



## UPF Youth Project to create a Peace Garden in Birmingham

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*By David & Patricia Earle*

The Universal Peace Federation, (UPF), supported by the Women's Federation for World Peace, carried out a Youth Service Project in August, in which twelve young women, and twelve young men, laid the foundations for a Peace Garden in a beautiful EcoPark, in Small Heath, one of the most deprived areas of Birmingham, working in partnership with the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust.

The young men cleared out a very overgrown part of the park, which was like a jungle, and began making a new fence around it, together with some benches for people to sit on and enjoy time reflecting in nature. At the centre of the Peace Garden is a beautiful fig tree.

The young women completed the woodwork, and cleared another area of very tall reeds and grass, putting in new soil to make a large flower bed. Seeds from these flowers will be sent out to other parks and green spaces in Birmingham next year.

Most of the young women were daughters of ladies who are part of the Birmingham Women's Peace Group.

Also, each day a home-made lunch was provided by different ladies from the Women's Peace Group – Bangladeshi, Moroccan, Jamaican, Iranian, Pakistani...

Several people came in to speak to the young men and women, including 2 women City Councillors from Small Heath, Cllr Moledina, and Balsall Heath, Cllr Bano, a Christian Minister, Rev Carver Anderson, and a local Imam, Shahid Tameez, working with youth and street gangs, and a young woman who leads the Violence Reduction Unit in the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Nadia Hussain.

All were inspired by the efforts of the young people, their teamwork, and the fact that they represented so many races, religions, cultures, and 10 different nationalities. It was so interesting to see the transformation which occurred during their 3 days at

the project, particularly in the young women, gaining confidence through public service, creating something of value for the community, and building lasting friendships with the other participants in the process. Wonderful!

At the end, Certificates of Achievement were presented to everyone by the Region's longest serving (35 years) female Police Officer, Rani Gundhu.

We will take one of the young men, Mohamed from Somalia, and one of the young women, Evanjelin from Sri Lanka, to receive a special UPF Youth Award in the UK Parliament, in October.

They will have time to speak in Parliament about their experience on the Peace Garden project, and other social and humanitarian work they have been doing to help young people, before receiving the award from their Member of Parliament.

It's been a lot of hard work, but so rewarding to work with such great young people.







