

## UPF Washington, DC's Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change event

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Washington, D.C. – "Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change – Make It Happen" was the theme for this year's program held on March 16 in the Beech Room of The Washington Times. The program was co-hosted by the Temple of Praise and the Universal Peace Federation USA.

Mrs. Tomiko Duggan, Sr. Vice President of UPF, USA, welcomed and reported on the World Summit held in February this year in Korea and the Celebration of the Founders of the UPF, the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon and the wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon to the full house of 80 women leaders. The program began with the prayer offered by Dr. Doris McGuffey, President, Center for Dimensional Transformation.

The guests included Christian, Jewish and Muslim women leaders and clergy who shared enthusiasm for the day and the speakers who inspired everyone to work hard to improve the condition of women and girls today. Six supportive men shared in the program. Notable guests came from three embassies: Albania, Ms. Florepa Saber, Nigeria, Ms. Fatima L. Ojcaku and Ms. Mercy Idoko and Jennifer Gray, Director of the Interfaith Office of Gov. Larry Hogan, Maryland.

After lunch, Rev. Kim Fuller from the Greater Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church brought women to their feet with songs of Every Praise and For Your Glory. Exaltations of Glory and Allah akbar mingled from the audience allowing all to feel a connection to the different religions represented.

Tomiko Duggan gave an historical report on the origins of the UN established International Women's Day. The keynote speaker was Rev. Dr. Sharon Styles Anderson, The Temple of Praise Church. Dr. Anderson attended Georgetown Law School, and soon became a public defender to help those who are often under-represented. She has worked closely with community leaders and advocates effective changes in DC's Ward 8 for over 20 years, especially in collaboration with faith-based organizations. During those years, she worked tirelessly on behalf of the disenfranchised. Her outstanding achievements have landed her among Who's Who in Professional and Executive Women and was the Mayor's Trail Blazer Award for outstanding service to the District of Columbia under Mayor Anthony Williams. She is also the host of her own television program: "From Behind the Podium, Conversations about Law and Faith."

She encouraged everyone to network and work together to build a strong infrastructure to help women and girls. She seeks to establish a think tank to this end to report to congress, the military and corporations. She stated that, "everyone has a role to play in developing gender equality." Her clarion call for 2019 is "Move Forward."

She called for a moment of silence in memory of the tragedy of violence at two Mosques in New Zealand, moving the hearts of the Muslim women in the audience. She said, "There is power in connection to your neighbor." She urged women to heed their own internal calling to help others, regardless of any lack or shortcomings. She said that women often struggle from a lack of self-esteem, or self-belief, causing them to judge or criticize other women, even feeling jealousy. She quoted I Corinthians 15:15 saying, "The eye,

the ear, are all of one body. Even the feeble parts are necessary, the uncomely parts are necessary. There is no schism in the body. We are all necessary. It is important to honor others and their situation," she added.

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 added that "what's inside of you, no one has seen yet."



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

A panel of three women answered the question, "Why do you do what you do?" Ms. Hali Jilani, Advisor to the US 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, Founder, My Sister My Seed, said that "when something disturbs your heart it becomes your work." She works to stop the sex trafficking of girls. Most of the girls who are forced into sex labor are 12-14-year-olds. 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. Girls of color are disproportionately affected. Girls need a healthy sense of self, that is the key to protecting them and allowing them to grow up naturally. Those who buy these girls need 'to be gotten after.' 13% of buyers are African-American, 15% are Hispanic, and 54% are White. It is prevalent throughout the entire world. The US has a huge problem with it too.

Dr. Cece Cole, President, Silk 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 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.

Ambassador for Peace appointments were given by Jan Du Plain, Du Plain Global Enterprises, which runs the popular "Passport" program of visiting the embassies in DC. New Ambassadors for Peace who were appointed were: Rev. Dr. Vanetta Rather Founder, My Sister My Seed, Inc.; Mrs. Rahila Azam, Vice President, Mustafa Center – VA; Ms. Kimberly Fuller, Gospel Music Singer, the Greater Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church, Ms. Naila Alam and Ms. Yasmeen Durrani, Express Care.

A toast to lasting peace through creating good marriages and families was offered by Mrs. Duggan, all drank the juice, to support this worthy cause.