WFWP USA: Sharing Cross Cultural Stories - From Memories to Friendships

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On a meaningful afternoon at the Heart Mountain Interpretive Center in Powell, Wyoming, a group of 12 educators, friends, and supporters gathered in the Simpson Moneta room with a shared vision: to turn historical memory into an engine for future peace. Organized by the Montana-Wyoming chapter of the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), the meeting set out to explore the development of a University of Wyoming Honors course focused on Japanese American culture and peacebuilding.

The afternoon opened with warm introductions, including special guest Pastor Chad Martin of the Montana Family Church in Billings. Attendees were introduced to the global vision of WFWP founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and heard personal reflections on the transformative power of WFWP's signature Bridge of Peace framework.

The heart of the program belonged to key guest speaker Mrs. Alice Slagowsky. Born to Japanese parents, Alice was just three years old in 1942 when her family - including her parents, three sisters, and grandparents - was relocated from California to the Heart Mountain Relocation Center after a grueling three-day journey by bus and train. Alice candidly shared her childhood memories of camp life and her early school years up to first grade, sparking an earnest conversation among participants about community support, resilience, and the modern parallels of displacement today.

Following a lively break filled with snacks and fellowship, the group toured the museum's interactive exhibits, documentary film, and preserved historical barracks. In a deeply emotional moment, Alice was brought to tears upon discovering a photograph of her own grandparents featured on one of the museum display panels - a poignant reminder of how personal story and historic memory intersect.

The gathering concluded with a time of deep reflection, crafting, and shared purpose. Participants folded origami roses and cranes, exchanged handmade Go Yen Japanese gifts, and offered thoughtful insights on the afternoon's lessons:

> "Stories create connections to lessons lived. We all need to hear more stories to make connections which can create change."
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> "I love the idea of a past reflection on hope and how to work to be light in darkness when power is limited."
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> "In a college class it would be interesting to connect the Japanese American internment to a larger historical trend of Native American reservations and schools and modern day Latin American immigrants."

Before departing, participants paused together at the Heart Mountain National Historic Landmark memorial wall, paying quiet tribute to the names of internee veterans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II. Leaving with full hearts and fresh inspiration, the group pledged to continue collaborating on their educational initiatives in the months ahead.