

WFWP HI: Youth Voices for Religious Liberty - Ignite Your Faith, Find Your Voice

Donna Shaver
November 24, 2025



On November 24, 2025, the WFWP-HI Chapter and the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) supported the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) Hawai'i chapter in hosting the youth-led second series of Peace Starts with Me Alliance: Youth Voices for Religious Liberty, titled "Ignite Your Faith. Find Your Voice. Fuel Your Purpose." The event took place at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa campus ballroom and was coordinated by Ms. Rena Saito, President of CARP HI, together with student member Ms. Makimi Uesugi. They introduced the CARP organization, led the opening song "Lean on Me" and the closing song "Where Peace Begins," and jointly presented on the theme "The Courage to Believe." Mr. Sonse Kawasaki, also a CARP member, served as an outstanding Master of Ceremony.



The first guest speaker, Mr. Haider Rifaat - a Pakistani national pursuing a PhD in Political Science at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa - shared his experience as a filmmaker, journalist, actor, and model. He discussed his short documentary, In Shackles, which highlights the story of a Pakistani woman forced into marriage and subjected to sexual violence, a reality faced by many women in Pakistan. Through his work, Mr. Rifaat advocates for social reform and urges the Pakistani government to raise the legal age of marriage from 16 to 18, noting that one in three girls marries before reaching adulthood. His heartfelt testimony and film left a strong impact on the audience.

Representative Diamond Garcia, Minority Floor Leader for House District 42, delivered the second keynote address. Raised on the West Side of O'ahu and known for his dedication to community health, safety, education, and affordability, Representative Garcia spoke on the historical struggles for religious

freedom and its development in the United States. He highlighted constitutional protections for religious liberty and explained how the principle of separation between church and state serves to safeguard religious institutions from governmental intrusion. His remarks were well received by all in attendance.



During the "Call to Action" segment, Rena Saito outlined the mission of the Peace Starts With Me Alliance and explained how participants could join, offering both hard-copy membership forms and a QR code. Of the 38 attendees, 13 were non-members, and two individuals completed membership forms for the Alliance. Sonse Kawasaki then expressed gratitude to the guest speakers - Mr. Haider Rifaat and Representative Diamond Garcia - as well as Rev. Jeffery Nakama of the Universal Peace Federation and Donna Shaver of the Women's Federation for World Peace, whose organizations generously supported the coordination of the event.



Following the acknowledgments, Rena and Makimi closed the program with the song "Where Peace Begins (One Family Under God)," after which a group photo was taken. Many attendees remained afterward to enjoy fellowship, conversation, and refreshments. Guests expressed appreciation for the

program and conveyed strong interest in attending the upcoming third series of the Peace Starts With Me Alliance event scheduled for December 2025.

