

UPF-USA Activity Report

Ricardo de Sena
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The Universal Peace Federation (UPF) is a global network of individuals and organizations dedicated to building a world of peace in which all people can live in freedom, harmony, cooperation and prosperity. This spring the U.S. chapter of UPF held events on the national and local level in various parts of the United States. Take a look at some of the many activities and issues that the organization is a part of:

Office of Asian Affairs Holds First Assembly



“I think this is important. Countries need to be bound by something higher than themselves, and that is being mindful of international relations,” said Hon. Mario de Leon Jr., the Philippine consul general to New York, in accepting his appointment as an Ambassador for Peace at the inaugural assembly of UPF-USA’s Office of Asian Affairs (OAA) on March 28, in mid-Manhattan.

The Office of Asian Affairs, led by Executive Director Rev. Greg Agulan, will reach out to diplomatic officials, business and community leaders in communities with Southeast Asian roots. The group will focus on the myriad issues of nations and peoples in Southeast Asia.



At the inaugural assembly Mr. Ricardo de Sena, president of UPF-USA, presented the purpose, structure and activities of UPF and emphasized UPF’s five Principles of Peace. “Transcending racial, religious and ethnic barriers is an imperative of our time. Faith can give people the power to forgive, and the love to overcome even generations of hatred, resentment and violence,” he said.



Esther Faith Batino, the OAA executive secretary, said that the formal launch of the OAA is a great leap forward in the peace movement in the United States. She said that her office is planning more innovative ways to unify the community with pursuits of cultural understanding as a way to peace.

Representatives and guests from Asian countries, including Nepal, India and Japan, gathered at the inaugural assembly, along with local representatives from New Jersey, New York and Massachusetts.



UPF Strategizes with UN Alliance of Civilizations to Achieve Development Goals



“Both UPF and the UN Alliance of Civilizations share the belief that the promotion of intercultural and interfaith dialogue is the path for people and nations to live in peace and security,” stated H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations.



H.E. Mr. Al-Nasser made these remarks at the March 27 consultation on “The Relevance of Interreligious and Inter-Civilizational Dialogue to the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals,” held at the UN headquarters in New York. He also stated, “All the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals] can only be achieved by leaping over the things that divide us to embrace our common and shared cultural heritage.”

Dr. Thomas Walsh, president of the Universal Peace Federation, which organized the event, offered premises for dialogue, including recognition that religious ideas and beliefs play decisive roles in individuals, families and societies.



Co-sponsors offered insights into the relevance of religions and faith-based organizations to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed for adoption by the United Nations this September, building on the Millennium Development Goals that the UN adopted in the year 2000. Among the areas

in which religions and faith-based organizations may provide leadership are alleviating poverty, the increasing gap between developed and developing countries, the plight of people living under terror and occupation, and concerns for refugees and displaced people.

Expert panelists included Dr. Rick Clugston, co-director of the Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future. He said that for more than 20 years he has worked with religious NGOs at the UN to raise awareness of sustainable development issues and is challenging them to offer input into ways that progress toward the goals can be measured. He noted that similar messages of religious leaders have already been expressed, but now they are being articulated in the UN context.



Peace activists expressed their concerns and shared their own stories. Mr. Eli Epstein, co-founder of the Children of Abraham, said he grew up as a child of Holocaust survivors who distrusted people outside their community. He described how his life has been enriched through developing friendships with people of diverse faiths. He urged participants: “Do not ignore the spiritual side, which is at the heart of all human beings.”

An interactive session offered an opportunity for the diverse audience to offer their insights. Speakers called attention to the tragedies suffered by Afghans and Nigerians, the special concerns of orphans, and the holistic views of indigenous populations about sustainable development.

H.E. Mr. Al-Nasser closed the consultation by expressing his conviction that “We have different cultures and different faiths, but we are one family. [Sustainable development] can only be achieved if people, communities and nations work together across cultures and religions.”



A Testimony of “Giving God’s Love to the Homeless and Poor”



Twenty Ambassadors for Peace and friends gathered on March 26 in Seattle to hear Ambassador for Peace Mr. Bert Caoili speak on “Giving God’s Love to the Homeless and Poor.”

Mr. Caoili, a former president and district governor of the Lions Club, whose motto is “We Serve,” asked: “What is our reaction when we ... see a person with a sign asking for donations from the passersby? Do we think, ‘Is this a scam?’” He said that what matters is how people perceive the sign.

Mr. Caoili quoted a statement made in 1978 by Father Moon, the founder of UPF: “When you give to others, do not think that you are giving from your own pocket. Give with the mind that it comes from the treasury of Heaven, and then the person receiving will feel it comes from God.”



As for the practical application, Mr. Caoili said he travels periodically to the Philippines, where his family distributes food and items to the needy. Also, together with the Seattle Bituin (Tagalog for “star”) Lions Club, he recycles used eyeglasses to donate to people in Jamaica and Central America who need them.

“We are called to serve them, and peace comes through cooperation beyond the boundaries of ethnicity, religion and nationality, as well as

economic situation,” he said. “Continue to give one hundred percent, with faith, knowing that God will assist you.”

An Energized Reunion in Las Vegas



The Las Vegas chapter of UPF-USA (UPFLV) held a reunion mixer at the Now Café on the 2nd floor of Las Vegas City Hall on March 19. The 22 guests heard plans for Las Vegas to become the model city for peacebuilding in America.

Newly appointed Las Vegas UPF-USA leaders Mrs. Katherine Duncan-Bartlett, chairwoman, and Mr. Gregg Smith, secretary general, established three committees aligning with the national and international goals presented by

UPF-USA President Ricardo de Sena. One of the main goals outlined was the holding of an American Leadership Conference in Las Vegas this year.



Local Ambassadors for Peace eagerly registered for assignments on the three committees: interfaith peacebuilding, marriage and family relations and serving the community.

AFPs were asked to support the amazing work that is already being done in Las Vegas to strengthen local

initiatives such as the Mayor's Interfaith Council, the Women's Federation for World Peace, and the Family Education and Empowerment Foundation. They were also encouraged to become members of the Universal Peace Federation and to help plan an annual "One World under God" fundraising event.



"I was very thrilled to have a big check presented on behalf of UPF Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon," said Mrs. Duncan-Bartlett, in a surprise presentation to support the Moulin Rouge Community Development Corporation. The corporation is a major community service project aimed at eradicating slums and blight in Las Vegas, restoring an important African-American landmark and establishing a training center for the hardest-to-employ individuals to find jobs in the hospitality industry.

President de Sena was very pleased with the Now Café and suggested that UPFLV have all its monthly meetings in the same location. UPFLV believes it will grow large enough to have its meetings at the Las Vegas City Council Chamber in the near future.