

## Women's Assembly Gets Rave Reviews by Participants

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*The crowd of the women's assembly this year was more than twice the size of last year's.*

The 19th Annual Women's Assembly in New York City (Aug. 4-6, 2011) was a breakthrough convention for the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) on several counts. The turnout of 380 participants was more than double that of the previous year, and the income from the paid registration brought the event close to the break-even point. For the first time, several local media, including ICEPN TV, the *Tremont Tribune*, and the *Mount Vernon Inquirer*, are writing stories to report the assembly to their audiences. Re-inspired with the WFWP activities of the conference, two ladies will start new chapters of the WFWP in Maine and Pennsylvania.

At this assembly 20 featured speakers explored the hidden power of women in relationships and explained the value of immediate action in becoming the peacemaker in relationships. The three-day long conference was designed to give practical advice about what women can do in their everyday lives to empower themselves and to provide a better idea of the opportunities for service that the WFWP offers. "A week's worth of content was packed into one weekend, because time is at a premium for these ladies, most of whom have families and have jobs to go back to," said Mrs. Angelika Selle, President of WFWP USA.

This year younger women were on the podium and in the audience as at no previous WFWP assembly. A multicultural array of young Unificationists, including Ms. Halka Herd, Ms. Tina Fields, and Ms. Victoria Roomet, stepped up to the podium as MCs.

Ms. Ichiko Sudo, a special consultant to Survivors Against Forced Exit (SAFE), showed for the first time to a public audience a six-minute video of five Unificationists who recounted their testimonies of forced-confinement at the hands of "deprogrammers," but who ultimately were able to raise successful families as proud Unificationists. Three college students, Ms. ChunMi Araki, Ms. Teresa Blount, and Ms. Manasa Kanithi, reported on their volunteer work in the quake zone in Japan, an account that speakers and VIPs hailed as impressive.

Many participants wrote in their evaluations of the conference that they were deeply impacted by the message of News Anchor Brenda Blackmon, from Channel 9 in New York, who was the second keynote speaker after Rev. In Jin Moon, the Senior Pastor of Lovin' Life Ministries. Ms. Blackmon introduced and spoke of her daughter, who had been afflicted with lupus, but who had recovered miraculously by way of prayer and faith despite some doctors' predictions that she would die. Having lived through a time of segregation in the United States, Ms. Blackmon also shared her wisdom about creating healthy relationships, and how she overcame her challenges with God's love.

"We as women have to do something," Ms. Blackmon said, "because women know which battles to fight."

The audience of more than 380 women, in age ranging from 18-75, included the elders of the WFWP Mrs. Nora Spurgin, Mrs. Motoko Sugiyama, Mrs. Marie Ang, and others, chairwomen from around the country, approximately 25 VIPs, including Sister Claudette Mohammed from the Nation of Islam, representatives of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC), representatives of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), journalists, and more than 50 second-

generation Unificationist ladies. More than 30 men also participated in support of the event.

“The best part of the program was the diversity of the speakers,” said Ulrike Zomorod, a first-generation Unificationist. “I believe everyone found some inspiration, and I am most inspired when I see ideas are put into action. I really want to see our local WFWP become involved with other organizations.”



*Comedian Leighann Lord from Jamaica, Queens, expounded on the light-hearted side of relationships.*

### **An Overview of the Program and Speakers**

The Assembly began on the evening of August 4, 2011, with a memorable introduction to the WFWP by its International president, Professor Lan Young Moon. Approximately 180 women attended the session, including 70 Japanese chairwomen and guests. Many women said that through President Moon’s presentation they came to appreciate the tremendous international foundation of the WFWP, and the heart of the founders, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

“Dr. Lan Young Moon’s determination to feed North Korean people with pure love is so beautiful,” said Emiko Butler, an attendee of the conference.

Mrs. Angelika Selle then explained the WFWP USA’s new vision, which focuses on developing the grassroots WFWP in the United States, addressing the problematic state of the nuclear family, and raising the next generation of citizens.

On Friday, August 5, 2011, Rev. In Jin Moon, president of the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) in the United States, and CEO of the Manhattan Center, encouraged her audience to exercise peace in a familial context: “The only way that peace is realized is in understanding what true love is all about. The True Parents of mankind, Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, constantly talk about not only knowing what true love is, but also exercising and substantiating it into our lives. Only by understanding how to accomplish peace in a family setting can we truly create peace on a world level.” Several women asked for copies of the speech, and almost every participant’s feedback sheet lauded Rev. Moon’s message, which included her insights as a mother and advice to “clean up” in order to unlock the power of relationships.



*Ms. Brenda Blackmon told attendees how she overcame challenges growing up in the segregated South.*

Ms. Deborah Saidy, an official of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), followed up with her own experiences as a mother, and explained how the WFP can be a way to help hungry women and children all around the world. Ms. Nia Lyte, a Colombian-born talk show host and former Ms. Hispana from Los Angeles, spoke about the “inner beauty” of women, and how she, an entertainment celebrity, decided to reject offers to pose nude for financial compensation.

“Develop your inner beauty,” Ms. Lyte encouraged her listeners, “and develop as thinkers. In my career, I turned certain jobs down because I wanted to maintain my integrity and my value. It is time to revolutionize Hollywood. It’s time to represent women as thinkers. Remember that no one can take my or your inner beauty away.”

“Ms. Nia Lyte’s speech was incredible – these days, most physically attractive women are compromising their standards, but seeing a woman like her strengthens me,” said attendee Lisa Canak. “She is someone I can look up to and keep in mind during my struggles at school. She inspires me to continue to uphold my standards regardless of what others may think.”

Mrs. Sandra Lowen, one of the pioneers of the Unification Movement in the United States who now works as a professional counselor and trauma therapist, provided insights on the importance of communication.

“Communication is the life water of relationships,” Mrs. Lowen said. “The tongue has the power of life and death. How do you react when someone can’t speak your ‘language?’ Saying what you said with more force is not the best way to communicate; doing the same thing day after day, and expecting a different response is a sign of insanity. We’re out today to stop the insanity. Let’s be a beautiful daughter, sister, and mother, who brings this message home to our spouses.”

Dr. Gita Bangera, a microbiologist and the principal administrator of “ComGen: The Community College Genomics Research Initiative,” introduced a new method of how to instill in women confidence and the sense that they deserve an education, especially in science.

“Everyone deserves a perfect relationship,” said Dr. Bangera. “I saw how women in and outside of India were abused in their relationships, and it didn’t make sense to me. Women had a preconceived notion that they were not good enough in science, and community colleges are a lot like these women – they don’t always get the respect that they deserve. We as women need to be contributing to the world. Take yourselves seriously – do not take your power for granted. No relationship can be strong unless the woman can be strong. Let’s challenge ourselves. Mothers, teach your girls to be resilient.”



*Award-winning ballroom dancers Dimitrios and Maria Damalas amazed the participants of the gala.*

## **Panel Presenters**

The afternoon panel on August 5, 2011, presented in 10-15 minute segments women who had made a difference in their communities through projects they had initiated by helping other women. As mentioned, Mrs. Ichiko Sudo presented a video of the faith-breaking in Japan and then talked about unlocking the power of relationships through serving Japan, the very nation in which Unificationists were denied human- and legal rights under its constitution. Under the guidance of WFWP USA, college students Ms. ChunMi Araki, Ms. Teresa Blount, Ms. Miwa Yokoyama, and Ms. Manasa Kanithi had traveled from the United States to help with the tsunami-relief efforts in Japan.

“We had initially scheduled a rally in front of the White House aimed at protesting the faith-breaking issues in Japan and the rape of women at the hands of faith-breakers, but we cancelled it and instead, turned our attention to helping the people of Japan, which was a life-changing experience for many,” said Mrs. Selle.

The last presenter was Ms. Evelyn Drake, a chairwoman from Florida, who shared a video on relief efforts in Haiti, which have been ongoing for three years.

“I especially like the presentations of helping Japan and Haiti. I hope in the future I can go to those countries and help,” said attendee Ms. Julia Walton.

“Hearing from women who are really doing something was really inspiring,” said another attendee, Mrs. Kim Dadachanji, “which makes it seem possible to run with the vision we each have.”

After the presentations, women were able to re-invigorate their limbs through the “We” activity of learning how to ballroom dance. Many women experienced a breakthrough in dancing and said they realized that life is joy, and that dancing is a part of it.

“The entire conference was uplifting spiritually and practically, and it left you with a feeling of accomplishment and that you could overcome anything,” observed Ms. Juanita Pierre-Louis.



*Mr. Luke Higuchi and wife Michelle represented husband and wife reconciliation on the iconic "Bridge of Peace" during the Benefit Gala.*

### **Benefit Gala for Soles4Souls**

On the evening of August 5, 2011, ladies and gentleman gathered in the Grand Ballroom of the Manhattan Center for a benefit gala organized to raise money for women needing shoes.

The evening began with MC Victoria Roomet, the Vice-President of the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), who recapped the events of the day and introduced Mrs. Jennifer Johnson, the representative of Soles4Souls, to address the audience. Mrs. Johnson explained about the work of Soles4Souls as a charity that donates shoes to adults and children in need and praised the work of WFWP.

Mrs. Angelika Selle then introduced the “Her Story” award, which was named in honor of a lecture series by Prof. Lan Young Moon and which highlights ordinary women who have accomplished extraordinary things. The “Her Story award” was presented to second-generation Unificationist Mrs. Kayo Masuda from Ohio, who despite suffering from Lupus for many years, continued to serve humanitarian missions in Africa and in Israel without complaint.

The “Bridge of Peace Ceremony,” introduced by Mrs. Heather Thalheimer, highlighted healing relationships between sisters, husbands and wives, and a mother and daughter through the act of bowing and embracing.

After a buffet dinner, popular New York City comedian Leighann Lord electrified the audience with her humorous perspective on family relations. “When my husband had to gall to ask me, ‘What do you think about an open marriage?’ I told him, ‘That all depends on what you think about an open casket?’” Ms. Lord said.

Professional ballroom dancers Maria and Dimitrios Damalas, co-owners of the Basic Ballroom Dance Studio in Manhattan, then took the floor with a Chacha and Bolero performance. Second-generation Unificationists showcased their dancing skills through a Waltz exhibition of 20 ladies and gentleman. Mr. Misha Green challenged the fluidity of ballroom dancing with the robotic dance style of pop-and-lock. After the performances, the audience put their newly acquired ballroom dancing skills to the test, joining in fellowship through the medium of dance.

On Saturday, August 6, 2011, 30 exhibitors arranged tables around the Mezzanine Level of the New Yorker Hotel for the first-ever WFWP Networking Fair. Women presented their work, service, or products on behalf of helping women live a healthy lifestyle and have constructive relationships.

Finally, Prof. Lan Young Moon offered the “Her Story” lecture, attended by 100 women, and joined by her husband, Mr. No Hi Pak, closed her presentation in high spirits with songs in Korean, Japanese, and English in honor of Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, founder of the WFWP.