

UPF's Together for Peace: World Youth Culture and Music Festival in New York

Tom McDevitt
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In support of youth empowerment and educating future global leaders, Universal Peace Federation (UPF) held the Together for Peace: World Youth Culture and Music Festival on Saturday, April 21, 2018 in New York. The event was co-sponsored by Youth and Students for Peace (YSP) and Sun International Peace Federation, while the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and Unification Theological Seminary helped support the event.

The festival was a gathering of youth and youth leaders from the tristate area. One youth traveled all the way from Puerto Rico to attend. The event featured musical and cultural performances from varied youth groups and a panel on "Elements for Peace," which included an interactive group discussion.

The "Elements for Peace" panel covered essential elements for peace: family, the cornerstone for world peace; service; interfaith harmony and cooperation; role of women in establishing world peace; true character leadership and good governance.

Additionally, there was a session on "Arts and Culture for World Peace." The sharing of music and the arts, both of which are universal languages, can help bring understanding and unity between world cultures and traditions. By understanding essential elements for peace, efforts for peace can be substantiated.

Performances were from varied youth groups, showcasing the tremendous talent of our youth, which included dance and musical performances and martial arts demonstration.

The program coordinators included the Youth Leader from Up and Coming Youth Group, New York; the New Jersey Youth Pastor, and two Ambassadors for Peace overseeing international youth dance groups.

The program opened with a grand parade of nations, in which youth, in procession led by the UPF flag, carried flags from throughout the world, led in song by Raoul Joseph, singing, "We are the World", and "Ain't Not Stopping Us Now".

Presenters included: Tom McDevitt, Chairman of UPF USA; Demian Dunkley, Northeast Subregional Director, Family Federation for a Heavenly USA; Lynn Walsh; Director of Family, UPF International; Maria L. Vargas, Regional Executive Director, N.E., UPF USA; Frank Kaufmann, President, Values in Knowledge Foundation; Naokimi Ushiroda, President, Youth and Students for Peace; Naria Gaarder, Administrator, Youth and Students for Peace; Yuki Jones, Youth Leader, Belvedere Family Community Youth Group; Yasutaka Ozawa, Youth Pastor, Clifton Family Church; and Ambassadors for Peace.

The response of participants overall about the program was that it "was amazing".

A theme carried throughout the youth conference was "Ain't no stopping us now."

We are living in a time where peace can be substantiated. In spite of the problems facing the world a new world is emerging before our eyes. There is no stopping now the realization of world peace. As the light is becoming stronger darkness will be banished.

As was prophesied in Isaiah 2:4; "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

The program ended with the grand finale Parade of Nations, youth standing for peace, as global youth peacemakers, determined victors.

"Ain't no stopping us now."



Here are a few reflections from presenters and participants:

"I can see a great opportunity in getting our youth involved in public programs organized by UPF/YSP, and it is something their schools and colleges will take notice of also."

-- Demian Dunkley, Vice President, Family Federation for a Heavenly USA; Regional Chairman, N.E., UPF USA

"It was a great partnership between UPF, Youth and Students for Peace, Ambassadors for Peace and local FFWPU youth ministries to share messages of peace and celebrate our various cultures through dance and song."

-- Naokimi Ushiroda, President, Youth and Students for Peace.

"The event was inspiring and well put together with the musical performances done by the various youth groups and how the speakers shared briefly, but said very profound and memorable points for us young people."

-- Naria Gaarder, Administrator, Youth and Students for Peace

"You did such a phenomenal job on that event! What a wonderful success it was! So excited to see more in the future and to work together and support! Would love to work with all those groups more."

-- Diane J., youth participant

"I learned things I could use in the future. The performances were wonderful."

-- Youth participant