

Solving Racism - The Role of Women as Peace Makers

Leslie Rigney
April 28, 2015

An event, "Solving Racism", which highlighted 'The Role of Women as Peace Makers' was held at the College of Southern Nevada, on the Cheyenne Campus, in North Las Vegas, Nevada, on March 26, 2015.



Dr. Sondra Cosgrove, a Caucasian history professor at CSN, was very interested in the topic. It was with her help that it became a co-sponsored event, and was held in the Horn Theater. Students could earn extra credit by attending. Many students were interested when we handed out flyers for the event during the "Women's Empowerment Fair" on campus. Both the Office of Community Relations, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs and the CSN Women's Alliance co-sponsored the program with WFWP.

The event was moderated by Ms. Monica Lenoir, who is the CEO and Founder of Network Nevada, an online networking company. Monica is also involved with the Clark County School District, one of the nation's largest, where she does fundraising for projects to support students. She is the Director of Public Relations for WFWP Las Vegas Chapter and the spokesperson for the Women's Chamber of Commerce of Nevada.



The panel discussing the issue of racism

The stage was very attractive, with a comfortable chair and a large couch for the speakers. The program began with the moderator's request to two high school student volunteers, who are in the "Leaders in Training" program, to give a dictionary definition of the word "racism". Then she asked the general audience to give a definition of racism. Through this, Monica demonstrated that peoples' understanding of racism varies considerably. Environment, one's personal perspective, and one's personal experiences can change an individual's understanding of racism; therefore, it would be beneficial for us all to be open to each other's varying opinions and perceptions about racism, rather than thinking it is a static, stationary issue.

Following that discussion, Monica introduced Mrs. Kimiyo Anceney, who gave an explanation of WFWP, its founder, history, purpose, and activities.

The panelists were then invited in one by one. They sat on the couch, next to Monica, who interviewed them each in a fashion reminiscent of popular TV shows.



Ms. Katherine Duncan and Dr. Sondra Cosgrove cross the bridge together

The first panelist was Ms. Katherine Duncan. She gave a very moving and personal testimony about growing up on a farm in Alabama, moving to Boston with her family in her early teen years, and the anger she experienced as she was confronted with racism. Katherine is a community activist here in Las Vegas, President of Las Vegas Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce, as well as an active member of WFWP. She is spearheading many valuable projects, especially in the African-American community. She feels racism is still very strong and personally feels there has been not enough progress to curb it.

Dr. Sondra Cosgrove is a History Professor at CSN and is also President of the League of Women Voters of Las Vegas Valley. She grew up in multiracial communities, with friends of many different races. She was confronted with racism when her parents were upset that she danced at a school dance with an African-American friend. She teaches history in order to help students understand the lessons of history, so that errors are not repeated. She strives to help students overcome the tendency to be narrow-minded and rigidly opinionated. Rather, she teaches them to view any problem in a larger context. She is actively working in her classes to overcome attitudes that can lead to racism, and has much hope that change is happening.

Judge Karen Bennett-Haron is the first African American female judge in Nevada, and was educated in primarily African-American universities. Her father was a prominent Las Vegas Minister who welcomed people to speak in his church, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rev. Sun Myung Moon. She expressed concern that the type of slavery practiced in America was especially insidious because it

stripped people of their language, their culture, and damaged their family system. Her research into the penal system has found that many African American young men are tracked into Special Education programs, not because they are lacking in intelligence, but because they are lacking in support systems. She has found the penal system uses the numbers in these programs to plan on the size of the prisons, which has become quite a business on its own. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to discuss this in greater depth, which is certainly an issue of concern.



After a few questions and comments were taken from the audience, Ms. Sita Hirano read a profound and powerful Poem: "The Crown of Glory" written by the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon when he was 16 years old. (To read it, go to <http://www.tparents.org/Moon-Talks/sunmyungmoonpre67/Um360101.htm>.)

To conclude the program, Ms. Mary Hida, vice chairwoman of WFWP Las Vegas led us in a Bridge of Peace Ceremony. She spoke about the history of the Bridge of Peace Ceremony, and how valuable this has been to the individuals who could participate. Everyone was invited to take part. There was great enthusiasm for this from the audience, with many participating. All three panelists participated. Mrs. Kathleen Blakely, Honorary Consul General of Japan for Nevada crossed the bridge with Mrs. Song Hee Doo, a Korean and the wife of the Las Vegas Family Church's pastor. Some husbands even went over the bridge with their wives! Many young people also participated. New friendships

were started. All together between 20 and 25 couples crossed the bridge.

The event ended with much picture-taking and conversations among the participants. There was a lot of love in the room, with many people asking, "What more can I do?" One female professor who came said, "This was such a good program. If I would had known it would be this good, I would have brought my whole class." Another attendee said "Don't give up hope because this cause is a worthy one."

WFWP will not give up! Women all over the world can work together with a mother's heart to listen and to heal the wounds of history to re-create this world as the Creator meant it to be.

To see a video encapsulating the event:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PIXOjfbITE&feature=youtu.be>.

To read the article in the student newspaper, go to:

<http://coyotestudentnews.com/2015/04/08/women-form-bond-crossing-over-the-bridge-of-peace/>