

WFWP / GWPN Canada's International Women's Day Luncheon Celebrating Women As Trail Blazers

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March 25, 2023

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY LUNCHEON

Innovation and Technological Change as Tools to Achieving Gender Equality

Deepa Mahanti
Social Activist and Writer-Director of short films and documentaries

Emma Asiedu-Akrofi
Executive Director
Jean Augustine Centre for Young Women's Empowerment

Lilly Tadin
President WFWP Canada

Eveline Stewart
Coordinator WFWP Hamilton

Global Women Peace Network will recognize outstanding women with the "HerStory" Award
Iqra Khalid
MP Mississauga-Erin Mills
Zohra Zoberi
Author, poet and playwright

Saturday, March 25, 2023 | 11:00am - 2:00pm
(Doors will open at 10:30am)

Venue: Canadiana Restaurant
5320 Dundas St. W
Six Points Plaza Toronto, ON. M9B 1A8

Cost of Admission: \$50 General Admission
\$40 for Students

WFWP/GWPN Canada Hosts 17th Annual International Women's Day Luncheon

The Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Canada hosted its 17th Annual International Women's Day Luncheon on Saturday, March 25, 2023 at the Canadiana Restaurant. In spite of heavy rain and high winds there was a great turnout which made the event a great success.

The spokespersons on the theme "Innovation and Technological Change as Tools to Achieving Gender Equality" were **Deepa Mahanti** [Social Activist and Writer] and **Emma Asiedu- Akrofi** [Executive Director Jean Augustine Centre For Young Women's Empowerment]. The event was also an opportunity for the Global Women's Peace Network (GWPN) to recognize three outstanding Canadian Women with the "HerStory" Award. These outstanding women are **Zohra Zoberi** [Artistic Director of Bridging the Gap Productions, Author, Poet and Banker],

Deepa Mahanti [Human Resource Professional, Social Activist, Writer-Director of Short Films and Documentaries] and **Iqra Khalid** [Canadian Member of Parliament]. Also, for the first time in Canada, two influential women would receive the Global Women Peace Ambassadors Certificate. These influential women were **Rosary Escano** [regional marketing director of ABS international] and **Arooj A. Rajput** [producer/radio host].

"Wonderful ladies, we hear you, we are celebrating you and our maternal ancestors and our trail blazers in our country and beyond." - WFWP Canada President Lilly Tadin

After opening remarks were heard, spokesperson **Emma Asiedu-Akrofi** presented the mission, vision and core values of the Jean Augustine Centre for Women's Empowerment (JAC). First opened in June 2014 the JAC is committed to building the self-esteem and self worth of young women and girls by positively influencing their outlook on life, broadening their horizons and helping them to empower themselves. The pillars of the JAC are four fold:

1. Academics and STEM
2. Financial Literacy
3. Civic Engagement
4. Empowerment

"We are doing a number of programs on a daily basis" - *Emma Asiedu-Akrofi* These programs include:

- Educate to Innovate STEM conference
- Let's Experiment
- Fun With Numbers
- Create coding and She Can Code
- JAC bloggers and Amplify
- Queen's University Engineering Workshops
- Women in Careers
- JAC and CIBC scholarships for young women pursuing STEM
- SHAD program

Next, **Deepa Mahanti** presented her work in progress film Noir called the MYA Illusion. Her motivation for the film was the Canadian COVID response and its effect on friends and families.

"During COVID we watched as mental health and strong minds were going into shambles. We wanted to do something but watched our boundaries. We created an image to represent each [personal] story. That was therapeutic for the person who created it and the person who knew someone was listening to them."

-Deepa Mahanti

Following that, **Zohra Zoberi** shared her personal story. She was a willing child bride because of her sense of adventure. This brought her to Nigeria where she wrote her first memoir at the age of 16. It was about how she found her niche as a useful person for this world as a social activist.

"We are living in a world with 200 million starving children, buried indigenous children and climate change. What do we do? We have choices... to live a reactive life or a proactive life. When you choose a proactive life you will find many opportunities will walk your way even when you are not looking"

- *Zohra Zoberi*

Zohra explained that she dealt with world issues that affected her through the arts and writing. To deal with incidents of cyberbullying and the death of Amanda Todd, Zohra wrote a poem called "*Sparkling Space*" for the Youth Troopers for Global Change (YTGC). It was presented with the help of the Mississauga Arts Council and performed at the Mississauga celebration square. To deal with incidents of racism, sexual abuse and Conservative South Asian women's issues, she also wrote writings and plays including the award winning "*Window shopping for a lasting love*" and "*Questionably ever after*" which consequently was funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation as a mental health program.

Following the keynote speakers were the presentations of the awards.

Rosary Escano received the first ever peace ambassadors certificate in Canada for making Philippine culture accessible to overseas audiences through a mixture of content, retail products and experiences. **Arooj A. Rajput** received the same award for her weekly radio program *Zindagi* which focuses on current social issues facing the South Asian Community.

Iqra Khalid received a "HerStory" award for her contributions to Canadian politics as a member of Parliament.

The evening concluded with a group photo.