

Building nonviolent South Africa seminar with different groups in Johannesburg

Jabu Solly Maseko
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Johannesburg, South Africa -- Constructing a peace blueprint by which different groups join in building a nonviolent South Africa was the focus of a dialogue seminar.

A total of 62 members of civil society, government and organizations attended the program, which was held by UPF-South Africa in partnership with the Dr. S.B. Radebe Foundation on September 2, 2016, in honor of the United Nations International Day of Peace.

The audience, which met in the spacious, newly built African Center of Excellence building in the Marshalltown suburb of Johannesburg, included representatives from the Motsepe Foundation, the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESAs), African indigenous churches (AICs), traditional healers, national faith-based organizations (FBOs) and members of government.

UPF-South Africa Secretary General Professor J.S. Maseko inaugurated the program, speaking of the need for government to work together with civil society and other organizations toward peaceful communities, free from xenophobic tendencies and some religious practices described by the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRRLC) as showing signs of lawlessness and normlessness.



Program director Mr. Mdongo applauded participants for their interest in promoting peace and urged them to use the opportunity to learn invaluable strategies that can be applied directly in their communities in order to sustain a peaceful community leading to world peace.

The keynote speaker, Dr. S.B. Radebe, the president of UPF-South Africa, spoke on the topic “God in an African Context.” He reasoned that when God speaks to an African, He uses an African language and culture. He made an example of a church visitor who regarded his African traditional attire -- “priestly robes” -- as being in opposition to Christian ethos as he considered pleasant suits to be more suitable for a

Christian leader. He also said that Christians should lead the racism debate so that the citizens of this country learn from Christians to be tolerant of one another as children of the same parent.

Dr. Radebe said that demands for African indigenous church leaders to prove their academic qualification are rather strange because the spiritual calling for either a shaman or medium comes from the spiritual world and can never be regulated and judged by earthly means. He further mentioned that xenophobic tendencies should be addressed, even if they are quiet now, because those behind them are part of our communities as neighbors and relatives.

Dr. Radebe said he has launched a blog, “African Hidden Voices” (africanhiddenvoices.wordpress.com), to allow members of society to contribute to peace.



The Rev. Thomas Mvhambo, a panelist, explained that divine intervention was experienced and clearly understood by African nations and the divine message was both written and orally transmitted to African nations. For example, Canopus (Kanuba/Namga) appeared and symbolized the birth of the son of God or Word of God and later was regarded as the beginning of the initiation tribal schools. Rev. Mvhambo stated, “Peacebuilding among Africans begins with respect for elders, starting from a family in which the father is the head, spreading to the community and finally the nation. So we must think globally and act locally, because we are now part of the global world.”

The next presentation was from Mr. Milton Mgoveni, representing King Ndamase from Contralesa accompanied by the Youth Movement. He stated that traditional leaders long have been advocating for sexual purity (abstinence) through virginity testing for girls. Although this practice, which was started by the Zulu nation and has

spread to the Swazi, baPedi and Tswana cultures, is regarded by the Human Rights Commission as a violation of girls’ rights, it continues to be observed to this day. Another panelist, Mrs. Kathy Ghomsi from the Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP), an affiliated organization, supported abstinence from sex by all teenagers and emphasized that the home is a school of love and peace as a model for the children.

Councilor Nonceba Mulwele from the Department of Social Development spoke on the root causes of conflict such as disrespect for elders by some young people. She described the behavior of some members of Parliament as disappointing, and she encouraged young people to adopt peace rather than violent protests and self-destruction.

Councilor Mulwele said she supports the return to family values that have worked for African families in the past. The government was ready to support any initiative that brings members of society and government toward working together toward peace, she said. The presentation underscored the effects of this dialogue alone as approaches to peaceful community and emphasized genuine tolerance.

During the question-and-answer time, one member from the floor echoed the effects of this dialogue as open and not restrictive to other views. Another participant commented that the most recommended and sustainable approach to peaceful resolution was the strategy of genuine reconciliation and respect to other people. “Our forefathers taught us to respect one another,” he said, “and when meeting a stranger we say, ‘Sawubona,’ meaning ‘I see you and I respect you.’”

Participants also listened to the proposal for the continuation of peace dialogue and requested another day in October. Dr. Radebe suggested a workshop for Ambassadors for Peace in October. It was resolved that the Ambassadors for Peace should take the lead in promoting national reconciliation by embarking on initiatives that will promote peace and reconciliation along religious, regional and resource divides. They expressed their determination to continue to expand the scope of the vision for peace to their local families and communities.