

## USA: Leadership Retreat 2018 - Creating a Culture of Empowerment

Myrna Lapres  
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WFWP USA's annual national leadership retreat unfolded at the Calvin Center in Hampton, Georgia from August 19 to 24, 2018. The theme this year was "Creating a Culture of Empowerment". Although there were challenges with the weather and making connections at the busy Atlanta International Airport, everyone made their way to the retreat and a sense of peace and tranquility embraced them.

Excitement charged the air as women from around the country reconnected with friends and met new ones. The gathering included 44 women ages 20 and up, representing 17 different states across the country. After settling in and enjoying a lovely dinner, everyone gathered together and were officially welcomed to Georgia by co-chairwomen Ekaette Heyliger and Myrna Lapres, who helped to plan and prepare for the retreat. The room bubbled with laughter as participants found out more about each other through an interactive icebreaker.

The retreat was a resounding success. We heard from the President and Vice President on WFWP's goals and vision and our new handbook and curriculum, focusing on creating a culture of empowerment in our local WFWP chapters. Many participants shared about the inspiring work they are already doing. And we received both spiritual and practical guidance on how to best achieve our goals. The three days culminated in a heartfelt Bridge of Peace Ceremony and reflections. Everyone left inspired, rejuvenated, and empowered to go out and continue making our a world a better place.

### Reflections:

*"One of the best retreats ever! So much substance and value to all aspects of the presentations. Real issues discussed, problems resolved. Amazing!"*

*"I was most inspired by all the different activities WFWP is putting together in different parts of the country. I am more confident to approach people now. The young women were also very involved and taking charge which makes me proud and inspired and gives me much hope for the future."*

*"Thank you so much, a really powerful retreat. So so often things resonated with me and I get ideas and felt so moved. I definitely feel this time for me was important and it was awesome to connect with the other ladies as well."*

*"As a former chairwoman, I feel the value even more and can now see how important this training is."*

**\*\*Please continue reading for a detailed report of the retreat\*\***

## **Purpose and Goals for the Retreat and Seminar:**

1. Connect in heart with WFWP founder and our vision/mission as women leaders
2. Be inspired and empowered to take ownership of the vision for peace and get involved
3. Understand the paradigm shift of feminine leadership and implications of how we work in this age
4. Identify and include new women as chapter leaders and participants in the chapters

## **DAY ONE**

### **Connecting to the Vision and Mission of WFWP in action**

Friday morning began with WFWP USA President, Angelika Selle, and WFWP USA Vice-President, Katarina Connery guiding everyone to reconnect to the WFWP's goals by 2020, as well as informing of the new developments that are taking place in 2018. Modeling teamwork and collaboration, Mrs. Selle and Ms. Connery led us through a session on Leadership and Team Building. Mrs. Selle shared the "10 Principles of Peace Leadership" from Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook's presentation at WFWP's Horizon Summit, as well as her own extensive experience from working in this area. Ms. Connery gave pointers on how to create a culture of empowerment in our local teams from the newly completed WFWP Chapter Handbook and guided everyone through an interactive team building activity.

The afternoon began with the Leadership of the Heart Session I: The Divine is Calling. Participants were introduced to the revised "Leadership of the Heart" curriculum. A highlight for many was writing and sharing their "Letter to God" which each person wrote with many heartfelt tears and gratitude.

### **Self-care and Self-Worth**

Following the Leadership of the Heart session, participants were treated to a packed hour of tools, tips and new ways of thinking about how to take care of the temple that we have been given; our own bodies. The session began with an excerpt from a webinar on "Finding Your Upward Spiral," by Bento Leal, Program Specialist & Course Instructor with Healthy Relationships, California. He gave us solid guidance on developing empathic awareness by recognizing our own inherent value.

**Peggy Brewster, co-chairwoman of WFWP MA**, is an expert in "tongren" healing. From her training as a nurse, she is able to identify what is needed in a person's body and gave many tips about how to regain balance in our bodies through kinesiology, homeopathy remedies, reflexology and pressure points.

**Tanya Selle, chairwoman of WFWP MD** and daughter of President Selle shared passionately on the topic of self value as a young woman. She gave practical pointers on how we can strengthen our self-worth, ending with a couple of exercises, including a guided affirmation.

**Vera Reed**, Certified Health Coach and Holistic Health Practitioner, chef, and educator gave us tips on "Healthy Eating" and how we can renew our passion for life, reduce stress and increase energy using nutrition and lifestyle changes. Participants were treated to her recipes for detoxing your body through combinations of specific fruits and vegetables.

**Lillian Morgan-Lewis**, an exceptional mindfulness and meditation coach, has spent years practicing and teaching Kriya Yoga (a contemplative form of meditation). After giving everyone an overview, Ms. Morgan-Lewis concluded the session by leading the group in Mindful Meditation.

Following the session, all presenters were available to interact with the participants through table displays and handouts. They were joined by **Mary Ann Connoley**, a Reiki and Medical Qigong healer who shared her expertise and healing practices with individuals and groups.

### **Schools of Africa**

After dinner, everyone had the opportunity to hear from WFWP USA's Schools of Africa Coordinator, Mrs. Fannie Smith about the current state of our fundraisers for Africa and a new booklet that includes details and photos of each school. Although the booklet is still in development, the potential for using it as an approach-book is very exciting. Mrs. Smith honored the efforts and accomplishments of several chapters with lovely gifts for the representatives and issued challenges for the chapters to increase giving and spread awareness. Following the presentation, Ekaette Heyliger led us in a dance to African music, which has become something of a tradition at our leadership retreats.

## **DAY TWO - Practical Tools to create growth and impact**

### **Presenting WFWP in an Exciting Way**

On Saturday morning, everyone jumped in to develop and practice their own unique way of introduce WFWP. After an introduction by Mrs. Selle, Ms. Connery guided the group to create an elevator pitch and refine it through a series of activities. Each person had the chance to increase their confidence through practicing their elevator pitches with each other and receiving feedback.

### **Financing Our Goals**

Knowing that all of the work that WFWP does needs a strong financial foundation, the next session included Irmgard Baynes, Financial Administrator and Treasurer of WFWP USA, who gave a clear report about where WFWP stands financially & budget-wise. She highlighted the importance of planning ahead by creating a budget for any event or project. The session also included an entertaining presentation by Hanabeta Deshotel on membership and a video and activity on Fundraising 101. Learning that most donations come from individuals, the reasons that people typically give, and the value of a donor packet gave participants new perspectives on next steps to fundraise in their chapters.

### **GWPN and Networking**

After hearing updates concerning the Global Women's Peace Network and WFWP USA's upcoming National Assembly, everyone was guided through several networking activities by Myrna Lapres. Each woman selected a balloon that coordinated with a discussion topic-Building Your Local Team, Parent's Day, Friends of WFWP, Service Projects, and more. After blowing up the balloon, everyone gathered by color/topic and had an opportunity to share ideas and hear new ones.

### **Sharing Best Practices and Looking to the Future**

The final session of the day included presentations to share some recent projects in local chapters, including:

- **WFWP Girls and the Day of Service, Next Steps**, by Rev. Juanita Pierre-Louis and Minister Chi Mauuso
- A video by Gale Alves and Shirley Chimes on how the Colorado chapter has been successfully conducting **The Celebration of Marriage**
- **Aimmee Kodachian, our WFWP USA Special Liason Officer** and founder & CEO of the of AK Experts in Las Vegas, reminded the audience and long-term members what a precious message WFWP has, saying that she herself had been searching for a long time to find an organization such as this. "There are many more women out there like me!" she said. Many were touched and felt encouraged by those words. Aimmee then introduced the 4 Be's: Be Yourself, Be Confident, Be Prepared and Be Personable
- **Ms. Kiyomi Schmidt, WFWP Outreach Coordinator**, shared on the importance of social media to reach a younger audience and simple steps to use these tools.

## **DAY THREE - Bridge of Peace and Reflections**

The final day gave us a taste of the nearly completed **Peace Starts with Me: Bridge of Peace Workshop**. President Angelika Selle and Vice President Juanita Pierre-Louis shared deeply about their own personal experiences of the power of repentance and forgiveness. Each participant participated in the Bridge of Peace and left the workshop with a new friendship sister. The reflections shared about the workshop connected everyone with the foundation we stand on and the commitment to grow and change together as we impact those around us.

Our deepest gratitude goes to WFWP founders, whose presence and guidance we felt throughout, our devoted and hardworking staff, and all chairwomen and women who have invested into WFWP throughout the years. There is no doubt that together, we can make peace a reality.