

## Women Paving the Way to Sustainable Peace

Elizabeth Aihe  
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*Explaining about the HerStory Award in Washington D.C.*

The room was full of warm-hearted, smiling faces, on Saturday, December 19, truly mirroring the spirit of the holiday season and the end-of-the-year festivities about to begin.

Ms. Julie Randolph, the vibrant emcee, welcomed the attendees and asked them to pair up for an ice-breaker, and introduce themselves by asking each other questions. This was followed by Pastor Matthew Goldberg who gave the invocation. Elizabeth Aihe, Chairwoman of the WFWP DC Chapter, welcomed the participants and said, "Even though we cannot extend our hands to give, we need to think and take a moment to pray for those who have no family, no shelter, and are without food during this holiday season." Mrs. Angelika Selle, president of WFWP, USA, gave an outstanding introduction to WFWP and, together with Ms. Randolph, proceeded to introduce and present the National HerStory Award to Ms. Valencia Mohammed. Ms. Mohammed is well known in the District of Columbia for her activism in support of mothers of murder victims.

Ms. Mohammed gave her testimony of the heartbreak of losing two of her sons to senseless violence. She shared with the audience her personal experiences as a mother who lost sons to gun violence, and how she used the pain to advocate for other mothers suffering in silence. She said those mothers need more than grief counseling. "I will never forget," she said, "the times I went to the homes of murdered victims and found chaos. Many mothers are reaching out for direction, organization, psychotherapy, and solace."

She poignantly summed up her talk, saying, "In order to heal the family, the mother must be healed, whether it's the mother of the murdered victim or the mother of the one who committed the crime. Then she can give the family the positive direction and messages that it needs in order to be godly and wholesome." You can read Ms. Mohammed's full reflection in the December 2015 Logic of Love News article.

After Ms. Mohammed's testimony of heartbreak and renewal, Mrs. Miwako Lindsey and Mrs. Nanae Goto graciously sang beautiful Christmas carols, capturing the hearts of the people in the room. Indeed, we felt the spirit of the heart of Christmas.

The program continued with a presentation on the Schools of Africa Project. In years past, we would have had a gift exchange. But this year attendees were asked to bring a monetary donation in lieu of a gift. All the money raised was donated to the WFWP Schools of Africa to give the gift of education to those who couldn't otherwise obtain it.

A photo slideshow was shown highlighting local activities of the WFWP Chapters in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia in 2015. This video was prepared by Ms. Elizabeth Aihe, Ms. Wasana Catalan, and the latter's daughter, Ms. Yesook Catalan. Our guests were inspired to see the many events and programs that have been taking place right here in their local communities.



*Mrs. Goto and Mrs. Lindsey*

One guest, Ms. Estefanni, said, "After the introduction to WFWP USA and seeing the photo slideshow of the local activities, I was so inspired that I said to myself, I need to be part of this amazing women's organization." Another attendee, Ms. Rebecca Holland, remarked, "I enjoyed the Christmas party, especially the video put together of all local activities in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia."

Ms. Holland and Mrs. Emiko Butler both worked very hard last year putting together two programs in Maryland--a computer technology program for seniors at Charter House in Silver Spring, Maryland, and another equally valuable service project. This year Rebecca is planning to bring two of her friends to the Maryland WFWP Chapter.

Mrs. Carmella Ciemny, an integral member of the Virginia WFWP Chapter, thanked Elizabeth and the team for organizing the wonderful program, and said she was really moved and inspired.



To conclude the program, the Maryland Chapter Chairwoman, Mrs. Kim Dadachanji, gave the closing remarks and encouraged attendees to support WFWP by becoming members and bringing new people to the 2016 programs that will be offered throughout the Metro-D.C. area. The afternoon ended with spirited networking and sharing healthy and varied refreshments. We all are looking forward to the activities planned for the new year 2016. Thank you, Metro-D.C. ladies and gentlemen for a successful celebration to mark the end of 2015!