

UPF Melbourne, Australia's UN Day of Peace: End Racism. Build Peace Program

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Melbourne, Australia - To commemorate the 2022 UN International Day of Peace, UPF-Australia held an online event on the theme for this year's Day, "End Racism. Build Peace," on September 24. Forty-five participants, including Australian Aboriginal elders, academics and faith and community leaders, attended the program addressing the issue of racism. A common topic that was brought up was a need to have a deep sense of our shared humanity and practice love for others.

Dr. Balwant Bhaneja, a board member of the Center for Global Nonkilling, an NGO affiliated with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), spoke on the topic, "Racism,

Nonkilling, and Shared Humanity."

He maintained that the concept of "other and otherness" has been the cause of much hurt and violence. The UN Declaration of Human Rights has inspired a rich body of human rights laws around the world, he added, and said, "We need a culture that is life affirming and of peace and harmony, [which is] more vital now than ever."

Ms. Tasneem Chopra OAM, a cross-cultural consultant who addresses issues of diversity, equity and inclusion across organization leadership, spoke on the theme, "We All Bleed the Same - Let's End the Pain." She stated that the prevalence of racism across the globe is a bleak reality. From micro to macro racisms, racism is a societal malaise that demands we tackle it, starting with introspection then committing to dismantling structural discrimination. It begins and ends with you and me. To combat racism, we need to carry in ourselves a sense of our common humanity.

For her efforts, Ms. Chopra was appointed as the first Ambassador for Women of Colour and has been named an Anti-Racism Champion by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Ambassador for Peace Dr. Steve Rametse, former president of Nelson Mandela Day Australia, presented on "Inhumanity is Contrary to Ubuntu/Humanness." He maintained that the values associated with ubuntu are vital for harmony and essential for peace. Inhumanity is contrary to the humanistic values expressed in the African concept of ubuntu, which is a philosophy based on the idea that all humanity is connected. He argued that world peace is dependent on the popular universalization of the values of ubuntu, such as love, interdependence, justice and unselfishness, to name a few.

Dr. Rametse is also a reader of the South African political economy and researcher on the settlement issues of the African diaspora in Australia. He is a former member of the Victorian Government's African Ministerial Advisory Group which helped formulate the "Victorian African Communities Action Plan."

Dr. John Bellavance, vice president of UPF-Australia; coordinator of the International Association of

Academicians for Peace (IAPP)-Oceania; and founder of DrJohnOnline, which fosters values education, spoke on "The Psychological Underpinnings of Racism and the Persecution of Dr. Moon."

He said that psychology has shown that racism and prejudice is a person's tendency to think that their race, culture or religion is superior to others. The issue of racism and prejudice is important in light of the world experiencing unprecedented immigration. Immigration is challenging all nations to find a shared sense of humanity because it may cause some to feel a sense of loss, fear and anger.

Dr. Bellavance also talked about his experiences in the U.S. when UPF co-founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon was sent to prison on unjust accusations. Dr. Bellavance said: "When the founder of a movement goes to prison you would expect the movement to die, but the opposite came about. Our movement grew and we made many new friends. Many American Christian leaders spoke out in defense of Dr. Moon and religious freedom."

Ambassador for Peace Ms. Pearl Wymarra, a distinguished teacher and researcher in the restoration of people's emotional health and social well-being who is from the Gudang Aboriginal clan, presented on the theme, "The In Love of Love - Identifying, Restoring and Peace-ing Together All Our Good and Proper Cultural Ways of Life".

She shared her deeply spiritual and Christian approach to restoring her cultural ways. She told of how her family would give food and shelter to people in need. "It was in my home that I learned about sharing and giving. It is there that I first saw the model of unconditional love. These rules of love - show respect to elders, share what we have and be humble - were not written on a poster in our house, but were the daily practices of the good and cultural ways of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and our Christian faith. We are still a great and solid peacekeeping force in this land. The last 234 years tells the story of how we actively worked for justice and peace. Our story is a one of peaceful resistance and needs to be told to our children."

Ms. Wymarra's mother was a descendant of the Stolen Generation, children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who were removed from their families through Australian government policies between 1910 and 1970. For many years, she has provided inspiring leadership in addressing the crisis of violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. She holds a Master's degree in health science (primary health care).

Pastor Uncle Ossie Cruse MBE AM, of the Eden Aboriginal Evangelical Church, New South Wales and a longtime defender of the values of the Yuin-Monaro Nation, gave the final remarks. He encouraged everyone to love one another and treat each other as family: "When you are at peace, you will be at peace with others. We must continue to share and care, regardless of where we come from. We must treat each other as extended family for the sake of our children's children.

He has defended the values of the Yuin-Monaro Nation in national, regional and global spheres, including at the UN, before heads of government of Commonwealth nations and at the Pacific Asia Council of Indigenous People. He contributed to the International Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. At 88 years old, he continues to serve as a pastor and promote the renovation of the Australian Constitution.

The event was supported by the following organizations: the Women's Federation for World Peace; Center for Global Nonkilling; Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Global Opportunities Commercialisation; Global Somali Diaspora; and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) - Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education.