

Women Activists Mull Ideas Changing the World

Ariana Moon
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Ideas that harm, help or empower women were the focus of the plenary session for the Women's Federation for World Peace's (WFWP) 20th Anniversary National Assembly Oct. 26, 2012 in Las Vegas. The day ended with WFWP's signature Bridge of Peace Ceremony, attended by approximately 500 women and a smattering of supportive husbands.

Professor Yeon Ah Choi, vice president of WFWP International and daughter-in-law of Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, founders of WFWP, greeted attendees during the morning program and read an excerpt from the late Rev. Moon's autobiography, *As A Peace-Loving Global Citizen*.

Vice President of WFWP International and President of WFWP USA Angelika Selle offered her morning welcoming remarks and introduced the day's Global Women's Peace Network (GWPN), which subsequently featured two panels of four women from various professions, each of whom spoke for ten minutes on a topic within their expertise.

"True Father, Rev. Moon, understood better than anyone else that women's values and energy are needed in order to create a world of peace," said professor Choi. "He established WFWP with his wife, True Mother, and created a substantial organization of service for women to practice love for their communities, nations and world. October 25, 2012, which was yesterday in Korea, was the last day of the 40-day special memorial prayer period after the Seonghwa or the passing of Rev. Moon. I would like to take this time to remember True Father's life. Let's have a moment of silence."

Global Women's Peace Network: First Panel

The first four panelists for the GWPN featured Linda Lucero, founder of United Native America Council and a Native Sister Navigator for Native American Cancer Research Corporation; Cynthia Turner, founder and executive director of SeraphimGLOBAL; Heidi Iseda, director of Clean Slate Education Program; and Nia Lyte, TV host of the Best of Art Basel Show and co-founder of Shin Koyamada Foundation.

"Historical doctrine has contributed to the creation of humanity's shameful past," said Linda Lucero during her presentation on the topic, "Transcending Religions – Historical and Contemporary Doctrines." She continued: "Some examples are that women did not receive the basic education to read or write or participate in public forum, the Inquisition, which was a system of utilizing doctrine to enforce Catholic policy, and slavery, which was founded on doctrine and suppressed human life.

"There's also non-religious doctrine that is practiced today in North Korea and Cuba where people are not allowed to have a relationship with their creator. Some contemporary doctrines advocate exclusivity. There's no concern for interfaith, no concern to learn what other people believe, and if people veered from that doctrine, they were killed. We can think of the Witch Hunts in Salem. There are radical doctrines that promote self-righteousness, arrogance and even justification to kill, as in 9/11. People have died because they did not believe the doctrines that were imposed."

Lucero said a “turning point” in history took place when Jesus appeared to Rev. Sun Myung Moon and appointed him to complete the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. “Not one moment has gone by when [Rev. Moon] did not attend God,” she said. “Rev. moon and his wife have championed religious unification greater than any other religious leader. Through their interreligious and intercultural marriage ceremonies, we can insure the harmony of the world.”



In her presentation, “Preventing Human Trafficking: It Starts With You,” Cynthia Turner explained the mission of SeraphimGlobal, an NGO that works to protect and heal victims of human trafficking, and gave an overview of global problem of sexual exploitation.

“There are 27 million victims of human trafficking around the world,” she said. “Human trafficking is the second largest criminal industry in the US behind arms- and drugs trafficking. The grim reality is that based on 2007 data from the Congressional Research Services, 70 percent of trafficking victims are women and 50 percent are female children from the ages of 5-13 and adolescents from 14-17 from all nationalities.”

Turner cited the causes of trafficking, including a mindset that tolerates social irresponsibility, a bankrupt moral agenda, poverty, sex abuse of children, drug dependency, broken families and lack of education.

“Preemptive action can be taken to prevent trafficking, and it begins by addressing these issues: Building strong families, lifting people out of poverty and regarding children as our most important gift,” she said. “So what can you do? Value your child. Your child is a gift of God, not a possession. Become a positive role model and build his or her esteem and confidence. Listen to your child, and respond without judgment. Encourage your child to talk with you. Believe your child!”

The third topic, “Peace: What Does Abstinence Have To Do With It?” was presented by Hiedi Iseda, who used slides to show the work of Clean Slate, a community-based abstinence-until-marriage education program. According to Iseda, STDs have undergone explosive growth from the 1960s, WHEN there were only two widely known STD's until the present, in which there are more than two dozen STD's and more than 33 million PEOPLE are infected with HIV/AIDS worldwide.

“It’s never too late to start over; that’s why we’re called ‘clean slate.’ This is the opportunity to have ‘renewed virginity,’” said Iseda. “What is the relationship between peace and abstinence? Don’t you think if our young people kept their purity and were able to fulfill their life goals, they would be better equipped to find someone to love and to be able to raise a family in peace? Don’t you think that if we have individuals at peace, they can create families who are at peace? This is our job as women and mothers.”

In the fourth and final presentation for the panel, Nia Lyte addressed the question “What does one’s beauty have to do with peace?” on the topic of “Taking a New Look at Beauty and Hollywood Culture.”

“Human perception is very subjective and personal, but peace starts at an individual- and a family level,” she said. “If we take a deeper look at things, we women are the ones who hold the home together. If we are having a bad DAY, everyone is having a bad day. If we are happy, our spouses are. We women are the glue that holds the home together.

“Because of that responsibility, we have to feel good about who we are and with our beauty, brains and bodies. If we don’t feel good and let Hollywood affect how we feel, deeper issues and problems can be created. For example, there have been cases where husbands have suggested to women to get breast implants or to get a nose job or to lose weight. What message is this sending to a woman and to the younger girls who are watching? When a man can recognize you for who you are inside, that is when you will have a peaceful home.

“We need to educate women in high schools that beauty is skin deep and that it is not acceptable to bully others because of their outer looks and appearance. Also, the entertainment industry can strive to create

scripts, stories, movies, television-show content, films and fashion ads that portray the average real woman and to honor her as beautiful in a positive light.”



Global Women’s Peace Network: Second Panel

The second set of four panelists for the GWPN featured Lesa Ellanson, founder of New Eden Equestrian Academy; Janice Kearney, publisher, author, oral historian and literacy advocate; Tina Ramirez, director of International and Government Relations for The Becket Fund and foreign policy advisor; and Lynn Walsh, director of the Universal Peace Federation’s Office of Marriage, Family and Human Development.

Ellanson explored the growing rift between urban and rural lifestyles in her presentation “From Hick Town to City Center: Let Us Preserve Our Union,” asking, “We talk about class, race and religion, but what about lifestyles that are just so different that we’re starting to lose touch with our roots as a culture? Every culture started out as an agrarian society and right now, as urban sprawl takes over, we’re losing touch with the very resources that made us, in the case of the United States, a great country.

“We’re also, unfortunately, not crediting enough the people who are producers and preventing farming from being part of a viable lifestyle. How many people want to run a farm as opposed to becoming a Wall Street executive? A lot of people grow up ignorant about what happens from the point something grows out of the ground to when it ends up on your table.

“Urban and suburban life has to be more appreciative of the country life. The values you learn on a farm are so important in that they are part of God’s will – taking dominion of the resources that were given to us.”

Janice Kearney, on the topic of “Media Making a Difference for Peace,” stressed the importance of ensuring that the world’s media efforts become a partner of peace.

“As a former journalist, I’ve often heard my colleagues say, ‘You might not like what I like, but I only write the facts.’ I say, ‘There are enough facts to fill up this room. We choose the facts that we write, what stories to cover, what opinions to have. Journalists, publishers, writers, columnists, news pundits, playwrights – we all have to use our editorial pages, our books, our newsletters, our blogs responsibly,” she said.

Kearney continued, “There is a huge amount of power in the media. Imagine all the different forms of media that impact our youth each day. Let’s each find our own way to insert messages of peace in those millions of messages in the airways each nanosecond.”

Tina Ramirez on “Religious Freedom and Peacebuilding: Why Women Matter,” provided various cases in which governments restrict people’s faith, including that of Unificationists in Japan. “Religion orients our lives, from life to death,” she said. “It teaches us where our dignity comes from, and I know Rev. Moon says that human beings are born with inherent dignity because they are born in the image of God. Along the path of life, governments like to put up roadblocks that affect our dignity in the form of trafficking, the form of family planning, etc., and so does society. Around the world today, we have three quarters of people, around 5.3 billion people, living under governments that seriously restrict people’s faith. The ability to believe, to choose and the search for truths are an inherent part of what it means to be human.”

Lynn Walsh’s presentation, “The Family as an Agent of Peace,” was accompanied with an entertaining slideshow that explored the differences between masculine and feminine behavior. “The root cause of violence, injustice and selfishness comes from a problem in the human heart,” she said. “Marriage is the foundation of the family. If families are essential as building blocks of society, we need to think not only how to maintain families, but also how to create families that are better than ever. Research indicates that the happiest couples are those that recognize the societal and spiritual purposes of marriage and who learn

to have mutual respect through synergy and teamwork. Marital commitment offers emotional safety in our adult life, protecting emotional fidelity and sexual exclusivity and nurturing trust.”

Breakout Sessions and the Bridge of Peace Ceremony

At the “Art and Healing Networking Expo: ‘Women, Heal Thyself,’” attendees were able to participate in a program titled “Become a Turning Point: Inheriting Tools for Leadership of Peace,” which consisted of several different hour-and-a-half “Breakout Sessions.” Each session was led once or twice by an expert in the topics addressed, some of which concerned self-defense, art therapy, healing through nutrition and prayer, teen prostitution, Japanese tea ceremonies and bridging male and female difference.

Attendees also had the option to browse the various tables arranged by representatives of WFWP chapters from around the United States that displayed independently-produced goods such as jewelry, clothes, books and artwork available for purchase.

The highlight of the evening was the Bridge of Peace Ceremony, renowned for having brought together thousands of women who are “historical enemies” to create partnerships for peace. Linda Lucero, the evening’s emcee, offered a Native-American prayer song and Rev. Juanita Pierre-Louis briefly explained the history of the Bridge of Peace Ceremony, which was inspired by Mrs. Tomiko Duggan, a leader of the GWPN and WFWP office in Washington D.C.

“When two women stand on opposite sides of the bridge and bow in repentance for anything their ancestors might have done or THAT they’ve done, the bow means asking for forgiveness,” said Rev. Pierre-Louis. “As the two women cross to the center to meet each other, they cross over fear, resentment and pain and embrace the other.

“The Bridge is a symbol of crossing over the barriers that many of us hold in our hearts. It is also a symbol of being willing to embrace someone different so that we ourselves become greater in our ability to love someone different. We have used the Bridge of Peace to unite former enemies and current ones. We’ve used it between Catholics and Protestants, Serbs and Bosnians, Israelites and Arabs, Jews and Christians, Christians and Muslims, and others. It has been used to heal racially by uniting women and girls in a multi-colored bouquet of sisterhood.”

Catherine Cromwell and Sarah Canak-Brown, chairwomen of WFWP in Virginia and Nevada, respectively, colored the evening with their light-hearted banter and proudly introduced the 15 or so couples, including Selle and her daughter, who participated in the Bridge of Peace Ceremony. The evening concluded with A collective activity during which women exchanged certificates with the women sitting behind them, signifying a commitment to work together on a cause to further world peace.