

IAPD: Women Peacemakers Affirm Sisterhood in Washington DC

Tomiko Duggan
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Washington, D.C., United States – The Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) held an event titled "Sisterhood for Peace: One Family Under God" on August 23, 2026, in the Founders' Room at the Washington Times Building in Washington, D.C. The program featured five women presenters, representing different professions, racial backgrounds, religious and cultural traditions.



The program began with an invocation by Ms. Adrienne Barnett from Greater Grace Family Ministries, who prayed for IAPD founder Dr. Hak Ja Han. "We are praying for the Mother of Peace, Mother Han, that you continue to increase her peace as she is going through trials and tribulations. Let her know that the word of peace is going out throughout the world and is still being carried on as a sisterhood of peace."

Ms. Tomiko Duggan, global coordinator for IAPD, greeted the audience and described five core values of sisterhood. These included creating a safe space to share challenges and be open about feelings without

fear of criticism; acknowledging that race, class and life experience shape everyone's world, highlighting the need for diverse support; celebrating each other's successes and offering mutual support to achieve personal and professional aspirations; and speaking out for one another at home, at work and in the community. Also, she added elevating women's perspectives in local and global peacebuilding initiatives, including frameworks like the United Nations' Women, Peace and Security agenda.



Ms. Duggan had prepared 1,000 origami cranes, explaining that the number came from the ancient Japanese belief that cranes live for 1,000 years. Folklore holds that folding 1,000 paper cranes – one for each year of the crane's mythical lifespan – grants a special wish, good luck, or healing from illness. Each speaker was given 200 of the origami cranes.



Dr. Tageldin Hamad, president of UPF International, attended with his wife, Ms. Josephine Hamad. Addressing the group, he said that women represent half of humanity and, as mothers, they give birth to all of humanity, thus shaping the next generation. He described peace as a responsibility shared by women and men, families and communities, governments and civil society, young people and elders.

Ms. Aisah Khan is chair of the National Center for Women Entrepreneurs, and a Global IAPD Advisory Committee member. She pointed out that, across South Asia, women have played important roles in peacebuilding and reconciliation. "Sisterhood means standing together, not only when it is easy, but especially when it is difficult," she said, calling on women to support one another and to build bridges where others see walls.

Ms. Ifeome C. Onyia is the founder and CEO of Clyopatra Winery and Vineyard, and its related charitable foundation. She described how, at Catholic Mass, before giving congregants the Holy Communion the priest asks everyone to offer each other the sign of peace. "And we turn, not to our own family, but to the stranger in the pew beside us. Before we are permitted to approach God, we are required to make peace with the person next to us first. Not after."



She described women as natural diplomats due to their gentle nature. "We remember our family's legacy, and peace becomes attainable when we pay attention to it. That is diplomacy; it simply happens in the kitchen instead of in a chamber.

Ms. Danyi Ma is an opera singer and founder and CEO of Global Art Culture USA. She described how art has the power to connect people: "The power of art begins in the human heart, and the power of peace begins there too. Through music we can communicate stories, cultures, and messages of hope even when we speak different languages or come from different cultural backgrounds. Peace begins with listening...sometimes it begins with one person listening to, understanding and respecting another."

Ambassador for Peace **Pastor Belina Wimbish**, founder of Belina Ministries, addressed the audience with passion and conviction. She called on the "Sisterhood for Peace" to take their rightful place in decision-making spaces at every level of society, from the home to the United Nations. She argued that global peace is unattainable without true partnership between men and women.

As a classically and gospel-trained psalmist, Pastor Wimbish drew on cultural references, from James Brown to Beyoncé, to critique a reality where women are often sidelined. She cited the landmark "Years of the Woman" (1975, 1992, and 2018) to detail the progress of women in political representation, emphasizing that, while systemic change is possible through organized effort, further progress is needed in securing human rights and equitable pay.

Ms. Bina Giubdi, author of "Tears of Hiroshima," expressed appreciation for the warmth and openness she experienced in this gathering. "The presence of accomplished artists and experts creates an atmosphere that feels almost like a dreamland," she said. "Together we have examined our shared challenges, explored thoughtful solutions, and worked toward common ground. It was a privilege to present my perspectives, particularly regarding Japan and the significance of August in our collective pursuit of peace."

To conclude the program, Dr. Hamad conferred the status of Ambassador for Peace upon three recipients: Ms. Ifeome C. Onyia, Ms. Danyi Ma, and Ms. Charlene Lockhart Jones, founder of the non-profit Savvy Sister Social Connection.