

WFWP USA's Igniting a Culture of Heart Seminar in Las Vegas

Angelika Selle
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"I learned to let go, and let God. I try to control everything and God has told me multiple times, multiple ways, and I have been resisting. I will own it now." -- Anonymous Participant

On October 12th, 57 women from around the United States, Central America, and the Caribbean arrived at the International Peace Education Center (IPEC) for a four-day seminar. Occurring in Las Vegas just 15 days after a mass shooting left 58 people dead and hundreds wounded, the retreat was a reminder of the unity that is possible when we work toward our common goals.

The theme for the retreat was Igniting a Culture of Heart. At the seminar, women were asked to share what they most wished they could change about the world. Those present spoke of their dreams to end poverty, wars, and racism; to provide adequate education for all children; and to celebrate the value of women. While recharging their minds and bodies in a relaxing atmosphere, participants learned about the work of WFWP and discussed how their personal and career aspirations might align with the vision of the women's nonprofit, started in 1992 by Unification Movement founder Hak Ja Han Moon. During the retreat, Vice President Katarina Connery introduced a new chapter manual, Financial Administrator Irmgard Baynes explained WFWP's efforts to increase financial transparency, and Membership Coordinator Hanabeta Deshotel explored ideas to increase chapter membership.

Later, WFWP President Angelika Selle and talk show host Aimmee Kodachian discussed keys to effective outreach, and schools of Africa Coordinator Fannie Smith presented on the various efforts of WFWP to provide education to impoverished youth around the world. Several chapter heads were honored for their work.

On the final day of the retreat, President Selle and Vice President Juanita Pierre-Louis discussed the value of feminine leadership styles and praised the work of International WFWP President Yeon Ah Moon. A native German and an African-American, the two served as representatives of black and white America and a reminder of the bridge we must make across racial divides. WFWP members remarked that Angelika and Juanita's talk gave them hope for America's current race relations.

At the end of the seminar, several women visited the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Resort to pay their respects to the victims and families of the October 1st massacre. They brought flowers and prayed at the site, finishing with a moving rendition of America the Beautiful. While they prayed and sang, bystanders and onlookers stopped what they were doing to join the women for a few moments. Out on the city streets, still crowded with tourists and mourners, the women were, momentarily, a symbol of love and peace.



Reflections:

"The format of the retreat was excellent. By that I mean – the flow of the workshops and how each one moved from the general to the specific, and from ideology to hands-on tools, with ample time in between to rest and reflect."

"The dynamic duo of Angelika and Katarina was excellent! Angelika's vision and how she expressed her heart and the heart of Heavenly Mother was deeply moving as always. Katarina's insight and organizational/ development skills are superb. I could listen to her for days."

"Thank you so much for putting on such an extraordinary retreat. The location was marvelous. The presentations were informative and inspiring, and provided lots of tools which are useful for our chapters. The group activities were good even though we had short time; it helped sisters to open up a bit and bond more. Throughout the retreat we felt so much love."

