

UPF USA Celebrates the UN International Day of Peace 2017

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United States -- UPF marked the 2017 UN International Day of Peace in more than a dozen locations across the United States.

In **Albuquerque, New Mexico**, the meeting on September 9 celebrated not only International Day of Peace but also Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. A special prayer was offered for peace on the Korean Peninsula and for the victims of recent hurricanes. Focusing on the theme "Peace Starts with Me," Dr. Joy Garratt, UPF New Mexico executive director, spoke of the challenges we face from the individual to the local, state, national and international levels, and she explored what working for peace means.

In the **Harlem** neighborhood of **New York City**, Dr. Drissa Kone, the executive director of the UPF-USA Office of African Affairs, initiated an Ambassadors for Peace forum on September 16. Forty-three African community leaders, largely from the West African nation of Cote d'Ivoire, attended the forum. Rev. Richard Buessing, the president of the US chapter of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an affiliated organization, gave the keynote speech on the theme "Peace Starts with Me." Ten participants were awarded Ambassador for Peace certificates, and eight persons received UPF pins. Six Ambassadors for Peace signed a membership form, making a total of 14 new UPF members.

In **Cary, North Carolina**, Sharon Pace, the UPF North Carolina executive director, in partnership with the North Carolina chapter of FFWPU, hosted an International Day of Peace event at the Havana Cuban Grill Restaurant on September 17. Ten Ambassadors of Peace and two middle-school children came together to talk about their experiences and their understanding of peace. The group read messages of peace from the late UPF founder, Dr. Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

Another highlight of the program was the message by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon from the Peace Rally held on July 15, 2017, at Madison Square Garden in New York City. "We can see that there is so much pain, anger, and resentment that needs to be brought out and dealt with, in order to heal the brokenness we have in ourselves and in the world. We need each other to help mend our broken hearts," Mrs. Pace and her husband, Pastor John Pace, concluded.

Las Vegas, Nevada, also held a Peace Forum on September 19. The topic was "Peace Starts with Me." A beautiful prayer was given by Rev. Ken Doo, pastor of Las Vegas Family Church (FFWPU). Comeisha Monica Lenoir moderated the discussion. Akira Watanabe, the director of the Las Vegas chapter of the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), an affiliated organization, started the discussion with a passionate expression of the value of the family and of parents' love.

Sofia Schersei recalled the difficulties of growing up as a refugee from Afghanistan. She expressed appreciation for her religion of Islam, saying that it teaches love for family, the value of service and peace. Jerushia McDonald-Hylton spoke of her choice to overcome persecution and to love others. She said peace starts with her by overcoming prejudice and helping others to overcome and have pride in who they are as a child of God. Two of the guest speakers were appointed as new Ambassadors for Peace. Mrs. Leslie Rigney, the UPF-Nevada executive director, organized the event together with her husband, Rev. James Rigney.

Mrs. Maria L. Vargas, the executive director of UPF-NY and of Latino affairs for UPF-USA, hosted a

UPF forum in the **New York City** borough of **Manhattan** on September 20. Presenters on the theme of the International Day of Peace were Ricardo de Sena, UPF-USA national president; Lynn Walsh, the director of the UPF International Office of Marriage and Family Education; Dr. Drissa Kone, the executive director of the UPF-USA Office of African Affairs; attorney Joseph M. Champagne, former mayor of South Toms River, New Jersey; philosopher and author Srinivas Arka; and Mrs. Vargas. New Ambassadors for Peace who were appointed included the president of an international youth dance organization and Yogi Srinivas Arka.



In **Seattle, Washington**, Ambassadors for Peace and supporters of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), an affiliated organization, were among the 25 persons who attended a Peace Forum held on September 21. During the meeting, the facilitator explained briefly the origins of the Universal Peace Federation and the Sunhak Peace Prize, in relation to the United Nations' theme for the 2017 International Day of Peace: "Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All."

After dinner, Sarah Nishioka from WFWP Washington spoke on "The Meaning of Peace." Linda Haakon Israel, a well-known artist, spoke about an organization called MAMA'S CHAMP (Community Health and Mobile Power), which supports the health of women in conflict zones, most recently in Gaza, as a key to peacebuilding. Her topic was "The International Mothers' Peace Project." Finally, Ray McCready, the executive director of UPF for Washington, spoke on the topic "Why the World Needs the WFWP, the UPF and the Peace-UN." Prayers for peace overlooking the northern expanse of Lake Washington culminated the event.

On September 21, the actual day of the UN International Day of Peace, Claudette Kambara, the executive director of UPF West Virginia, attended a special event at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel in **Charleston, West Virginia**, featuring US Attorney General Jeff Sessions and US Congressman Alex Mooney, as part of her political outreach project. The attorney general of West Virginia, Patrick Morrisey, met with 100 Christian ministers to discuss the drug problem and set up a drug hotline. Another speaker, the forensic toxicologist Dr. David L. Black, said that "politics alone would not stop the drug problem, but we must rely on religion, faith, and Christian values as well." The drug problem was "a crisis of faith," he said, and we should not use the phrase "war" to describe it.

Also on September 21, UPF-Missouri commemorated the day at the County Library in **Clayton, Missouri**. Executive Director Bill Stoner introduced the mission of UPF and its founders by showing the last two minutes of "Peace Starts with Me," the speech that UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon gave at New York City's Madison Square Garden on July 15. Of the 21 persons who were in attendance, five were special guest speakers: Jack Sisk, the founder and director of the Living Insights Center; Dr. David Mehl, the executive director of Interfaith Partnership of St. Louis; Diego Abente, vice president of economic development with the International Institute of St. Louis; Maysa Albarcha, founder and director of the Islamic Speakers Bureau of St. Louis; and Pamela Dunn, founder and instructor of Your Infinite Life Training Company. Each was given 15 minutes to describe how their organization was contributing to the growth of peace in St. Louis. Each speaker received an appointment as Ambassador for Peace at the conclusion of the event.

The development of UPF's partnership with WFWP in **Columbus, Ohio**, over the past two years led to a joint celebration of International Day of Peace on September 23 at the National Hotel and Conference

Center. The luncheon event brought 120 guests of multiple origins and faiths. To the delight of all, five local community leaders spoke on the theme "Together for Peace: Respect, Safety, and Dignity for All." Following lunch, 21 participants were honored with Ambassador for Peace certificates. This was followed by a symbolic Bridge of Peace ceremony. Enthusiasm was very high and held the guests long after the conclusion. The event was spearheaded by Christopher Fox, the UPF-Ohio executive director, in tandem with WFWP Ohio



The **Omaha, Nebraska**, chapter of UPF held an Interfaith Prayer Breakfast on September 23 held at the Omaha Wedding Chapel, a lovely space donated for the meeting by Chaplain Royal Carleton. Theresa Tsubaki, the executive director of UPF-Omaha, gave the opening remarks, briefly outlining the core values of UPF. The ceremony began with leaders from three faith traditions -- Hindu, Catholic and Unificationist -- offering heartfelt prayers for peace. During breakfast, Joe Van Trimmell, a social worker with the Omaha Public Schools, spoke about the difficult and often confusing transition that many refugees face. He then engaged everyone in a lively roundtable discussion on ways to help the people in the community. Mohammed Sahile, a former translator for the US Army and now a refugee from Afghanistan because of death threats, spoke of his deep love and gratitude for the United States. At the same time, he expressed his sorrow over leaving his country and his desire to return.

Everyone was moved by this testimony and realized what a tragedy is unfolding in real time. It set the stage for the final comments. One guest explained how he is funding one person's education. "Just help one person, give a hand up to one family. If we all started doing just one thing, that would help many people."

The local chapter of UPF in **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**, organized a Peace Forum on September 25, with twenty persons in attendance, in partnership with WFWP and FFWPU Pittsburgh. Khara Timsina, a Bhutanese community leader, gave a talk on peace. He later was appointed as Ambassador for Peace. A Bridge of Peace Ceremony also was held, facilitated by Rita Baldwin of WFWP. In the end, Pastor Tom Baldwin of FFWPU read the speech given by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon at Madison Square Garden in New York, emphasizing the theme "Peace Starts with Me."

In **Crownsville, Maryland**, UPF of Baltimore and UPF of Washington, DC, partnered on September 28 to host a Breakfast Forum, which was co-sponsored by the Maryland Governor's Office of Interfaith Community Initiatives. Jennifer Gray, the director of interfaith outreach for the governor, and Tomiko Duggan, executive director of UPF of Washington, DC, called the event "Together We Can Bring Peace." A total of 70 guests attended the ground-breaking gathering of interfaith leaders. Dr. Manon Gurley offered the invocation, and Ms. Gray gave each of the six speakers -- four women and two men -- a specific question to answer.

The speakers were Dr. Hodayra Ziad, a scholar at the Institute of Islamic, Christian and Jewish Studies in Baltimore; Rabbi Batya Steinlauf, the director of social justice and inter-group initiatives at the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington, DC; Rev. Dr. Carletta Allen, Nadia S. Hassan, founder and director of the Young Leaders Institute; and Rev. Medgar L. Reid, DD, director of spiritual

care and chaplaincy services at Keswick Multi-Care Center in Baltimore.



The final event was held in **Irvington, New Jersey**, on September 30. It took place at the Town Hall Council Chamber with the cooperation of Mayor Tony Vauss, who graciously welcomed UPF New Jersey to his town. Forty people participated in the Peace Forum, recognizing the importance of the celebration and also honoring the works and accomplishment of the mayor in promoting peace and prosperity in his community.

Professor Alan Saunders, an advisor to the UNESCO Center for Global Education, gave a brief talk on the meaning of the International Day of Peace. Rev. Ralph Oppenheimer, the outreach leader of UPF of New Jersey, next gave a presentation on the five UPF Principles of Peace.

UPF-USA President Ricardo de Sena, together with Tony Vozza, the executive director of UPF of New Jersey, presented Mayor Vauss with an Ambassador for Peace certificate and a UPF pin. Mayor Angela Garretson of Hillside, New Jersey, was also present to congratulate the new appointee. She praised her colleague for his outstanding work and also indicated her willingness to partner with UPF-NJ for the same purpose – promoting peace among her constituents.

The program concluded with a very powerful Call to Action by Rev. Denneze Nelson, the chair of the New Jersey chapter of WFWP. Finally, the audience sang *Let There Be Peace on Earth*, led by the New Jerusalem Choir.

Muslim imams, American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) ministers, leaders of the Filipino International Community of America (FICA) and the African New Hope Association (ANHA) as well as a local media outlet, Local Talk Weekly, were among the participants.

