

Diplomacy Panel at WFWPI Young Women Leader's Retreat - Mamie Thompson

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CSW Speaker Mamie Thompson

During a panel on diplomacy (the skill of managing international relations) at the WFWPI Young Women Leader's Retreat that occurred from March 18 to 20, this year, International Educator and Training Specialist, Mamie J. Thompson, presented on building bridges towards peaceful coexistence. Below is a summarized account of her presentation, for your thought, awareness, and deliberation.

Ms. Thompson began her presentation by highlighting the point that every country and culture places limitations on how they view others and the world. And while people continue to prove that they are susceptible to change, through technology for example, adapting to cultural differences has proven to be problematic.

In order to move towards peaceful coexistence, Ms. Thompson brought up two connected areas that need to be worked on: education and awareness. She emphasized the need to educate our leaders, children, families, and communities to recognize the culture-based issues. These are needed to invoke a desire for change, and to bring possible solutions to light. She added that women are an important part of this process.

She told of how influential the educational process is, and that it begins at an early age. She described the findings of 20 years of applying the habituation technique on infants (observing infants as they see something that interests them, and how they look away when they are bored). By the time babies are six

to eight months old, they recognize racial difference. By the age of two children are observed to have a racial preference, and by the age of four, preference is replaced with prejudice. She pointed out that these children are not born with prejudice, but the behavior is learned. The question is how?



CSW Human Side of Diplomacy Panel

Ms. Thompson continued to share an account of another person's upbringing. As a child, this person recalled her mother assuredly saying that all people are equal. It was not until later in life when she realized that her mother's words and actions did not always align. For example, if they were in a neighborhood where people did not look like them, her mother would make sure to lock the car doors, or hold her hand tighter when walking down the street. These often unconscious cues came to bear significant meaning.

As the presentation came to a close, Ms. Thompson emphasized the role we can play in educating young people, and that children are our future. Her final inspirational words were, "When children are told that they are beautiful, they believe it. When they are told they can make a difference, they believe it."