

UN International Family Day 2013 UK

Christa Kamga
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The annual commemoration of the United Nations International Family Day was held in Universal Peace Federation - UK Headquarters on Thursday May 16th focussing on the theme presented by the UN Secretary General Hon. Ban Ki-Moon, "Advancing Social Integration and Intergenerational Solidarity".

Mr Ahmed Shebani, Co Founder of the Libya Democratic Party quoted Mother Teresa, "The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty -- it is not only poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. There's a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God." Mother Teresa, A Simple Path.

Around the world similar programmes were held by UPF Chapters. More information and presentation materials are available from the International UPF website.

After a 30 minutes reception, the evening opened with UPF-UK Secretary General, Robin Marsh, introducing the day and the event. Shortly after, Sheikh Dr. Ramzy explained how Islam encourages families as it is a foundation for a good society. "We are now becoming more and more disconnected even though we know we should respect each and every member of the family especially parents", be kind to them, and when they become old, do not criticize them but bestow upon them the mercy they cherished you in your childhood.

In the Western world, the elderly are sometimes neglected; it is so different, when I grew up, elderly where like highly priced or very much valued explained. Society must learn from the successes of older generations so we can move forward. Family is priceless; the family shares together, enjoy and help each other in time of need. The family prays together, celebrate and work together.

We need to teach the young generation to love their elders. Old people are not to be categorized as "sell by date products". Such teachings should be done on a daily bases. In some countries, over 300 people stay together and live together. I pray to almighty God that we can be able to create that one strong family under God.

Margaret Ali, UPF - UK Director, introduced Dr. Suman Datta a wonderful lady, who is a prominent member of the Women's Interfaith Network. When she came on stage, she spoke very personal and captured the audience as she started to speak "What do we mean by family? Is it just mother father & children? Or is it wider? I will speak from my experience, I lived in India, uncle, aunts, neighbors, all of them where my family. If I reflect on that time, there was less depression, less problems, if we look at the relationship between the family, children and parents, husband and wife, cousins and neighbors, we can't say we have the same type of relationship, they are all different and we when we had certain problems, we would discuss with any one relation and get a varied understanding". When I was in university, I would leave my mother mum and people where very surprised, wondering how I can trust her? That was strange, of course, I would she is my mum. I knew that they are well taken care of mentally and physically. When a girl gets married and goes to her in-lawsthey would also become family. That is how I was brought up and how I lived.

The rate of depression that has risen, I have noticed something, that in my time was impossible – privacy - Don't come insin in front of room door. When I was young, problems where talked about. Also, if we had visitors, be it uncles, aunts, friends, they would stay in the children room we never questioned it. Our children have missed out on close relationships. I feel we need to promote this the society at the moment.

– So people with an extended family network should be proud of and promote it. With Interacting groups and discussions like what we do today, should be encouraged.



Extended families can be like the many legs of a table, if you have 1 leg, you can't stand but if you have more legs it makes it stable if you have 2, 4, 6 or 8 it is very helpful. When you are boiling inside and angry, grand parents can be very helpful as they can be calm – Robin Marsh spoke and then read the speech of Ban Ki Moon on the occasion of UN International Day of Family.

Rev. Jack Corley, the National President of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, gave a presentation on the family, he started by giving experience of his own family and how through the family we learn the most. A good family, will create a good society, the foundation of the family is the basis for peace. That is why there is a saying that in the first 3 years of child, his character is formed. The warm feelings you get when meeting an extended family, is one of peace, security and love that they could feel that as children (he and his 9 siblings).

To be able to educate a person more we have to understand people better. We are not just flesh and blood but also have a mind. This mind element is the essence and the mind pursues certain things like truth, beauty, goodness and love. The body needs food, shelter, wealth and comfort. Sometimes people ignore the spiritual and go for material but our view is that we need to combine both. Sometimes, the richest are not happy because of an excessive focus on the material. But still we tend to ignore the essential things and wonder how to make the balance and bring about a good life. We have to think about education of character. The fundamental place for character education is the family and it should not be ignored. We do also need education for career and based on talent and skills.

Family is the God instituted institution. When you reach for the age of 18 do you graduate from being the child of your parents? No you will always be. Do you graduate from being a brother and /or sister? NO. There are 6 different types of relationship up-down, back-front-right-left and that makes a rounded person Loving relationship and family. We should think of others and society. Good families don't just live for themselves they are also taking care of a greater good. – We need to educate our children to be able to learn how to give back to society, so they think even in school, how can my study bring something for others?

So we should share with our children a vision, which is different from just making money and working. We like people like Ghandi, Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King. We shouldn't just teach business but work ethics. If not it will become a society of "they pretend to pay us and we pretend to work" We should think how can we leave a better place behind so that our descendants can benefit. In order to do this; become the best you can be, give of your time, effort and money for community service. The problem of Modern Education is that we have everything upside down, we value education rather than the cultivation of heart.

After Jack Corley, a youth representative Christa Kamga, shared with the audience her experiences both in Africa, Korea and the clash she got when living in the Western world. She explained how in Africa, she had learned to respect her elders so much that everyone elder than her she still call uncle or aunt, while studying in Korea, she saw how children would bow to their parents in the morning, respect someone of even a year older calling them brother or sister and never by name. Such traditions should be

strengthened and there is hope as such forums are created. We will have to bring more young people next time would be a good idea.



To conclude, Margaret Ali, spoke of her experiences, of how living in an extended family taught her the spirit of serving and doing things for others. Slowly more people came up to share Mrs. Anna Reynolds, and a number of others came up to talk. The room was filled with close to a 100 people and even when we closed, no one was leaving.

It was a good way to end this day thinking about family and how we can bring good traditions back in the society.

Inspirations:

- ALICE WALKER, In my mother's garden
- To end we read a head Master's plea – a very inspiring message.