

22nd National Assembly of Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP) USA, held in Washington, D.C.

Emily Cornier and Angelika Selle
October 25, 2014



Over 200 participants attended the 22nd National Assembly of Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP) USA, which this year was held in Washington, D.C., in the historic ballroom of The Washington Times building. The theme of the October 25 assembly, “Learn to Lead,” was the same as last year’s, but added a new subtitle, “From Local to Global—Leading with Heart.” The participants, who came from around the country as well as the Washington, D.C., area, included the chairwomen of 18 WFWP chapters, mostly from the East Coast, dignitaries, activists and business professionals.



For more than 22 years, WFWP, as an NGO in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations has been involved in numerous projects and activities from the local to the global level. All of WFWP’s efforts have been motivated by the heart of women who have worked with

sacrifice and love. In 1992, co-founders Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon called on women and mothers to play a pivotal role in providing leadership “with a mother’s heart” based on their innate, God-given qualities of nurturing, compassion and creating harmony—all crucial ingredients for leadership for peace. All elements of this year’s program were geared toward learning, from professionals and each other’s wisdom and experience, what it takes to lead from the local to the global level by “leading with heart.”

An introductory video of WFWP International and USA was followed by congratulatory remarks from Tom McDevitt, chairman of The Washington Times. The effervescent mistress of ceremonies, Lena Yasutake, then read excerpts of congratulatory remarks from prominent leaders around the country, such as Congressman Steny Hoyer of Maryland, Democratic whip in the U.S. House of Representatives; Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, the delegate from the District of Columbia; and many others. The unexpected declaration from District of Columbia Mayor Vincent Gray that October 25 was the “Women’s Federation for World Peace USA Day” was the highlight of these remarks.



This was the second proclamation that WFWP USA had received from the mayor’s office, as last year he declared October 24 as “Washington, D.C.’s, Day of Service.” WFWP is holding a Day of Service every year as part of “raising up and training a new crop of leadership” through humility and service. This project is led by WFWP USA Vice President Juanita Pierre-Louis and her team (see separate article).

Alexa Ward, WFWP vice president international for North America, delivered the Welcoming Remarks on behalf of newly appointed International President Yeon Ah Moon in her absence. Both President Yeon Ah Moon and USA President Angelika Selle emphasized that this year and this assembly marked a new phase of transition in WFWP, as the younger generation of women had much input in the content of this year’s program. This also reflects the founder’s urgent request to have older and younger generations work together as a “two-winged” team.

President Selle emphasized that WFWP is not a feminist group and that its members honor their husbands and men and seek to bridge the gap between the genders. She said, “We do not wish to compete with each other, but rather to complete each other.”

The morning session opened with the Global Women’s Peace Network panel, in which five influential women from various fields shared their personal experience, insights and practical tools they learned and applied in their field as examples of “leading from the heart.”

The first speaker was the vivacious Dr. Cheryl A. Hill, an advisor to several government and faith leaders in the United States and overseas. Dr. Hill operates on the belief that one can holistically discern the needs of a community and build it while addressing the whole person in practical ways.

The second speaker was Donna G. Miller, the founder, president and CEO of Life Guard International Inc. and its Flying ICU, a fixed-wing air ambulance service based in Las Vegas. She enlightened the audience on “Leading with Emotional Intelligence,” which was quite thought-provoking and profound.

Then Nandi Bengu, a South African-born educator, motivational speaker and community activist who has worked as a youth and young adult educator, stirred the audience with her theme of “The Art of Forgiveness, Love and Unity.” She highlighted leaders of reconciliation from her own country, such as a white woman, Helen Suzman, the “heroine of South Africa,” who was the only woman and member of Parliament at the time of apartheid and interracial conflict and who stood up for the South African blacks. Images of and quotes from former South African President Nelson Mandela brought home the challenges. For example, President Mandela said, “Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”



Fourth on the panel was Jennifer Victor-Larson from Minnesota, an activist against human trafficking and child exploitation who founded HeroSearch.org, an online marketplace that connects people who have items to donate to non-profit organizations. She explored the topic “I Am Only One—But I Am ONE,” sharing from her own experience and illustrating it with a story of how one person can make a difference. She, like the women speakers before her, ended by asking all women to “find your passion and don’t let it go.”

The last speaker was WFWP’s youngest speaker ever, Victoria Pannell, a 15-year-old model, actress and activist from Harlem, New York. Victoria, who has many other accomplishments to show starting from when she was 4 years old, captivated the audience with her boldness, love, clarity and focus as she shared from her personal experience of “Daring to Speak Out for Others.” Her speech will be available soon on www.wfwp.us.

A short but content-rich question-and-answer period followed, which segued into a roundtable discussion session in which speakers joined in and participants quizzed them personally for further insights.

The delicious lunch, prepared by Japanese women and mothers of WFWP, and a spirited ice-breaker by Dotti Chicquelo helped to keep the animated conversations going, which spilled over into the networking coffee hour.

A “Show and Learn” session featured representatives whose tables were displayed throughout the event. These included makeover expert Phyllis Lampkin, Collegiate Association for Research of Principles (CARP) President Naokimi Ushiroda, WFWP-at-the-UN representative Heather Fraser-Harris, Lydia Billings, founder of a photographic anti-rape project called Trigger Warning, and Fannie Smith, coordinator of the WFWP Schools of Africa project, who awarded five WFWP chapters and chairwomen who had contributed to the project over the years.

The Bridge of Peace ceremony, for many years the signature project of WFWP, was held at the assembly. The ceremony, which has brought together former enemies to overcome racial, political and religious barriers, was opened by a dramatic sacred drumming session by Native American drummer Gregory Woods.

President Selle briefly pointed out that this process of repentance and forgiveness is a key ingredient for leadership of peace which was demonstrated by the founders throughout their lives. “Even if one person reconciles with another, representing their nation, religion or gender, it opens the door for many others to follow.”



Crossing the Bridge this year were two representatives of India and Pakistan; Russia and the United States; church and state; and husband and wife. During the ceremony a Japanese women’s choir sang “Let There Be Peace on Earth” and “Hand in Hand,” as all present rose and held hands while singing along.

The rather serious spirit at the beginning of the ceremony turned into one of joy and celebration, expressed in the lively music and dance provided by Los Quetzales Mexican Dance Ensemble, Forward Motion Dance Company, and Seiko Lee, a famous international soprano and Ambassador for Peace.

The assembly concluded with the annual HerStory award, given this year to Remise Walker, who at the age of 25 has made major inroads in ending homelessness and assisting youth to dream big.

Three Ambassador for Peace appointments were presented by Barbara Mosely-Marks, representing the WFWP sister organization Universal Peace Federation.

This National Assembly was particularly successful because of the unity and contributions of elder and younger generations of women, with the younger women, who are committed to becoming future leaders, learning from the elder women, who have invested much to build strong foundation by leading with heart.

Special thanks go to Teresa Ferrete, CARP events coordinator and vice president, as well as all WFWP chairwomen nationwide, sister organizations, the Japanese and Korean community, and the many volunteers who have made this assembly unforgettable and meaningful for all.