

## UPF Washington, DC's 2019 celebration of International Women's Day

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Washington, D.C., United States -- "Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change – Make It Happen" was the theme for the 2019 celebration of International Women's Day, held on March 16 in the Beech Room at The Washington Times.

The event was co-hosted by UPF-USA and the Temple of Praise church of Washington, D.C.

Tomiko Duggan, the senior vice president of UPF-USA, welcomed the audience. She then reported on the UPF World Summit 2019 and the related birthday celebration for the UPF founders, both held in February in Seoul, South Korea.

The program began with a prayer offered by Rev. Dr. Doris T. McGuffey, the founder and CEO of Dimensional Transformation Ministries, Worldwide.

The 80 guests included Christian, Jewish and Muslim women leaders and clergy, as well as six supportive men. Among the guests were Florepa Saber from the Embassy of Albania; Fatima L. Ojcaku and Mercy Idoko from the Embassy of Nigeria; and Jennifer Gray, director of the Interfaith Office of Larry Hogan, governor of the state of Maryland.

After lunch, Rev. Kimberly Fuller from the Greater Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church performed the songs "Every Praise" and "For Your Glory," bringing the audience to their feet. Cries of "Glory!" and "Allah akbar!" ("God is greatest!") from the audience allowed all to feel a connection to the different religions represented.

Then Tomiko Duggan gave a report on the origins of International Women's Day.

The keynote speaker was Rev. Dr. Sharon Styles-Anderson, representing the Temple of Praise church. After attending Georgetown Law School, Dr. Anderson became a public defender to help those who are often underrepresented. For over 20 years she has worked closely with community leaders and faith-based organizations, especially in Ward 8 of Washington, D.C., on behalf of the disenfranchised. Because of her outstanding achievements, she has been included in Who's Who in Professional and Executive Women and has won the Mayor's Trail Blazer Award for outstanding service to the District of Columbia. She is also the host of her own television program: From Behind the Podium, Conversations about Law and Faith.

In her keynote speech Dr. Styles-Anderson encouraged her listeners to network and work together to build a strong infrastructure to help women and girls. "Everyone has a role to play in developing gender equality," she said. She seeks to establish a think tank to this end to report to Congress, the military and corporations, she said. Her clarion call for 2019 is "Move Forward."

She called for a moment of silence in honor of the victims of shootings at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, only one day earlier. This gesture moved the hearts of the Muslim women in the audience.

"There is power in connection to your neighbor," Dr. Styles-Anderson said. She urged women to heed their own internal calling to help others, regardless of any lack or shortcomings.



She called on each woman to believe that she has a unique gift that God needs to help change this nation and the world for the better. "Think: I'm good enough, I am smart enough. Be affirmed and be great," she said, adding, "What's inside of you, no one has seen yet."

A young Afghan-American woman, Marjan, offered a powerful poem about the terrible struggles a young woman might go through and yet rise above the difficulties. "No one can take away your identity; it is forever," she said. "Even if you speak to only one person in your life, you've left your mark."

A panel of three women addressed the question, "Why do you do what you do?" Hali Jilani, advisor to the U.S. Marine Corps working in Afghanistan, said, "I work in the area of war and conflict because women don't start wars but they suffer more from them. I had a great mom and dad who encouraged me greatly. This privilege made me feel responsible to help mediate in the war in Afghanistan."

Dr. Vanetta Rather, the founder of the anti-trafficking NGO My Sister My Seed, said, "When something disturbs your heart, it becomes your work." Most of the girls who are forced into sex labor are between the ages of 12 and 14, she said. They are kidnapped, beaten and threatened into the sexual slave trade. Education is needed, but it is difficult to get into schools and churches to reach young women, she said. Girls of color are disproportionately affected. Human trafficking is common throughout the world, including the United States.

Dr. CeCe Cole, the president of the professional women's magazine Silke Endress, spoke on equity parity. She dubbed all the men in the room "feminists" for supporting this program! She said she does what she does because women need access to equal pay and equal opportunity if they are to succeed. In many parts of the world cell phones and online sites are the only access to education and development that many girls and women have.

She talked about the appalling problem of child brides. "They are young enough to get married but not old enough to divorce. In many countries a girl cannot get a divorce," she said. We all need to work together to realize women's equal rights to create parity with men, she said.

Ambassador for Peace certificates were presented by Jan Du Plain, founder of Du Plain Global Enterprises, which runs the popular "Passport" program of visiting the embassies in D.C. The new Ambassadors for Peace were: Rev. Dr. Vanetta Rather, founder of My Sister My Seed Inc.; Rahila Azam, vice president of the Mustafa Center in Virginia; Kimberly Fuller, gospel music singer with the Greater Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church; and Naila Alam and Yasmeen Durrani of Express Care.

Mrs. Duggan led the audience in drinking a toast to lasting peace through creating good marriages and families.