

UPF UK Artists Promote Culture of Peace Through Shared Stories

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London, United Kingdom – Artists, poets, writers, filmmakers and cultural leaders came together at UPF headquarters in London on September 23, 2026, for an evening devoted to exploring how arts, culture and storytelling can help build a more peaceful and understanding world. Hosted by the International Association of Arts and Culture for Peace (IAACP-UK), the event commemorated the UN International Day of Peace and reflected its 2026 theme, "Invest in Peace: For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day."



The MC for the evening, **Ms. Rhoslyn Singh**, welcomed the guests and introduced the program, which included poetry, cultural heritage, documentary film, personal testimony and discussion. Throughout the evening, speakers returned to a common message: Peace is created not only through political agreements or international institutions, but also through relationships, stories and cultural experiences that enable people to recognize their shared humanity.

Mr. Robin Marsh, secretary general of UPF-UK, highlighted how arts and culture can bring people together across national, religious and social divides. He explained how UPF encourages cooperation across many sectors of society through its associations and peacebuilding initiatives. A UPF introductory video was shown, featuring the organization's international activities. This was followed by an appeal for support for those affected by devastating floods in Nepal, through the Nepal Prime Minister's [Disaster Relief Fund](#).

Dr. Sangita Swechcha, chair of IAACP-UK, then introduced the evening's central theme, that creativity can overcome barriers, preserve identity and open pathways towards mutual understanding. She emphasized that investing in peace means investing in relationships and cultural spaces through which people learn to understand one another.



Mr. Nnamdi Chukwuka, a member of Parliament for the State of the African Diaspora (SOAD) as well as its former minister of culture, spoke of the role and significance of the African diaspora. He explained that this includes approximately 360 million people of African origin worldwide. The African Union is divided into five geographical regions, with the diaspora officially considered its sixth region.

Mr. Nirvik Jung Rayamajhi, a London-based Nepali poet and writer, then presented two poems, "Farewell" and "The Watch Window," demonstrating that poetry can give voice to personal experience while addressing universal themes. Through poetry, participants were encouraged to consider how experiences of loss, belonging, hope and identity can become points of connection rather than division.



Mr. Sushil Prajapati, president of Pasa Puchah Guthi UK, gave a fascinating presentation entitled "Kumari: Living Heritage, Culture and Tradition." He introduced the ancient Kumari tradition of Nepal's Kathmandu Valley, a distinctive cultural and spiritual practice with roots in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions. The Kumari is traditionally a young girl who is revered as a living goddess and plays an important ceremonial role within the community. His presentation illustrated that cultural identity, when shared openly and respectfully, can become a means of dialogue and mutual enrichment.

Joining the program remotely, filmmaker and creative producer **Mr. Diyodi Devinda Menon** explored the power of documentary and visual storytelling to challenge assumptions and bring attention to little-known human experiences. His videos, "Stories That Inspire Understanding," centered on themes of identity, inclusion and resilience. Among them was a documentary about a plus-sized personal trainer challenging stereotypes around body image and fitness. He also shared the story of Recipes of Resilience, a community arts project that brings people of different backgrounds together around a shared table, allowing them to explore their experiences through food, storytelling, poetry and art.

Dr. Sara Kapadia, writer and founder of Plot Potatoes, continued the theme of storytelling with a presentation on how stories can connect people living in diverse communities. Stories, she suggested, allow people not merely to learn about one another, but to begin seeing the world through another person's perspective. In increasingly diverse societies, such encounters can contribute to empathy and social cohesion.



A deeply personal perspective was offered by **Ms. Margaret Aberdeen**, award-winning speaker, author, self-relationship coach and poet. Under the title "Today I Am Alive: From Adversity to Empowerment," she reflected on her journey through hardship to resilience and inner peace. Transforming painful experiences into strength, purpose and compassion can change one's life, she said, and also relationships with families, communities and wider society. She highlighted the importance of gratitude and positive emotions.

Dr. Sangita Swechcha then moderated a collective reflection, exploring the question: "What Does a Culture of Peace Mean to Us?" The discussion brought together many strands from the program – poetry, cultural identity, personal resilience, storytelling, heritage and communication. The discussion reinforced the idea that a culture of peace is something that must be practiced in everyday life, through the words people use, the stories they share, the traditions they respect and the relationships they build.

Mr. Ian Pelham Turner, international television broadcaster and UPF-UK patron, delivered a special address on "The Role of Media and Culture in Promoting Peace and Global Understanding." Drawing on experiences from his international career, he reflected on the power of communication to shape people's perceptions of nations, communities and conflicts. He highlighted the responsibility carried by those involved in media and public communication: they can reinforce division, or create understanding by allowing people to encounter perspectives and experiences beyond their own.

The evening concluded with reflections on the shared responsibility to build peace within communities and across cultures. The International Day of Peace reminds the international community of the need to invest in peace. The IAACP UK gathering showed that investment in creativity, cultural understanding, dialogue and relationships can help people who differ in background, nationality, faith or experience discover something deeper that they share.

A video of the event may be viewed [here](#).