

WFWP USA: HerStory Award - Rebuilding with Love

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HerStory Award Celebrating Women Peacemakers

Brought to you by Women's Federation for World Peace USA

Saturday MARCH 9 8 PM ET / 5 PM PST

Registration: www.tinyurl.com/mar-herstory

LAURA LOPEZ
Prosecutor
Cook County
State's Attorney's Office

GAIL PERRY-MASON
Founder,
Money Matters 4 Youth

DR. ANNALISA EUSTACE
DEI Therapist,
Arizona Recovery Center

The HerStory Award event hosted by WFWP USA on March 9, in commemoration of International Women's Day, was gracefully emceed by Ms. Adia Lancaster, who serves as the Director of the New Hope International Foundation and Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Global Women's Peace Network Field Coordinator. In her opening remarks, she warmly welcomed all attendees and expressed appreciation for the remarkable achievements of the women being honored, highlighting not only their external accomplishments but also their remarkable dedication to making a positive difference in the world.

Following this introduction, WFWP President Kaeleigh Moffitt shared her enthusiasm for the event, emphasizing the significance of celebrating International Women's Day and the continuous inspiration drawn from the remarkable women encountered. She then shared about WFWP Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han, founding principle of WFWP: to awaken women to recognize their true value and to foster their development in collaboration with men. President Kaeleigh emphasized the importance of honoring women's unique leadership qualities, their compassionate hearts, and their ability to unite people. She shared that the event aimed to shine a spotlight on the often-overlooked contributions of women, acknowledging their tireless efforts and dedication to their work.

Each of the awardees was then introduced with their bios as well as a personal sharing from the WFWP member who nominated them. Ms. Lancaster then virtually presented the award and each awardee shared her story with the participants.

"My journey in public service started with a desire to give back to the community," Laura Lopez, Prosecutor for Cook County's State Attorney's Office, shared as she accepted her award. "I am driven by the fight against injustice and giving back to the community because not everyone has the opportunity I have been given, and it would be wonderful to uplift them as much as we can." Reflecting on her personal challenges, she recalled that as a child, her mother, sister and herself had endured a brutal attack. Despite her mother's injuries, she managed to secure their safety. A few weeks later, with the assistance of family already residing in the United States, they were able to immigrate. She emphasized that this experience, and the support of her family community, continues to drive her forward.

As a new immigrant to the country, Laura found herself navigating unfamiliar territory while also supporting her mother. Taking on increasing responsibilities, she learned valuable life lessons about resilience, character, empathy, determination, and the pursuit of stability and safety for her family and others from similar backgrounds. Despite facing challenges as a young teenager, where home life was difficult and she made some poor decisions, Laura realized she stood at a crossroads. Reflecting on this pivotal moment, she shared, "I found myself at a crossroad. I could either continue to follow this path of not doing the best at school, getting bad guidance from people or I could get back on track and get myself oriented."

She attributes her redirection to her mother's decision to send her to live with a relative in a more favorable part of town, a move she believes provided her with the opportunity she needed to

thrive. Despite the lack of belief from her high school counselor, Laura graduated at the top of her class and caught the attention of a college recruiter, and awarded college scholarships. During her time at college, Laura worked in the admissions office, where she actively contributed to increasing enrollment numbers. In her closing remarks, Laura expressed her commitment to continuing her role as a prosecutor, aiming to make a difference in the lives of those who may find themselves at a crossroads. She emphasized her determination to provide opportunities for individuals to change their lives for the better. "My motto is onwards and upwards, and I will continue to live by that," she concluded

The second awardee was Gail Perry-Mason, Founder of Money Matters for Youth, began her speech by stating, "I believe that peace and love are what make our whole world go round and love means Let Obstacles Vanish Effortlessly." She shared a personal anecdote, saying, "Because of love, I am here today." Recalling her infancy, she recounted being left at a Women's Hospital in Detroit, Michigan, and becoming a ward of the state. She was labeled as special needs and difficult to place due to a perceived disability, not speaking until the age of four. Fortunately, she was taken in by an older lady. A doctor who monitored her progress advised her guardian that all she needed was to love that little girl. It was this love that enabled her to start talking and eventually led her to run marathons to this day.

When I go to a school, even though I teach them about financial literacy, what we really teach them is about love, their value and the value of each other. I am doing all these because of the mother who raised me because she taught me about serving and giving back."

She recounted that in her efforts to connect with her biological mother, she discovered some difficult truths. Her birth mother admitted to her that she did not want her because she was racist. Despite this revelation, Gail shared, "What was prescribed to me, I prescribed to her: peace and love." She expressed that she would send her mother items related to peace and love, and gradually they became closer. When her mother became ill, Gail drove to be with her, and her mother's last words before passing away were, "I love you." She shared that she employs love as a tool to overcome obstacles and dismantle barriers. Concluding her speech, she remarked, "Peacemakers have these things in common. They drink from the everlasting cup all the days of their lives, they steal a moment of time to help somebody else out, they swear to be a better person than they were yesterday, and they lie down and thank God every night."

The third awardee was Dr. Annalisa Eustace, DEI Therapist at the Arizona Recovery Center, shared that on coming to America she realized that we are all human beings seeking for a better life however we define that. She recalled that the faith imparted to her at the age of twelve that with God all things are possible has been the source of her continued endurance and perseverance.

"When I was 12 or 13 years old, I told God that I wanted to build self-esteem in women," she recounted. "At that age, I had no idea what that would look like, but I'm still doing that work today, as it is at the core of what I do in substance use recovery." She emphasized her mission to remind women of who they are before experiencing abuse and trauma, calling forth their authentic selves and reminding them of their inherent value beyond their physical bodies. "The work of rebuilding is rooted in personal peace. When I know who I am and am at peace, I can navigate all the circumstances of this world...I have a front row seat to the transformation happening."

Reflecting on overcoming challenges, she credited all those who provided both spiritual and physical support throughout her journey. "As an international psychologist, I am called to build bridges of peace in communities, to rebuild and transform communities after trauma." She concluded by sharing her dream of building homes for forsaken children, expressing her desire to be among those who uplift and support them.

We would like to thank all the amazing ladies for sharing their stories and leaving us with nuggets of wisdom as we celebrate this Women's Month.