

CARP Grand Rapids, MI Inspires Students to be Ambassadors for Peace

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Final group photo for the event with CARP members, guest speaker, faculty, and students

On November 15th, CARP Grand Rapids hosted a Campus Talk with the theme "Peace Starts with Me" on Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) campus. This event was co-sponsored by CARP and the [Universal Peace Federation \(UPF\)](#), a sister organization to CARP. A total of three professors, three faculty members, and 40 students attended.

The purpose of this Campus Talk was to inspire and empower students to be Ambassadors for Peace who seek points of convergence among people rather than those of divergence. We wanted to pass the message that only when I as an individual become peaceful can the society be peaceful. Hence, Peace Starts With Me.

"The world is filled with a lot of conflicts and divisions and the sad part is that no one wants to take responsibility to fix the problem. Instead, we resort to blames and finger pointing. So our goal was reminding our community that unless we do something, nothing can happen. We have to possess within ourselves the qualities that we want to see in the society in this case peace." - J. Kisile, CARP GRCC President



K. Zittel and I. Zittel performing their original song for the event

The program began with a musical performance by K. Zittel and I. Zittel, sisters and friends of CARP,

performing their own songs. For them, it was a good opportunity to use their talents for the sake of peace.



Mr. Ricardo De Sena of UPF waits for his cue

The main presentation was given by Mr. Ricardo De Sena, President of UPF USA. He began by explaining the reason why all global effort for peace has not been successful; the source of conflict is within and not without -- it all begins in the mind. For that reason, we need a revival of the heart or mind. In his presentation, Mr. De Sena focused on three fundamental principles of Peace Building:

First, we are one family under God. He explained that in order for peace to come, we need to acknowledge each other as brothers and sisters from the same family -- the family of God. We have to love, respect, and care for another. He explained that it doesn't matter whether you call him God, Allah, or the One; the truth is that we all come from a common source, a God of love.

"This concept of God, for me is not religion, it is a key principle," he said.

He called the audience to treat people with love regardless of their race, religion, nationality or ethnicity.



Guest speaker, Ricardo De Sena, shares what it means to be an Ambassador for Peace

His second point was that the family is the school of love and peace. In the family, we learn how to treat one another. We learn the basic principles of love, respect, and care for others. That is why UPF focuses on strengthening the family as the building block of the society.

"The family is like a training ground for how to treat people and the building block for world peace," he said.

Lastly, he talked about living for the sake of others. He explained that living for the sake of others is the highest virtue and the foundation for peace. When we begin to look out for the other more than we do for ourselves, peace can come.

He concluded his presentation by calling the audience to adhere to these principles as true Ambassadors for Peace.

"Ambassadors for Peace are those who carry these principles in their walks of life," he explained.

Such people become the "heart and conscience" of the world. The call for Ambassadors for Peace is to be the bridge of peace whenever there is conflict. This begins by taking responsibility for the problem and seek reconciliation. It's a quest on each one of us because peace starts with me.



Dr. Stephen Barton gives concluding remarks

CARP Grand Rapids Advisor, Dr Stephen Barton, gave the closing remarks. In his remarks, he called the audience to get rid of the word "tolerance" and start loving them.

"We should not tolerate people, we should love them," he said.

He also called the audience to be people who focus on the points of convergence rather than those of divergence. He concluded his talk with these words:

"I am here to tell you that religion or no religion, whatever brings us together to a point of convergence and understanding what is great about all of us and how we can celebrate it and not just tolerate it, whatever that is, that's what Rev. Moon [the founder of CARP] was all about, and I am grateful for that. And to me, that is the hope of the world: our ability to have talks about what we have in common -- the points of convergence. Just like my choir, when they come together, it doesn't matter that they are different, what matters is that they converge into something beautiful. That's all that matters in this world. If you stay your whole life talking about what is different, you are the slave to divergence."

CARP members, professors, and faculty members left inspired and hopeful for a peaceful world. They shared their gratitude and determination to become Ambassadors for Peace and support CARP's cause of creating a world of peace.



A. Hunt, MC, enjoys the event

"I found the presentation very interesting. I found it insightful how he laid the responsibility on the individual and not the group. I think that the individual's integrity is truly the only way to change and reform the world we live in now." - A. Hunt, CARP GRCC member and MC for the event

"It was my pleasure to attend the CARP Peace Starts With Me conference. I really appreciated Mr. Ricardo De Sena's message about how choosing peace is a conscious decision that each of us can make. He reminded us that we all say we want peace, but to achieve it, we must choose it in every situation, by seeing others as us, not as 'them.' It was inspiring to see so many GRCC students who are committed to making the world a better place. I have no doubt that they will succeed. If my schedule is not so full next semester, I would love to attend more CARP events." - Professor Karin Gallagher



CARP GRCC members staff the event

"Peace Starts with Me was a very special event. Dr. Barton mentioned in his closing remarks that no matter how different we are, if we focus on our points of convergence, great things will happen. I really connected with that phrase because I feel that's truly the language of heart which means transcending skin colors, religions, politics and just love each other genuinely as brothers and sisters. Love guarantees everyone's interest and will also bring peace!" - C. Koran, CARP GRCC member