Party and its policies.

"In such times, there can be an inclination for leaders and nations to turn to easy but ultimately disastrous solutions: protectionism, socialism and aggression in international affairs," Mr. Harper said. "That's why it is essential that we understand our interdependence in this world, work together to rebuild our mutual prosperity and act on shared values rather than zero-sum strategies."

"We must recognize that history shows that the rights and freedoms of ordinary people are critical to creating and sustaining our prosperity and peace over time," Mr. Harper said. "In other words, we should not pretend that those states which deny freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law share values with us."

Other major world figures spoke of the need for humanity to seek not only to defeat the coronavirus but also to accept it as reality and make necessary adjustments to daily life.

"We may have the coronavirus for a long time. Yes, we must attack it, but we also must learn to live with it," said former Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales. "Let's adapt to living with the social distancing and improving our hygiene. Let's take advantage of technology to inform and stimulate the intelligent coexistence among our people. Let us demonstrate true love toward others, with solidarity, fairness, equality and justice for all."

Against the backdrop of those challenges, a broader focus on unity, human rights and respect for all people was a central tenet of the rally. That also has been a guiding principle in the life of [UPF](#) co-founder Hak Ja Han Moon, the leader of the Unification Church and wife of the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon. The two devoted their lives to the promotion of world peace and the reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

Saturday's event was the first in a series of online "rallies of hope" to be held each month through December. Each event aims to bring together leaders in politics, religion, media, economics and other fields. The virtual gatherings are especially vital in today's climate as the world struggles to contain and ultimately rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The goal of these assemblies is to set a cornerstone for the realization of a world of proactive international and interreligious collaboration for the good of all people," said Dr. Thomas G. Walsh, [UPF](#) chairman.

'A dramatically better future'

While Mr. Harper and other speakers shined a bright light on the moral and political challenges facing the world today -- such as China's whitewashing of the true nature of the coronavirus outbreak and the subsequent deaths caused by it -- others painted an optimistic picture. Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich said that major breakthroughs in medicine, science and technology will lead to a more prosperous human race and will bring people together.

"Yes, we have challenges. Yes, there are difficulties. But I believe that we can in fact work together. ... We can reach across national boundaries, we can reach across parties and differences, and we can find a way to create a dramatically better future for our children and our grandchildren," said Mr. Gingrich, Georgia Republican. "And by doing it together, we actually create a better future for the entire human race. So count me in as an optimist, count me in as somebody who believes each one of us can make a big difference."

Other speakers at Saturday's event included Senegalese President Macky Sall; Nigerian Prime Minister

Brigi Rafini; Chuichi Date, former president of the House of Councillors of Japan; and others.

In his own remarks, former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said COVID-19, climate change and other challenges represent "nature's stern warning to humanity" and should spur countries to band together.

"Now is the time for us to build bridges, not to erect walls. If we work together, there is no challenge that is too great, no obstacle that cannot be overcome," Mr. Ban said. "Regardless of our national, ethnic, racial, religious or political backgrounds, we are the members of one human family. Let us respect and support one another to achieve world peace and move one step closer to peaceful reunification on the Korean Peninsula."

In a sign of [UPF](#)'s reach and influence, top North Korean officials even delivered a message to the organization's World Summit in February and urged Mrs. Moon to continue the work of her late husband and push for "national peace, prosperity and unification."

Reuniting Korea is a key pillar of the Unification movement that grew from the Unification Church that Rev. Moon founded in 1954. Mrs. Moon has led the movement since a few years before the 2012 death of Rev. Moon, whose ministry grew from a tiny, embattled church in South Korea to a global spiritual movement and an affiliated commercial empire comprising real estate, manufacturing and agricultural operations, as well as media properties including The Washington Times.

In her remarks Saturday night, Mrs. Moon said the reunification of Korea would be a long-awaited step forward for the world.

"It is only when we attend heavenly parent that the issue of North-South reunification, that a true unified Korea, can be realized," she said. "May Korea become a nation of virtue that can stand as a beacon ... before the world."

Lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula also has been a top priority for President Trump, who has held three historic in-person meetings with North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un. The White House is seeking an elusive deal in which Pyongyang would give up all of North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions in exchange for a massive influx of economic aid and investment.

Despite the administration's push, there has been little movement on negotiations with North Korea in recent months. Officials have said the two sides remain at odds on key points, such as whether full and complete denuclearization comes before the lifting of economic sanctions or other forms of financial aid.

Still, speakers at Saturday's event urged all stakeholders not to give up hope for peace and eventual reunification.

"Could it be that we are in an anointed release of the church to see the ancient wounds of God's house rebuilt, and ruined cities and the desolation of many generations repaired?" said Paula White-Cain, Mr. Trump's personal spiritual adviser. "Well, I believe that God is at work. And so I pray right now for the reunification of South and North Korea and pray that you move mightily, I pray that you release a miracle, God."