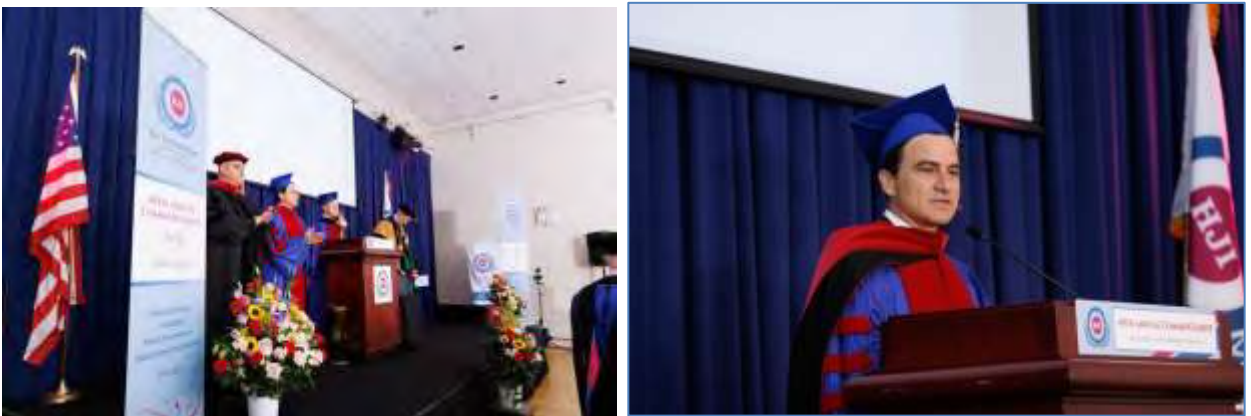


HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership Class of 2025

Thomas G. Walsh
June 17, 2025



On Saturday, May 31, 2025, HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership (HJI) held its 49th Commencement in New York City to celebrate the class of 2025.



Special remarks were offered by Rev. Demian Dunkley, FFWPU Continental Director, North America, and Member of the HJI Board of Trustees. “I believe we came here, to this great school, to go deeper and dive deeper into our own sense of purpose and to show up boldly, courageously, and surrender to a higher will.”



Dr. Franco Famulao, Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, Rev. Demian Dunkley In recognition for her exemplary leadership and advocacy for peace, the Doctor of Humane Letters was awarded to Dr. Saken Yacoobi,

Educator and Founder of the Afghan Institute of Learning, and former recipient of the Sunhak Peace Prize. Afterwards, Dr. Yacoobi delivered the commencement address.



Dr. Thomas Walsh, Dr. Sakena Yacoobi

Dr. Yacoobi shared words of encouragement and inspiration:

“It is you that is going to make this world a beautiful place. It is you that is going to transform lives. It is you that is going to bring peace...Let me tell you, peace is something that we can all bring together collectively. As an individual, no one can bring peace. We can bring peace in a nation, and in the world, just if we all work together side by side.”



Dr. Sakena Yacoobi

She continued “Your religion is a pillar that you can hold on to and it will make you continuously grow and learn. God is the only one that can help you to achieve your success. And for that purpose, again, Mother Moon and Father Moon gave us a great concept. They said that ‘we are all one family.’”

Dr. Yacoobi also touched on the challenges her organizations have faced and their victories. “They counted on us to hold their hand because we promised we were going to help. So we said yes. We developed a curriculum and we set up University Meraj. Meraj means getting to the highest point, reaching to God with knowledge, being humble, and being wise.”



Dr. Yacoobi concluded, “I am sure with your education, that was very thoughtfully developed, you can do many, many things in this world...I wish you all the best and I will constantly congratulate you from the bottom of my heart.”



Dr. Thomas Walsh, and Prabhu (Graduate)



Dr. Thomas Walsh

The class of 2025 was represented by 21 graduates. In his congratulatory remarks, Dr. Thomas Walsh, President, stated “Our HJI mission is reflected in our name, one that highlights our commitment to peace and public leadership. Peace, as our graduates know, is understood very comprehensively or holistically. At its core, peace is an ideal that describes a set of relationships; our relationship with God, our relationship with humanity, and relationship with the natural world, our environment.”



Dr. Thomas Walsh, Megumi Tona (Graduate), Dr. Sakena Yacoobi

After sharing upcoming developments for HJI, Dr. Walsh stated “As our Founders understood so well, religion, spirituality and faith are absolutely essential for peace. This principle underlies so much of what we do at HJI...Keep the fire burning for your alma mater. Be confident that all of us here at HJI stand ready to continue to support you. Please maintain your commitment to serving the wider world, creating peace through principled public leadership.”



Ms. Sancha Samara Ogden Christian



Dr. Katarina Connery



Dr. Mika Deshotel

The class of 2025 graduate responses were delivered by Ms. Sancha Samara Ogden Christian, representing students in the master degree programs, as well as Dr. Katarina Connery and Dr. Mika Deshotel on behalf of the Doctor of Ministry recipients.

Ten students were inducted into Theta Alpha Kappa, the national honor society for the field of religious studies, by Dr. Thomas Ward, Director of the Peace Studies Program.



Dr. Shota Iwasaki, Distinguished Service Award Recipient



Rev. Barbara Robertson, Public Leadership Award Recipient

Dr. Shota Iwasaki was presented with the Distinguished Service Award. The Public Leadership Award was presented to Rev. Barbara Robertson.

Congratulations to the class of 2025!

Watch the recording [here](#). Additional photos can be viewed [here](#).



DMin Graduate Dissertations:

Ken Alexander – *The Reintegration of Ex-Offenders in Society: The Collaboration of Community and Faith-Based Organizations Focusing on Transitioning from Prison to Work to Society*



Katarina Connery – *In Her Image: Effect of a Personal Relationship with Heavenly Mother on Self-Worth in Motherhood*

Mika Deshotel – *Unified Voices: Exploring Intergenerational Collaboration in a Unificationist Worship Model*

Alice Fleisher – *Spiritual Life Formation and Growth Education for Young Adults within FFWPU-USA Opportunities and Limitations*

Shota Iwasaki – *Building a Community-Oriented Church through Beautification Projects: A Case Study of the Application and Practice of Service Learning as a Catalyst for Community Development*

Alhassan Kamagtey – *Muslim Marital Counseling: Views, Perceptions and Experience of Yankasa Muslim Community in The Bronx, NY, USA*

Magnus Larsson – *The 90-Degree Leader: Bridging Faith and Reason for Meaningful Relations and Personal Growth*

Ron Pappalardo – *The God Effect: Exploring the Long-Term Influences of Elicited Mystical Experiences*



MA Theses:

Mitch Dixon – *The Suffering God: Exploring Divine Suffering in Contemporary Theology*

Mary Marshall-Moriarty – *A New Paradigm for the Relationship between Human Beings and the Natural Environment: From Divergent Influences to Integration and Harmony, and the Contribution of Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon*

Wassa Traore – *Women's Participation in Peace Processes: Case Study: Liberia*