

**WORKSHOP AND LECTURE SESSIONS AT THE 'IMAGINE PEACE'
WOMEN'S CONFERENCE
ACTIVE DIALOGUES FOR PEACE**

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The video, *Imagine Peace*, by SGI-USA member Lynn Collins, records SGI-USA member Stephanie Tansey saying, "Buddhism is happiness with a social conscience." "Imagine Peace" participants, though not all Buddhist, all exhibited the deep happiness that making a positive difference in society brings out. In 41 workshops and lectures, they explored the many facets of social conscience needed to imagine peace.

Michele Chargois, opening the morning general session, described peace from a Buddhist perspective not as a state but a process, achieved not passively but actively, by being not other-focused but me-focused— not reactive but proactive.

Hazel Henderson, Ph.D., keynote morning session speaker, encouraged her 400-person audience to exercise strategic visioning to remedy dangerous and unsustainable consumption patterns. Dr. Henderson just completed her second dialogue with SGI President Ikeda.

"All great religions have some core, wonderful insights," she remarked. "We need now to come together... to work toward propagating visions of how cultures of peace and sustainable development will work." She encouraged her audience to identify the deeply held values that unite all people, to continue dialogues in local communities and to commit to solving the current crisis by providing solutions to their political leaders. "We need politicians who are visionaries, who are poets," she said. "Most of all, we need a lot more politicians who are women."

Ivonne A-Baki, ambassador from Ecuador to the United States and also a successful painter, joined politics to be taken more seriously. "Art is pure feelings," she said. "Politics is making it all happen."

During the afternoon general session, the ambassador talked about her experience as a peacemaker in South America. "Wherever we imagine peace, it is treasured," she said. "We can make a change— not just from the president's podium or the senator's office, but as advocates, artists, professionals, sisters and mothers."

Also in the afternoon general session were Professor Corann Okorodudu of Rowan University, Liberia, president of the American Psychological Association's Division of Peace Psychology, who noted that "even in a very oppressive environment, there are allies—you will find spaces to do the work for peace." And Dr. Ellen H. Taliaferro, president of Physicians for a Violence-Free Society, commented that "endurance means remaining a victim; transformation means becoming a winner."

Meeting simultaneously with the general sessions were intimate workshops elsewhere in the World Bank.

Gail C. Christopher, D.N., Licensed Holistic Health Practitioner and executive director of Innovation in American Government, Harvard University JFK School of Government, said in one of the most heavily attended workshops, "Peace Begins with Me: The Mind and Body Connection": "Take your power back! You must change your mind before you can change your body." This dynamic speaker urged that "peace is consistent with the natural order of things" and "we can be healthy with a little effort and time" by re-

orienting ourselves from within.

“Resolving Conflict: Communication as a First Step” taught participants to change negative communication patterns to create harmonious relationships. Corrine McLaughlin, executive director of the Center for Visionary Leadership, led two sessions, and Tina Smith, behavioral management consultant and SGI-USA member, led two. Ms. Smith proposed “creating peace from the inside out,” explaining: “If you want to influence your future, create it in your head and in your heart. If you can conceive it, then it can happen.”

The six speakers in four sessions of “Joining With Youth to Create a Culture of Peace” utilized peer mediation, mentoring and music to help young people express their creativity and divert their attention from destructive acts.

T-shirts designed by family, friends and victims of violence hung from clotheslines in “Freedom from Violence and The Clothesline Project.” The project’s purposes are to bear witness; to heal; to educate, document and raise awareness; and to support, encourage and inform.

Women attending “Celebrating the Power of Women as Peacemakers” shared ways to take control when personally challenged and invent new approaches to peacemaking.

Three workshops focused on the Earth Charter. “Building a Global Family,” “Building Economic Justice,” and “Building a Safe Environment for Women” sought solutions to the problems of poverty, over-consumption of the earth’s resources, violence against women and the deterioration of communities. Dr. Richard Clugston of the Secretariat for the Earth Charter USA Campaign described the Earth Charter as a “soft power” peace proclamation. Dr. Hope Bliss, SGI-USA member and educator, advocated adoption of Earth Charter principles by youth to ensure a sustainable future based on justice, equity, peace and ecological security.

Closing the conference, Carmela Menchaca, SGI-USA Mid-Atlantic Zone women’s leader, asked each participant to awaken to her own unique mission as a protagonist in the transformation of history. “In imagining peace,” she said, “each of us will gain the courage and determination to make that vision a reality and make a difference.”

Adenike Adeleke, Yvonne Mapily, Saundra Scott and Rosalye Settles contributed to this article.