



# *Women's Federation for World Peace, USA*

An NGO in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

## Women's Federation for World Peace, USA E-Newsletter

Becoming Women of Peace

January/February 2006

Dear WFWP,

Welcome to the latest issue of WFWP, USA's E-Newsletter! We welcome all the new members who have joined WFWP this year.

This issue will be covering the Victory Celebration for the WMEPI Signature Campaign held in Los Angeles, California; a panel discussion by the Women's Peace Initiative for the Middle East and South Asia held at Georgetown University in Washington, DC; WFWP International's panel held in conjunction with the UN's Commission on the Status of Women's 50th Session; and an overview of WFWP, USA's activities during 2005.

We hope you enjoy this volume of our E-Newsletter.

Jennifer Ang, Editor

### in this issue

**Victory Celebration for the WMEPI Signature Campaign**

**Women of Peace: The Role of Women as Peacemakers**

**Commission on the Status of Women 2006: WFWPI Side Event**

**Overview of WFWP, USA Activities in 2005**

### *Victory Celebration for the WMEPI Signature Campaign*



by Sheri Rueter, Vice President, WFWP, USA

On Sunday, January 29th, more than 150 members and friends of WFWP, USA's Southern California Chapter gathered in a bright, sunny garden at Vanguard Hollywood to participate in our Fifth Annual "Welcome the New Year Tea," and to celebrate VICTORY for the Women's Middle East Peace Initiative (WMEPI) Declaration for Peace Signature Campaign.

[Read on...](#)

### *Women of Peace: The Role of Women as Peacemakers*

by Caroline Betancourt, Vice President, WFWP, USA and Chairwoman, DC Metro Region

The Women's Peace Initiative for the Middle East and South Asia conducted its first panel discussion on the Role of



Women as Peacemakers on Thursday, February 2, 2006, at George Mason University in Virginia. The room was filled to capacity with over 40 guests and students.



[Read on...](#)

### *Commission on the Status of Women 2006: WFWPI Side Event*



by Jennifer Ang, Administrative Director, WFWP, USA

The morning of February 27, 2006, the United Nations was buzzing with the conversation and laughter of thousands of women. These women came from every possible region of the globe, many clothed in their native attire. The occasion was the Fiftieth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a commission of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, whose purpose is "promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social

and educational fields".

[Read on...](#)

### *Overview of WFWP, USA Activities in 2005*

by Jennifer Ang, Administrative Director, WFWP, USA

The year 2005 was an exciting one for Women's Federation for World Peace, USA. We had many full programs on both the international and the national levels.

On the international level, there were three major programs: the Women's Middle East Peace Initiative Declaration for Peace Signature Campaign; the Goodwill Exchange for Peace in Beijing, China; and the Sixth Annual WFWP International Leaders Workshop.



[Read on...](#)



**Victory Celebration for the Women's Middle East Peace Initiative**  
*Declaration for Peace Signature Campaign*  
Los Angeles, California  
January 29, 2006

By Sheri Rueter, Vice President, WFWP, USA

On Sunday, January 29<sup>th</sup>, more than 150 members and friends of WFWP, USA's Southern California Chapter gathered in a bright, sunny garden at Vanguard Hollywood to participate in our Fifth Annual "Welcome the New Year Tea," and to celebrate **VICTORY** for the Women's Middle East Peace Initiative (WMEPI) *Declaration for Peace* Signature Campaign. Our dream of gathering one million signatures was far exceeded by the reality of collecting **10 million, 800 thousand** signatures when the campaign officially ended on the United Nations International Day for Human Rights, December 10, 2005. We had a lot to celebrate!

The WMEPI *Declaration for Peace* was drafted in January 2004 to promote peace in the Middle East from a woman's perspective. The purpose of the *Declaration for Peace* is to support women of the Middle East at home and abroad; to turn the hearts and minds of women worldwide to the ongoing crisis in the Middle East; and to encourage women to use their God-given nature to contribute to lasting peace in the region, as well as throughout the world.

On the heels of a resolution (4/30/04) by the Los Angeles City Council to recognize and commend the work of WFWP and the WMEPI, on May 2, 2004, more than 250 women representing diverse ethnic and faith backgrounds gathered at the LA Friendship Center to participate in a deeply moving "Bridge of Peace Ceremony" and become the first signers of the WMEPI *Declaration for Peace*.

From Los Angeles, Ms. Norma Foster, President, United Nations Association Pacific-Los Angeles Chapter and National Advisor to WFWP, USA carried the *Declaration* to Geneva, Switzerland, for the Eighth Annual Conference on Peace in the Middle East, sponsored by WFWP Japan. Twenty-five delegates from nine Middle Eastern nations signed the document. Next, signatures were collected during the "Women of Peace Program," sponsored by WFWP and IIFWPU, which brought 526 women from 41 nations to Jerusalem. Participation in the signature campaign further expanded to more than 35 nations as an international resolution to support it was formally adopted at the Fifth Annual WFWP International Leaders Workshop, held in Seebenstein, Austria, in September of 2004.

Over the past eighteen months, signatures were collected through grassroots efforts, door-to-door visitations, public events, and through the support of like-minded NGOs and organizations around the world.





On January 29<sup>th</sup>, a lovely garden patio, a jolly Buddha statue, and the “Hollywood Sign” became the backdrop for a celebratory event that opened with prayers led by leaders representing the three Abrahamic Faiths: Mrs. Nahid Kabbani, Palestinian and Founder/President of “One World,” Rev. Clara Epps, and Mrs. Ariella Shira Lewis.

Mr. Jordan Birnbaum, owner of Vanguard Hollywood, one of the largest dance clubs in Los Angeles, graciously donated the venue as well as technical support, serving staff, and all of the refreshments for this event. As the ladies enjoyed “tea” together they were entertained by the beautiful background music of John Holmes on piano and the lovely voice of Mrs. Annette Moss who sang “Sebben Crudele,” by composer Antonio Caldera.

Ms. Norma Foster served as master of ceremonies and several presentations were made. Ms. Leslie Orticke, President, Los Angeles Commission on the Status of Women, read a personal letter from Mayor Antonio Villaragosa. “On behalf of the City of Los Angeles, I extend my appreciation for your invaluable leadership in completing the WMEPI Signature campaign. It is fitting that a resolution from the City of Los Angeles Council that helped launch the campaign is now celebrating its victory.” An official Congratulatory Declaration was also extended from the County of Los Angeles, Board of Supervisors.

Letters of congratulations were read from Dr. Thomas Walsh, Secretary General, Universal Peace Federation/Interreligious International Federation for World Peace, Dr. Lan Young Moon, President, WFWP International, and Mrs. Alexa Ward, President, WFWP, USA. Dr. Walsh reminded us that we not only succeeded in collecting more than 10 million signatures, but we also “helped in educating, raising awareness and securing commitments for peace from more than 10 million people. This is a remarkable achievement.”





Sheri Rueter, Vice President, WFWP, USA, delivered a PowerPoint presentation, which provided a comprehensive overview of the WMEPI, outlined the activities of WFWP, USA in 2005, and presented national and local goals for 2006. A shortened version of the moving video “Women of Peace” served to conclude the formal part of the program.

From that point we “broke out” into singing and dancing! A VICTORY cake was cut by several representative leaders as Rick Joswick and the “Origins” choir led a spirited version of “Peace, Shalom, Salaam Aleichum” and the assembled ladies sang along and danced around the patio together. In closing, we held hands and sang our signature “Let There Be Peace on Earth,” uniting in heart with each other as we pledged to continue our work together to make “The Peace Kingdom” a reality for every person in the world.

This event will not be forgotten because it lives in our hearts, but also because it was extensively covered by the media. Camera crews were present throughout the event from both ABC News and FOX News. ABC-7 featured a lengthy segment on our event on the Evening News and again the next morning on the Morning News. FOX-11 aired a segment on the Morning News as well. At a time when the Middle East remains embroiled in war and conflict....our peace initiative is truly an historic measure.









***Commission for the Status on Women  
Report on the WFWPI Side Event:  
“Creating an Enabling Environment for Women’s Participation”***  
By Jennifer Ang, Administrative Director, WFWP, USA

The morning of February 27, 2006, the United Nations was buzzing with the conversation and laughter of thousands of women. These women came from every possible region of the globe, many clothed in their native attire. The occasion was the Fiftieth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a commission of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, whose purpose is “promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields”.

In conjunction with the Fiftieth Session of CSW, Women’s Federation for World Peace, International sponsored a parallel event in the UN Church Center, from 10:30 to 12 noon, entitled “Creating an Enabling Environment for Women’s Participation”. This topic was in accordance with the themes of the CSW assembly, namely the enhanced participation of women in development and equal participation of men and women in decision-making processes at all levels.

Over sixty women were in attendance, with overflow in the back and on the sides of the room.

The session began with a greeting by the moderator, Motoko Sugiyama, Director of the UN Office, WFPW International. She began by asking the audience to see how many parts of the world were represented by women in the room, which, among others, included Taiwan, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, Austria and Africa.

The first panelist, Dr. Lan Young Moon, President, WFPW International, gave some background to WFPW International and its status in the United Nations, as a non-governmental organization (NGO) in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, the highest level an NGO can obtain in the UN. She spoke of WFPW International's committed efforts to support the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set forth by the United Nations, including the eradication of poverty, literacy and AIDS prevention. In a nod to the volunteers who developed and staffed WFPW International's programs across the world, Dr. Moon publicly recognized the dedication and sacrifice of WFPW volunteers, as many of them had left their home country and sometimes families behind to support overseas service projects in developing countries.

Dr. Moon strongly affirmed the need for women leaders in all areas of society. She cited the international percentages of women in leadership for several nations, with her home country of Korea having the lowest participation and Rwanda with the highest (39-40% of parliamentarians are women).

She went on to address the correspondence of lower birth rates to the increase in career women in society, specifically in Korea. According to Dr. Moon, Korea has the lowest birth rate in the world. "In Korea, there are some villages that haven't heard a baby's cry for over 30 years", she said, to the audible astonishment of the audience. In a defense of strong family life, she maintained: "Traditional roles such as cooking and childrearing are also an important way to contribute to society."

Dr. Moon made the point that the role of being a parent should be included in the definition of leadership. "I think that the direction of the women's movement will move towards a more balanced past", Dr. Moon declared, to applause. She concluded by asserting that families are the essential unit of the world, and that she does not want women to lose sight of this.

The next panelist was Dr. Lih-Rong Wang, a professor from the National Taiwan University, who warmly greeted the panelists and all women present. Her presentation, *Gender Difference: the Facts and Reality*, compared the disparity between men's and women's situations across the spectrum of society. She presented sobering statistics showing the sizable gap between men and women in the areas of labor force, managerial level, salary ratio, etc. She also addressed good practices that could be implemented to give women enhanced access to opportunities and a better balance between work and family.

Some work promotion strategies Dr. Wang advocated, included eliminating occupational segregation, such as gender wage gaps; enhancing managerial positions for women; enhancing access to opportunities and resources for women; and promoting work-life balance. She cited Norway and Sweden as model countries in terms of helping women maintain a balance of work and life, in that they offer benefits such as parental leave, etc.

The third panelist, Dr. Mei-Nu Yu, President of the National Union of Taiwan Women's Association, focused more on the political and social aspects of the women's movement in Taiwan. She gave a history of legislation that supported gender equality, as well as a history of social action since the

1980s taken by women to achieve these steps forward in legislation.

Dr. Yu mentioned the Free and Young Program, which “learns from the wisdom of flying geese”. She used this analogy to make the point that “those who lead help those who come after. Women also help and support each other to achieve their goals.” This program brings women entrepreneurs together to cooperate with each other to help women build successful businesses. She emphasized that this kind of spirit of sisterhood among women entrepreneurs is important for women to succeed in the area of entrepreneurship. Dr. Yu also outlined many social service projects that their association conducts each year.

The fourth and final panelist, Ms. Bonnie Berry, UN Representative for WFWP International, began her presentation by mentioning the role of women in creating peace. In her words, “Women have a common instinct and desire to build a better and safer world for our children and families.” She offered examples of several successful international nongovernmental organizations whose activities work to increase political participation in women and the poor, through economic empowerment and other means.

As models, she mentioned WFWPI projects where WFWP Uganda partnered with the United Nations Development Fund, two WFWPI projects in Afghanistan that empower women economically and educate political candidates and voters, and finally, Peace X Peace’s Global Network, which was formed in the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup> and encourages women to use their leadership potential to promote peace. She argued that the reason that all these projects were successful were that they began with a women who wanted to serve and help other create peace, the needs of those being served were identified, plans were made, partners were found through personal networks, and plans were carried out on a grassroots level. The result was that women were empowered through increased opportunities, economic support, education healthcare, etc.

The WFWPI-sponsored panel event provided a very informative and enlightening afternoon for all of the women gathered, as well as food for thought for when they returned to their own cities and countries, strengthened with new and fresh insights, valuable awareness and a feeling of solidarity gained from their attendance to the Commission on the Status of Women’s gathering.







## Overview of WFWP, USA Activities in 2005

By Jennifer Ang, Administrative Director, WFWP, USA

The year 2005 was an exciting one for Women's Federation for World Peace, USA. We had many full programs on both the international and the national levels.

On the international level, there were three major programs: the Women's Middle East Peace Initiative *Declaration for Peace* Signature Campaign; the Goodwill Exchange for Peace in Beijing, China; and the Sixth Annual WFWP International Leaders Workshop.

During the Fifth Annual WFWP International Leaders Workshop in Seebenstein, Austria, in August 2004, leaders of WFWP International joined together in an effort to collect one million signatures worldwide in support of peace in the Middle East, in an initiative called the Women's Middle East Peace Initiative *Declaration for Peace* Signature Campaign. WFWP, USA served as the international secretariat for this signature campaign. This effort, carried on throughout the year, was concluded on December 5, 2005, at which point a total of 10,800,000 signatures had been collected worldwide, in over 35 countries.

In August 2005, WFWP, USA sent 102 women on the "Goodwill Exchange for Peace" trip to China in the spirit of sisterhood with Chinese women. This trip brought together more than four hundred women, from more than thirty countries, to Beijing for several public meetings that highlighted the importance of unity among women from the Pacific region. Many women indicated that it was an incredible and very memorable program.



In September 2005, WFWP International's leaders from around the world gathered in Moscow, Russia, for the Sixth Annual WFWP International Leaders Workshop. During that workshop, leaders made reports and shared best practices of what they were doing in their own respective countries, as well as shared ideas for future projects and what they hoped to accomplish in the coming year.

On the national level, there were three outstanding programs in 2005, including a new year's celebration held on January 1, 2005 in New York City; an afternoon tea in Washington, DC, commemorating International Women's Day 2005; and the UN forum, "Global Perspectives to End Racial Discrimination", held in the United Nations on March 21, 2005.

On January 1, 2005, a family-oriented new year's entertainment program was held at Manhattan Center studios in New York City, which brought together approximately one dozen young adult performing artists, from around the country, to the Manhattan Center for a special program. There were 250 guests, including entire families, in attendance. A Bridge of Peace Ceremony allowed individuals, couples, children and families to begin the New Year in the spirit of peace and harmony.

A program was held in Washington DC, at the prestigious Congressional Club, sponsored by WFWP, USA and IIFWP, on March 8, 2005, in observance of International Women's Day, a day commemorated by the United Nations in recognition of the need for women's rights and advancement. This program brought Iraqi women leaders together with American women leaders for two keynote presentations as well as a Bridge of Peace Ceremony. Eighty guests attended this event.







On March 21, 2005, WFWP, USA and WFWP, International co-sponsored a forum on the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, entitled "Global Perspectives to End Racial Discrimination". The program included a keynote presentation by Ms. Donzaleigh Abernathy, the daughter of the famed civil rights leader Rev. Dr. Ralph David Abernathy; as well as a panel of distinguished guests, including Ms. Zahra Nuru, Senior Advisor to the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; Ms. Susan Mulcahy, psychologist and co-founder of the Interracial Sisterhood Project in Northern California; and Dr. Lonnie McLeod, president of the Exodus Transitional Community. These panelists talked about different aspects of improving race relations from their own unique perspectives. The entire program highlighted the Interracial Sisterhood Project, a project of WFWP, USA, that has sponsored more than fifty interracial Bridge of Peace programs since 1997. There were 250 guests in attendance.





At the local level, our regional chapters created many remarkable programs, in line with the goal of each chapter to create programs in the areas of Women of Faith, Benefits for the Schools of Africa, and NGO Networking, as well as the Interracial Sisterhood Project and the Women's Peace Initiative.

Just a few examples of local programs in the areas of service and social reconciliation activities include an effort to support Iraqi nationals going to the polls and vote in the first fair Iraqi elections in decades; an interfaith event that was held in Long Island, New York; and an interracial event sponsored in Northern California.

In January of 2005, Iraqi nationals, living in the United States, had the historic opportunity to vote in their national election. WFWP provided support by driving several families to the polls in the Washington, DC area. WFWP also set up a hospitality tent in the Los Angeles area that served refreshments to hundreds of Iraqis over a several day period. At the tent, two men who had been friends from many years ago in Iraq met for the first time in many years since they left their country. They were interviewed by a local radio station.



On September 24, 2005, the New York Metro chapter held an interfaith women's program on Long Island, with a moving Bridge of Peace ceremony between women of different faith backgrounds. On October 29, 2005, the Northern California chapter of WFWP, USA highlighted the Interracial Sisterhood Project through a Bridge of Peace Ceremony and Conference.

Many regional chapters also had Benefits for the Schools of Africa, which brought together women in their communities to educate them about WFWPI-sponsored schools in Africa, with all of the proceeds from these events going directly to each region's sponsored school.

In the administrative area, WFWP, USA initiated a bi-monthly E-newsletter, and saw the creation of a new and more user-friendly WFWP, USA website ([www.wfwp.us](http://www.wfwp.us)). WFWP, USA also moved its Finance and Membership Office up to Bridgeport, Connecticut, to join the National Headquarters office.

In 2006, Women's Federation for World Peace, USA's goal, the same as last year, is to go one step higher in its programming. WFWP, USA will continue to offer inspiring and meaningful programs, in its efforts to strengthen the family and society, support international service projects, and promote social peace and reconciliation activities.





### **Women of Peace: The Role of Women as Peacemakers**

By Caroline Betancourt, Vice President, WFWP, USA and Chairwoman, DC Metro Region

The Women's Peace Initiative for the Middle East and South Asia conducted its first panel discussion on the Role of Women as Peacemakers on Thursday, February 2, 2006, at George Mason University in Virginia. The room was filled to capacity with over 40 guests and students.

Dr. Katrin Michael, a women's rights activist from Iraq, Mrs. Fawzia Etemadi from Afghanistan, and Ms. Miriam Asmar, an American-born Palestinian studying Middle Eastern issues at Georgetown

University in Washington, DC, presented women's concerns and challenges in their respective countries and identified qualities of women, such as forgiveness and compassion, that enhance their ability to create peace and harmony. Moderator Susan Fefferman facilitated the panel and the question and answer period.

A particular touching moment occurred when Dr. Michael recognized and embraced Sergeant Jeremy Lee, a soldier who was severely injured by a roadside bomb in Iraq and who is at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, DC, for physical therapy. Dr. Michael publicly expressed her gratitude for his sacrifice in bringing peace to her country.

The Women's Peace Initiative, a project of the Women's Federation for World Peace, was created one year ago when Fawzia Etemadi, who is an Ambassador for Peace, told WFWP member Grazyna Hagen how deeply disturbed she was by recent news of an honor killing in her home country of Afghanistan. Mrs. Hagen called Caroline Betancourt, Regional Chairwoman of the DC Metro area who, in the spirit of the Women's Middle Peace Initiative, introduced Fawzia to women from Iraq, Israel and Pakistan.

Concerned about peace in the Middle East, these women, along with several American women, shared their cultures, religions and hearts. Driven by their deep concerns for the struggles facing women in their countries, these women met twice monthly, acutely aware that every day hundreds of women were victimized by their religious, political and cultural circumstances. They realized that only through compassion, forgiveness and understanding among themselves could the seed be planted to erase conflict and abuse among peoples of the diverse religions in the Middle East. And that only by educating women in the Western countries about the situation of women in this region, can all women rise up together for freedom through peaceful means. Through this effort, the Women's Peace Initiative for the Middle East and South Asia was born.

Desiring to educate women and students in America, the group recently presented another panel at the University of Maryland at the end of February in preparation for their appearance at the International Women's Day program scheduled at the Capitol Hill Club in Washington, DC, on Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup>. The title of that program was "The Essential Role of Women in Creating Peace."



