

The 23rd Annual WFWP National Assembly

Angelika Selle
October 24, 2015



Over the weekend of October 22-24, 2015 the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) USA held its national assembly titled "Learn to Lead – Women Leading the Way to Sustainable Peace". More than 200 women, young professionals, mothers, daughters and gentlemen gathered in Washington DC over the course of three days to participate in the 23rd Anniversary National Assembly and also the 20th Anniversary of the Bridge of Peace, the flagship program of WFWP. All generations and diverse ages (from 9 to 77) were represented, as well as women of all races, religions and backgrounds.



On this special occasion of commemorating the 20th anniversary of WFWP's Bridge of Peace, we were excited to have with us the two first presidents of WFWP USA, Mrs. Nora Spurgin and Mrs. Alexa Ward, who represented its very substantial history. Another special guest was Georgia Sen. Donzella James, a longtime friend of WFWP, other providential organizations and True Parents. The many young women in

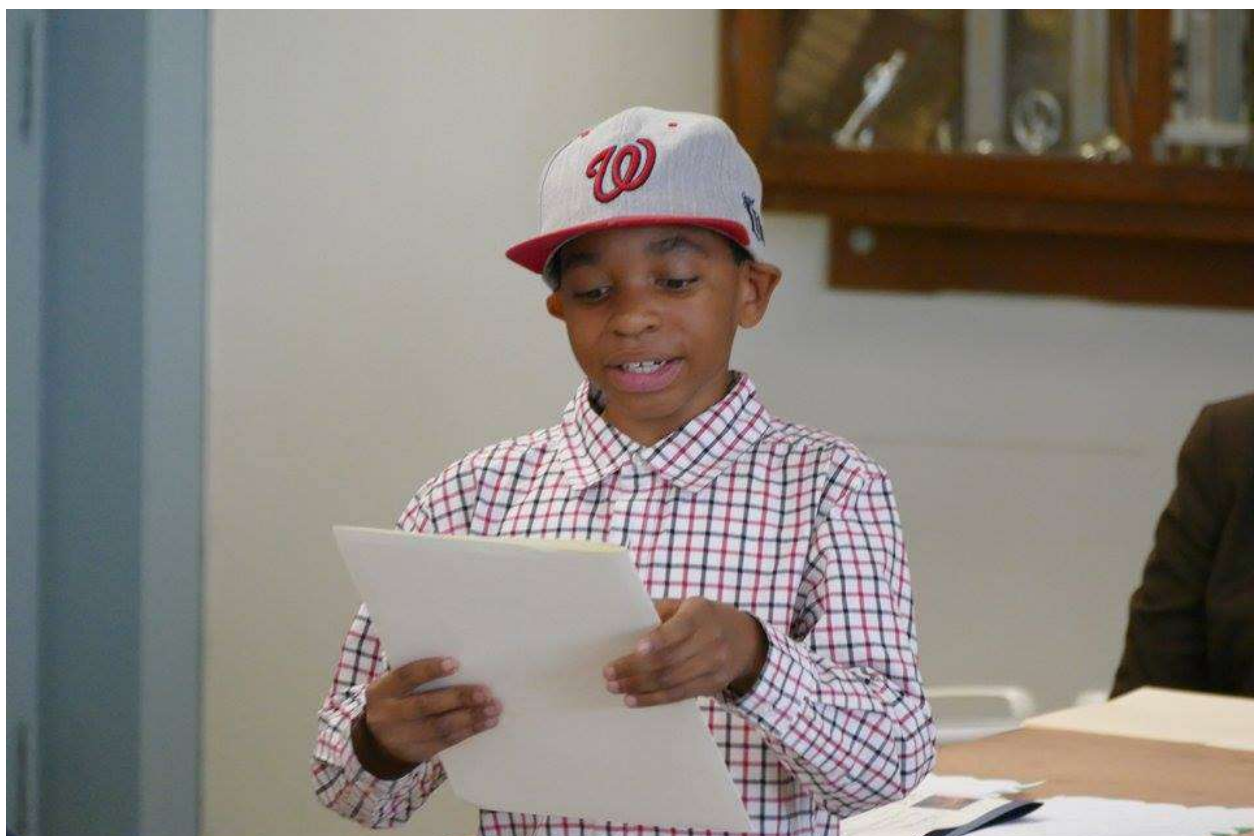
the audience brought a fresh bright spirit with them. Everyone felt that this year's assembly promised to be a unique undertaking, as we gathered to honor the past, celebrate the present, and build the future. The entire three days of events were conceived and executed to a large degree by the younger generation of women leaders on the WFWP USA's staff and board, together with the national chairwomen, making it a truly intergenerational effort.

**Day of Service
Thursday, Oct. 22**



As has been the tradition for the last two national assemblies, we started off with a Day of Service under the theme of “Leadership through Service – Living by the Logic of Love.”

The Washington, DC Metropolitan Police Department's Fourth Precinct once again offered their facility for the students and teachers from four public schools to gather, take their brooms, rakes and shovels, and clean and beautify the surrounding Georgia Avenue. As always, this program was designed to educate the students that leadership begins with service, as well as to provide character education through service.



The students also received values education from several speakers: a representative from Mayor Muriel Bowser's office, who presented a Proclamation recognizing WFWP USA and the Day of Service; WFWP USA President Angelika Selle; Rev. Juanita Pierre-Louis, WFWP USA Senior Vice President and Day of Service leader; Minister Chi Mauuso, community activist and Day of Service assistant leader; Ms. Elizabeth Aihe, WFWP Chairwoman of Washington, DC; and Minister Fannie Smith, WFWP USA Schools of Africa Coordinator.



Over 70 people participated in the day's projects. Nandi Morton explained the cleaning procedure and then we went out to clean Georgia Avenue, Emory Park, outside the Fire Station and shop windows.

After lunch, we gave certificates prepared by the WFWP DC chapter to all students for their participation. Fannie asked students for their feedback on this event, and many said they needed more time to clean. Students felt so much love that they wanted to come again.



**The Assembly Begins
Friday Evening, October 23**



The Washington Times Ballroom was transformed into an elegant banquet hall, with autumnal flowers gracing the stage and tables throughout the hall. The opening night was dedicated to a Networking Fair. The spirit was already very high when “The Keys” band kicked off the program by performing contemporary songs and some Beatles numbers. This inspired several ladies to start dancing in the back of the room, and before we knew it many in the audience were on their feet.



Professional and classy emcee, Julie Randolph, opened the evening with a warm welcome, detailing the purpose of the evening, which was to hear more about WFWP, its founding, vision and mission, and activities from the international and the United Nations level to the local level.



Mr. Tom McDevitt, Chairman of the Washington Times Board of Directors, greeted the audience and congratulated WFP for its excellent work over the years and affirmed that it is indeed time for women to step up and become involved in the affairs of society.



Mrs. Alexa Ward, current Deputy Secretary-General of WFP's UN Office, then presented a comprehensive, well-researched and insightful presentation on the founding of WFP in 1992, the founders' vision and WFP's activities worldwide. These activities, she said, have impacted and involved world leaders, and have given birth to multiple service and relief projects and educational seminars.



Current WFWP USA President Angelika Selle then welcomed special guests in the audience, among them Dr. Michael and Fumiko Balcomb, President of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) US; the former First Lady of Mali; and Hollywood TV and internet talk-show hostess Nia Lyte and actor husband Shin Koyamada. She proceeded to share freely from her heart about WFWP USA's activities in the last 5 years which was focused on developing leadership training with local chairwomen and preparing to raise the younger generation of women leaders. She also announced the most recent appointment of Mrs. Katarina Connery as the new Vice President and future President of WFWP USA.



Mrs. Connery then shared from her heart what inspired her about working with WFWP, “Men and women do not need to struggle with each other, because they do not need to imitate the characteristics, dispositions or roles of the other. It is not necessary to confront, compete or covet the things of the other, or take them by force. Instead, by giving what one has to the other, with true love, and by completing the other, they can become united as a greater whole and share in a relationship of joint ownership.”



Our emcee then announced a raffle and redirected the audience to the availability of mocktails on a side table, along with deliciously prepared and very colorful hors d'oeuvres to munch on as the Networking Fair continued.



Main Event
Saturday, October 24



The doors opened early in the morning as an increasing number of guests and women joined the Assembly from the DC environs. Mrs. Julie Randolph again welcomed the audience. She introduced international President Professor Yeon Ah Moon, who was not able to attend in person. Her welcoming remarks were read by Vice President Katarina Connery.

Sen. Donzella James of Georgia then came to the podium. She sincerely honored True Parents, the WFWP founders, and shared words of deep wisdom and practical advice about women's leadership based on her own experience as a woman leader in politics. She encouraged all women in the room to not be afraid to lead and bring their motherly hearts to the table.



Dr. Michael Balcomb challenged the audience and WFWP, in light of the hundreds of thousands of Syrian and other refugees seeking shelter in Europe, to consider inviting one family into each of our homes here in the US.



President Selle then gave her opening remarks entitled: “Why We Are Here,” and explained the purpose behind the theme of the assembly, “Learn to Lead”. She spoke about the strong need to raise up a new crop of leaders who can lead toward lasting peace and who can transform leadership from that of the head to that of the heart. She explained that all components of the conference—from the speakers who would provide practical tools and insights on peacemaking, to the Bridge of Peace, that would stir the heart to tears—would equip everyone with the insights to find the leader of the heart within each of them.

Rev. Juanita Pierre-Louis explained the purpose of the Day of service and then gave a brief Character Education presentation. She shared in a very succinct and eloquent way the vision behind the Day of Service: to teach children from an early age that leadership begins with service. She brought her powerful team to the stage, including a 9-year-old student participant who had eloquently spoken at the Day of Service. She asked him to give a small synopsis of what he felt on the Day of Service, and he said he liked to serve very much, and that he learned, in his own words, that “Serving is cool!”





Minister Chi Mauuso, mover and shaker and Day of Service coordinator, reminded everyone that “teamwork makes the dream work” and to continue to live for the sake of others.



The audience then prepared for the Global Women’s Peace Network (GWPN) panel, where four women conducted a forum from the stage. They shared their insights on the topic of “Women Leading the Way to Sustainable Peace” in the areas of business, politics, family and youth activism, followed by questions and answers from the audience. The GWPN was established by True Parents in 2012 before True Father’s ascension.



After an entertaining icebreaker and during a delectable lunch, FFWPU North America Continental Director Dr. Ki Hoon Kim graced the audience with a brief message, sharing from the heart of our founders, True Parents. He applauded WFWP USA for the Day of Service project as a wonderful way to substantialize our assemblies with action and to educate the younger generation.



Also, special guest of honor the former First Lady of Mali greeted the audience with a brief speech on peace, sharing her perspective on why women are needed at this time of world crisis to step forward and exercise leadership that promotes lasting peace.



We were overjoyed to once again have Mrs. Nia Lyte with our national assembly, this time as our keynote speaker. She stirred our hearts deeply by shedding light on the word “sustainable” and what it takes to accomplish sustainability. She explained that we need to start with ourselves to live a lifestyle of peace, and to become a peacemaker in our own extended family. The audience responded with a standing ovation.



In the afternoon, the ladies and gentlemen were given the choice of attending one of eight practical breakout sessions on various topics that were carefully chosen to be in line with the overall topic. Their aim was to provide hands-on tools to become an effective peace leader.





After this, and undoubtedly the highlight, heart and soul of this year's assembly, was the Bridge of Peace Ceremony. A team of seven women under the leadership of Maryland WFPW Chairwoman Mrs. Kim Dadachanji had prepared in prayer and discussion for six weeks for this momentous occasion.

The New Hope Japanese Women's Peace Choir prepared the atmosphere for this sacred moment. Mrs. Dadachanji laid out a brief account of the history of the Bridge of Peace while images flashed on the screen, bringing back many precious memories for many women in the room.



This year, the Bridge of Peace Committee carefully prepared scenarios to be addressed through this symbolic "bridge" that reflected current and past unresolved pains. Each pair who crossed the Bridge was introduced with a brief scripted text and sometimes with a video clip to bring home to the audience the issue or problem they represented. In this way, as each pair crossed the Bridge, everyone could experience the repentance, forgiveness and healing together with them.



The areas being reconciled were:

1. Japan and the US – commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the Bridge crossing



2. North and South Korea – Unification of North and South Korea



3. Native American and White – Acknowledging America’s First People and their Spirituality





4. Democrat and Republican – Democratic and Republican Cooperation



5. Black and White – To Build Black and White Unity



6. Interracial Couple – Creating World Peace through International and Interracial Marriages



Tears flowed and then faces began to smile as each pair crossed the Bridge. After all the pairs crossed, everyone sang together, "Let There Be Peace on Earth," and took a group photo on the Bridge. As one participant noted, "Today history was made in America for a change for the better. Something came to a closure and something new was given birth to."



Then came the celebration with music and dance. Las Vegas singer Sandy Kastel entertained everyone with songs, followed by a stunning performance by the New Hope Academy Company Dancers. To top it all off, three belly dancers of the Mia Naja al Sefhira and the Raks Divas Dance Ensemble performed. The Belly Dance is actually a sacred dance for women to commemorate bearing and raising children.

Great raffle prizes were offered and won, including cookware, jewelry and a \$3,000 original painting by an artist from Belarus. A final powerful call to action was issued by the afternoon's dynamic emcee and Chairwoman of the Connecticut chapter, Mrs. Lena Yasutake.

President Selle then concluded the day by bringing up the many volunteers, core staff and members of the Bridge of Peace Committee.

By that time everyone felt like one family and, following the tradition from last year, Crow, Muscogee Creek and African American drummer Chief Dawn Wolf (Gregory E. Woods) gave a performance. He drummed around the room with his sacred drum to offer up all the events of the day. Then he sat down on the stage with his drum and drummed with the authority that stirred the soul, causing true celebration and dance to break loose.



We thank our God in heaven and most of all our True Parents, who have shown us through their example how to live for the sake of others. They have laid the foundation for this precious organization and are now counting on us to carry on their legacy of true love in action. It was an assembly to remember!

