

## WFWP Northern Cal's GWPN webinar: Women as Leaders: Building Community

Myrna Lapres  
March 13, 2021



Inaugurated in 2012, the Global Women's Peace Network (GWPN) is a project of WFWPI and events are held internationally, nationally and locally. GWPN brings together women leaders and organizations working with governments to solve pressing social issues and to secure an environment for equitable human development. Through peace leadership based on the feminine aspect of human nature, GWPN seeks to ensure lasting peace and prosperity for generations to come.

On Saturday March 13, 2021, Northern California WFWP chapter held its first Global Women's Peace Network webinar "Women as Leaders: Building Community." Our guest speaker, Maree Gauper, introduced us to her journey of becoming active in her local community through town events and racial dialogue. Beginning with the statement, "We need to end racism," Ms. Gauper said that although we may all agree with this statement, we may wonder what one person can do to make a difference. Her goal was to give us insight and inspiration on how we can do just that.

Through a conversation with a friend while cleaning up their northern California neighborhood for MLK Jr. Day--the inspiration came to have a Community Choral Festival in remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King. From 2014-2017, Maree supported choirs and individuals from black and white churches to come together to celebrate on MLK Jr. Day. Ms. Gauper calls these projects her formation stage and how she earned some credibility as an activist in her community.

The growth stage was getting involved with Black History Month. As a teenager, Maree Gauper said that she heard Scott Joplin's piano rag, "The Entertainer" so often on the radio that she could play it by ear. She imagined him a white man, maybe related to Janis Joplin. As a piano teacher in California, she says "I soon learned that Scott Joplin was a black man who had lived more than 100 years ago and whose potential as a brilliant composer was seriously hampered by the racism of his era."

In 2016, Ms. Gauper volunteered to share her memorabilia on Scott Joplin at the library and she met Mary Alice Shumate who was a literacy coordinator extraordinaire and the go-to person for Black History Month in the bi-county area. Ms. Shumate had a connection to everyone and is credited with helping as many as 6,000 people become U.S. Citizens and learn English. Through their friendship, Maree was able

to participate in a number of events and meet people in education, business, churches, sports, government, law enforcement and beyond.

Community Choral Festival  
in remembrance of  
Dr. Martin Luther King  
Sunday, January 18, 2015  
4:00PM to 6:00PM

Mt. Olivet Baptist Church  
2284 McGowan Parkway  
Olivehurst

**Free and Open to All**  
Food/Refreshments

**Keynote Speaker:**  
Bishop Arlie Capps, The Church of Jesus Christ, LDS  
**Theme: "Lift Every Voice"**

*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and to his court with praise.  
(Psalm 100:4)*  
Any questions, please call Maree Gauper at 530-633-0656 or cellphone  
530-870-0514

Yuba College

M.L.K. Events

When Ms. Shumate retired at 80 years old, it took a committee to fill her shoes. As part of the committee, Ms. Gauper was able to work together with amazing groups of people such as the Tri-Counties African American Alliance. Another person on the committee was Joyce Pope, a Public Health nurse, who she already knew through Toastmasters. Together, they planned and held a series of programs beginning in February 2019. These included an event entitled "Justice Pending," bringing together members of police and sheriff's departments, the DA's office, along with members of the community. Since racial tensions were running high after a police shooting of a young black man in Sacramento, the committee determined that they wanted to help their community respond to this tragedy in a comprehensive way.

Other projects include Race Dialogs, neighborhood walks together, a book discussion on "So You Want to Talk About Race" by Ijeoma Oluo, and a Community College workshop on the documentary "13" by Ava DuVernay.

Ms. Gauper said, "What I'm describing now is the maturing stage of my journey. I was no longer one person sharing an idea. I was part of a growing number of people with seemingly endless ideas for making positive change in our community. As you can see, one person CAN make a difference. One person can talk to another person and energy is generated. Like-minded people can form alliances and committees to create amazing programs and projects. You could start by visiting your local library for ideas (if it's open) or consider visiting a Toastmasters club in your area! You never know what interesting new friends you might find there."

After Maree Gauper's inspiring talk, we had a QandA and then everyone went into breakout rooms to discuss their inspirations from the talk and what they could do in their local community. The zoom webinar attracted more than 25 people and everyone was inspired to learn about Maree Gauper's journey. We are looking forward to our next webinar in the series "Women as Leaders" on Saturday, June 26 at 1 pm PST. You can see the recording of our March 13 GWPN event here: [youtu.be/2v8oNIFvswM](https://youtu.be/2v8oNIFvswM)