

PLANTING A SEED OF PEACE: PERSONAL SNAPSHOT OF CSW60

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Fannie Smith (Right) together with WFWP USA President Angelika Selle (Left) and WFWP International President Yeon Ah Moon (Middle)

Like most of us, I look forward to the new spring season with all the beauty and freshness that comes with it. Likewise, I was also inspired by the anticipation of spending a few days in New York City at the United Nations for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60). This year's conference with the theme "Women Empowered to Implement the Sustainable Development Goals" held from March 14 to the 24, was in no way a disappointment.



I arrived in New York as a representative for WFWP USA, the Midwest Region. New York City was on fire with the energy created by the thousands of women from around the world intent on visiting this women's Mecca. While making arrangements for this exciting trip, I was in awe of the special

accommodations for "CSW" travelers: hotels & restaurants, tours, and the like that "pop-up" as I maneuvered to finalize my plans. This is a huge indication of just how influential women have become and have evolved over the years toward the world's economy and other benefits.



On the first full day of my visit, I was very excited to see the new office for WFWP Headquarters on the 12th floor in the beautiful refurbished New Yorker Hotel. The cozy office seats President Angelika Selle, Vice-President Katarina Connery, Finance Assistant Irmgard Baynes, and our very efficient Administrative Assistant Kiyomi Schmidt. That afternoon I and others attended a WFWPI parallel event on "Engaging Women in Sustainable Development: Family Transformation, Co-Prosperity". The parallel session was directed toward motherhood and the family. The panel lead by Mrs. Alexa Ward was enlightening and very inspiring. While it was sad to hear the panelists speak on the suffering, degradation, and lack of human rights for women in parts of the world, a sense of encouragement was felt as they gave remedies and a "purpose for the party." Basically,

if we help others to prosper by utilizing our gifts to diminish poverty, respect the rights and freedom of others, end disease and illiteracy within our own community, the whole world prospers. We all reap the benefits.

As the WFWP Schools of Africa National Coordinator, I was particularly astute to remarks by Mrs. Saida Ali, International Policy Consultant, when she shared her knowledge of young women in Kenya. The sexual abuse of young girls is often symbolized by wearing certain jewelry, dress or other signs that symbolically suggest she is a virgin, unmarried, or for sale as a tribal ritual. This ritual along with many others is often a deterrent in Africa for increasing the sustainability of our young girls and women.

The year 2030 poses a challenge to the UN development goals and to us as individual women, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that include five on Gender Equality. Sustainability for women begins in our own homes, with our families, communities, and friends and then taken abroad.



At this point, I must send a shout out to WFWP Chicago, Mrs. Patricia Fliginger, to Chicago Family Church, Rev. Johnny Porter, to HSA-Chicago, and to others who helped to make this experience possible for me.

CSW60 WFWP International Parallel Banquet

This year WFWP International flipped the script to the delight of everyone's pleasure. The CSW Parallel event was given as a banquet held at the beautifully decorated 43rd Street Family Church in Manhattan.

The program began with exchanging greetings among familiar faces including Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, Dr. Michael Balcomb, Rev. Tanya and Rev. Edwards, Rev. Juanita Pierre-Louis, Nandi Bengu, Beryl Green, Denneze Nelson, and so many others from places near and far. The much anticipated special guest, WFWP International President Professor Yeon Ah Moon, was well received with much love and excitement. Each time I am in her presence, it is obvious how she truly represents Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, by being transparent as to the advantages of her being a powerful leader, but also the challenges of a loving mother, widow, and strong influential figure for followers and families around the world. I think we all see the grace and love of Mother Moon exemplified in her persona.

Guests enjoyed the fabulous food plus great entertainment by Raoul, Steve, and the music students under the auspices of Jessica Garand. Mrs. Seiko Lee mesmerized us with her angelic voice, and a deserving embrace from Dr. Yeon Ah Moon. Several young women from around the country took part in picture taking with WFWP President, Angelika Selle and myself. How nice to be seen as "mentoring mothers" from our future leaders in the making.

I had the pleasure of sharing a dinner table with some of the WFWP national staff. We always have topics to discuss as they bring me up to date on our Schools of Africa program.

Later, while taking a picture with past president Mrs. Spurgin, current President Mrs. Angelika Selle and newly appointed Vice-President Mrs. Katarina Connery, I was proud to see the strong bond of continuity within the WFWP legacy; this is quite a phenomenon not often found.

At the evening finale, we gathered in a prayer circle around the room and sang "Let There Be Peace on Earth". This song truly encompasses the entire gist of my three days in New York because, in all actuality, if each of us plants a seed for PEACE in our hearts, and nurture it with our LOVE, we can make a better world, starting with me.

Ideally, next year we will have a bigger delegation from the Midwest area and send some of our outstanding young women leaders as well.