

UN Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

James Claxton and Margaret Ali
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Ms Jacqueline Onalo, seventh from left

On November 28th, the Universal Peace Federation UK and the Women's Federation for World Peace UK commemorated the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Speakers included Baroness Pola Uddin, Baroness Meral Hussein-Ece, Ms Caroline Makaka, Ms Carole Stone OBE, Ms Jacqueline Onalo and Ms Raj Holness. Kindly hosted in the House of Lords by Hon. Baroness Sandip Verma.

We were honoured to have three Baronesses of three main parties, all notable women and each with a moving story to share. We were most impressed with the interest and commitment the baronesses had in helping the cause of abused women. Baroness Meral Hussein-Ece, who has worked with abused women from the Turkish-Cypriot community, informed us about the Womens Aid Bill Department and asked us to visit their website, www.womensaid.org.uk, to find out more about women's aid efforts.



Ms Raj Holness receiving her award, fourth from left

Human rights is a topic that here in the United Kingdom we should not take for granted. This month marks the 70th anniversary of the declaration of human rights signed at the United Nations. Violence against women though, still continues. Ms Jacqueline Onalo, a human rights lawyer, had a lady come to her who had been sexually abused by her husband, treated as a slave and even used as an ash tray. Ms Onalo, wanted to help her. However, since the abusive husband had passed away, and they had no legal marriage, she had no legal status in the UK. Ms Onalo noticed that as this lady would continue to visit, she became thinner and thinner. Ms Onalo wondered why. This lady had been walking 3 hours each journey, there and back, just to seek Ms Onalo's help.



Ms Carole Stone OBE

The deep hardships that these women face is heart breaking. Listening to these stories we felt a deep

sadness and awe that they are still standing. Still standing to share their stories. Such a story was told by one of the speakers called Raj. She had lived a happy life as a young girl. Every day Raj would look up to her grandfather who loved her. She had sensed that her family disliked her, but she was safe under her grandfather's protection. Everything changed when her grandfather passed. Her life turned upside down. She was beaten and abused. Beaten so badly that she was hidden away by her family for weeks for her wounds to heal. Raj had to survive with her innovative thinking. She had her friends pretend to be the police and call her every day. After being beaten so badly and ending up in hospital she ran away for good. This put a weight on my mind. It is hard to understand how this women had been through this and still alive so that we could all hear the story ourselves.



Ms Caroline Makaka spoke about her work with abused women which is under the banner of Ladies of All Nations. This organisation has devised a programme of awarding survivors of abuse of violence as heroines: giving them opportunities to share their stories, thus empowering them to move out of the position as victims. She was very passionate and urged the audience to come together and help women who are victims of violence.

Ms Caroline Stone OBE, who is patron of EDV (Elimination of Domestic Violence) spoke passionately about the fact that there were so many organisations working in this area, and yet there is no clear light at the end of the tunnel. It is therefore time that we stand up together all the people who are working to stop abuse of Women, to collaborate strongly and seriously to make a difference.



Since November 28th many have been impacted by the stories of the night. Many have taken it upon themselves to create programmes to help victims of violence. At Universal Peace Federation- UPF- we have already started working along with our Ambassadors for Peace who are competent in the field of coaching and mentoring to create a one year long resilience programme which we will offer to the victims of violence. We hope that change will come here and abroad. We hope by the next anniversary there will be less victims, less suffering and more heroines.

One of the participants, Gill, was so touched by the stories that she could not sleep that night. She therefore sat down and wrote a proposal of how we can come together, all the providers of services from charities and NGO's as well as public services to think about how to help the victims of abuse to best access the needed services, more easily.

Another participant who became tearful when Ms Raj was speaking, as she comes from the same city as herself, she spontaneously offered to help Raj with her work, helping others in venerable situations.

Everyone in the room was touched to various degrees. Let us use our deep impressions which expanded our hearts, to go and help abused women in need.