



**The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)**

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Meaningfulworld United Nations International Day of Peace Gala at

The Bronx Museum of the Arts

September 21, 2012

Leysa Cerswell and Katrina Martinez, Meaningfulworld

*"Peace is one of humanity's most precious needs. It is also the United Nation's highest calling."*

— U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

Friday September 21 was a beautiful and memorable celebration of peace at the **Bronx Museum of the Arts**, located just around the corner from legendary Yankee Stadium. Here the **Association for Trauma Outreach and Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld** held an **International Day of Peace Gala in celebration of the United Nations'** official day of peace observed around the world since 1982. The celebration included the presentation of youth art, hip-hop poetry, and lives musical performances featuring a congero, pianist, violinist, and powerful vocalists. The gala also included an awards ceremony honoring local and international peacemakers and a presentation about ATOP's international work promoting peace around the globe. Over

one hundred-and-fifty people gathered to

celebrate peace. Throughout the event the sharing of different ideas, beliefs, cultures, and artistry created an atmosphere of joy, peace, inspiration, and positive energy.

One could just imagine how moving and powerful the potential of this event could be if it were held just a few blocks over, filling up Yankee Stadium. The room was beautifully and delicately decorated by the Meaningfulworld team of ambassadors, volunteers, and interns, who adorned the space with drawings, paintings, photographs, and handicraft created by youth artists from around the world. Banners highlighting love, peace, and happiness imparted a delightful ambience to the room, which was illuminated by candlelight positioned around the auditorium. Near the stage at the front of the room were tables garnished with Meaningfulworld books and CDs, candles, essential oils, and treasures collected from around the world. Armenian food and drinks were specially catered by Zara Mediterranean Cuisine.

**Camille Safiya** captured the energy of each moment of the event with a live painting following her opening performance of "Sunset Pyramidz." As she sang her father, **Dr. George Friedman**



Nirvana Lucie



Nevard Shadarevian



Camille Safiya

*Jimenez*, joined in on the congas, traditional drums of his Afro-Cuban heritage. At the end of the evening the finished painting was raffled off to one lucky attendee, who in addition to revisiting the joy of the night through photographs can also be reminded of the collective joyous energy of the peace celebration through Camille's painting.



Audience engaged in spiritual dance

**Dr. Ani Kalayjian**, Founder and President of Meaningfulworld, shared stories of peace and forgiveness from her work around the world, ending with “We have moved from IQ to EQ, emotional intelligence, let us move to SQ, Spiritual Intelligence which is universal, just as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which should be taught in every kindergarten around the globe.” The UN International Day of Peace also falls on the *Armenian Independence Day*, as well as *Dr. Ani's birthday!* With all there was to celebrate that evening, the audience's energy and spirits were naturally very high. Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States, kindly provided a history of the International Day of Peace. This day was established by a UN resolution in 1981 to take place during the opening of the General Assembly and was initially created by the UN in devotion to worldwide peace. Since then millions of people from around the world have been celebrating peace on the same day each year, sending out innumerable vibrations of positive, peace-filled energy into the universe at the same time.



Camella Qabazard

Meaningfulworld Ambassador **Katherine Kaze** shared a PowerPoint presentation on the work of Meaningfulworld and its multiple programs on education, empowerment, and promotion of peace over the last 22 years locally and globally. Throughout the evening awardees were



Ambassador Lhatu Wangchuk & Dr. Ani Kalayjian

honored in between amazing musical performances, receiving their plaques with brief but moving speeches. Awardees at the Peace Gala were Ambassador Lhatu Wangchuk (Ambassador of Bhutan to the UN), **Dr. Lisa Miller** (Teachers College, Columbia University), **Dr. Maria Montes** (VP and Dean of Academic Affairs at Boricua College), **Mr. Chris Cunningham** (HIV Director of Heritage Health and Housing), **Queen Mother Dr.**

**Delois Blakely** (Community Mayor of Harlem), **Mr. Gabriel Fekete** (Youth Peace Maker), **Ms Davinia Troughton** (Artists Striving to End Poverty), **Mr. Voza Rivers** (New Heritage Theatre Group), **Taz Tagore and Adam Bucko** (Cofounders of The Reciprocity Foundation). The audience, which was filled with students, United Nations Ambassadors, teachers, artists, physicians, lawyers, and many others enjoyed performances from *hip-hop duo SupaNova and TreZure Empire*, *Nirvana Lucie*, *Elizabeth Tomboulian*, *Nevard Shadarevian*, and *Camelia Qabazard*.



SupaNova & TreZure Empire



Elizabeth Tomboulian

The artwork on display featured the work of many talented young artists under 30. It included drawings by children from Sri Lanka done after the tsunami, as well as response drawings from a group of 8-year-olds in New Jersey, which offered strength and hope to those affected by the tsunami. Other drawings were created by children at an orphanage in Haiti,



Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury

produced during the most recent Meaningfulworld mission there in June 2012. Generous artists contributed works to enliven the space and speak through art on the theme of peace. Artists included in the exhibition were **Ezra Hubbard**, age 8, who displayed pencil drawings on peace; **Jensun Karissa Berry**, age 3, who displayed beautiful paper mache sculptures such as “Peace of Elephant”; **Gabriel Fekete**, age 17, who displayed photographs of people in Rwanda, among others; and

**Jeff Swagerman**, who donated an ink drawing titled “Immunity.” A painting of children was created by Miss Boombox specifically for the event. **G. Davis Cathcart** also created a colored ink drawing for this event titled “Welcome.” **Rebecca Alexander** painted slate images of continents on rock sculptures.

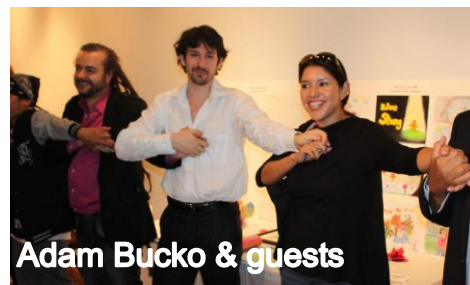
**Meaningfulworld Vice President Jennifer De Mucci**, followed with the introduction of the ATOP Meaningfulworld **film on peace keeping mission in Sierra Leone**, helping rehabilitation of the surviving communities as well as building their sense of hope, peace and love.



Chris Cunningham



Dr. Nora Pressley & guests



Adam Bucko & guests

Heart-to-heart gratitude circle

The event closed with each Meaningfulworld team member sharing a quote on the value of peace and coming to the podium with a flag of the country that we have served. A **Heart-to-Heart Circle** of gratitude and peace followed, in which everyone in the room held hands in a circle as they tuned in to the heartbeat of the person standing next to them. This created a wonderful atmosphere in which to sing Happy Birthday to Dr. Ani and enjoy the surprise birthday cake. The evening also provided an opportunity to network with others who deeply care about creating peace through education, spirituality, and the arts.

**Meaningfulworld is deeply grateful** to all the cosponsors of the event, including The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP), The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Voices for Freedom, the Armenian Constitutional Rights Protective Center, the Armenian American Society for Studies on Stress & Genocide, Lisa Schiller, the Alexander Family, the Harlow Family, Dayla Maisey at the Strongest Oaks, Dr. Noyemi Isnar, Kevork and Anna Ucaryan of Zara Mediterranean Cuisine and Alfonso Natural Delight for the delicious food.



Queen Mother Dr. Delois Blakely



Intern Michael Reda with youth artists

We thank the entire Meaningfulworld team and all our guests for making September 21, 2012, the UN International Day of Peace Gala at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, a night to remember. Special thanks to all the Meaningfulworld team members: Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Wesley Beekes (Co-Chairs), Mileka Ackie (Program Manager), Jennifer De Mucci (VP), Leysa Cerswell (Secretary), Nira Shah, Kelsi Kimball, Michael Reda, Katrina Martinez, Jessica Harlow, Victoria Alexander, Richard Griff, Lisa Schiller, Crystal Barry, Preet Dhillon, and Barbara Fallon.



Here are a few examples of the positive comments we received from the audience:  
“Dear Ani: The gala brought us all together in the right spirit. Your words guided us to clarity about our singular purpose of love and peace. The members of the peace activist community were accomplished, wise, and bright in spirit.”  
– **Dr. Lisa Miller**, Director of Clinical Psychology, Columbia University, Teachers College

“Thank you so much for including Adam and I in your wonderful event. It was clear after the evening that you have been a pioneer in integrating healing modalities into trauma recovery frameworks and applying them to a broad range of complex situations in a global setting. Wow! It was really inspiring to see how courageous and thoughtful you have been in your work both academically and in direct service.”  
– **Taz Tagore**, cofounder, The Reciprocity Foundation (“Transforming Homeless Youth from Within”)



“Dear Dr. Ani: What you do for the world is incomparable! God bless you. I was incredibly moved that day. Once again, I appreciate who you are and what you stand for. It is truly incredible how much we as people take for granted. We definitely need to value what is really important in life. World peace certainly needs to be a priority for every nation.”

– Nirvana Lucie Nixon

*"Peace is its own reward." — Mahatma Gandhi*

