

American Leaders Discuss Principles for Building a Nation of Peace

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By American Leadership Conference: More than a hundred peace lovers from the public sector, religious, civic society and even the youth sector assembled at the FFWPU Learning Center, 4 West 43rd Street, New York, on January 16 for the first of a series of American Leadership Conferences sponsored by the Universal Peace Federation USA. With support from UPF International and affiliated organizations Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) and the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC), participants received amazing insights and education on various topics centering on the theme: “America at a Turning Point: Principles and Values for Building a Nation of Peace.”

During the morning session, Dr. Thomas Walsh, president of UPF International, set the tone of the conference with a brief presentation on “Vision for Peace: Universal Principles of Creation,” while Rev. Richard de Sena, president of UPF USA, presented thought-provoking revelations on “The Root Cause of Conflict and Principles of Reconciliation.”

The afternoon session consisted of two panel discussions. The first discussion, which was moderated by Rev. Tom Cutts, national executive director of ACLC, centered on “The Need for Interfaith Cooperation for Sustainable Peace.” The five panelists were Rev. Floyd R. Blair, director of Faith and Community Outreach, Social Justice and Education, Safe Haven United Church of Christ; Imam Shamsi Ali, director, Jamaica Muslim Center; Avathuta H.H. Jagat Guru Dileepji Maharaj, founder and president, World Yoga Community and International Gurukula Community; Mrs. Genie Kagawa, chair, UN NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns; and Swami Parameshananda, United Nations Main Representative, Bharat Sevashram Sangha.

According to Mrs. Kagawa, “One of the best-kept secrets at the United Nations is that more than 80 percent of the NGOs working with the UN are faith-based organizations.”

The second half of the afternoon resonated even more for the participants, especially because it focused on “The Significant Role of the Family and Youth for Peace and Development.” The panelists were Ms. Nadja Wolfe, director of Advocacy, World Youth Alliance; Mr. Ryan Koch, director, NY Office of the Church of Latter-day Saints’ Public and International Affairs; and Mrs. Lynn Walsh, co-chair, UN NGO Committee on the Family, and director, Office of the Family, UPF International. The discussion was moderated by Mame Koni Diop, doctoral research assistant, Montclair State University, Department of Family and Child Studies. Dr. Tony Seyegh, a medical doctor, testified that the discussion awoke in him the desire to do something for the sake of peace. Further, he said, “I pray that the next time we see each other again, I could report to you that I did this and that for this cause,” which truly moved everyone’s heart and spirit.

Fifteen new Ambassadors for Peace were appointed, including the Consul General of Cote D’Ivoire,

Honorable Christophe Kouakou.



In conclusion, Rev. de Sena reiterated the desire of the Founder of UPF, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, calling for the renewal of the United Nations to build lasting peace. "World peace can be fully accomplished only when the wisdom and efforts of the world's religious leaders work cooperatively and respectfully with national leaders," Rev. Dr. Moon said. To translate this vision locally, Rev. de Sena encouraged the audience to become active participants in the creation of Local Peace Councils. These councils will consist of appointed Ambassadors for Peace who will partner and work with local governments to address the issues of peace.

As a call for action, each participant was requested to fill out the registration form and indicate which of the four areas of work of UPF USA they are interested to help: Peace Education; Interfaith Peacebuilding; Strengthening Marriage and Family; and Youth and Service.

Finally, two events were announced: a Peace Forum and the Launching of UPF Youth, which are scheduled to take place in February and March respectively.

