



# Health, Transformation and Spirituality

a working group of

Committee on Spirituality, Values, and Global Concerns, NY

Presents a symposium on



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### Achieving Sustainable Peace and Well-Being:

The Role of Education and Integrative Healing

#### Jen Mount, ATOP Meaningfulworld

On 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016, *Health, Transformation and Spirituality Working Group* of the Committee on Spirituality, Values, and Global Concerns, (CSVGC-NY), held a symposium on *Achieving Sustainable Peace and Well-Being*, discussing the role of education and integrative healing.

*John T. Digilio, Jr.*, Vice Chair of CSVGC-NY and Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Vice Chair of CSVGC-NY, and Chair of the Health, Transformation and Spirituality working group, introduced *Dr. Leslie Popoff*, Meaningfulworld’s United Nations Coordinator, who opened the symposium with a moment of silent.

*Irene Tananyan*, led the participants through a mindfulness meditation. Irene began by reciting the mantra “I am,” to which the group received and then recited in silence. She then invited the group to extend their positive mantra to the world so that our gratitude for humanity and mother earth is able to spread.

*Dr. Ani Kalayjian* continued by sharing a poem called “*Let Love Transform You,*” expressing the importance of love in the process of personal and collective growth as well as sustaining peace throughout our world.

After a moment of reflection, Dr. Ani Kalayjian introduced *Sona Tatoyan*, an Armenian-American actor, writer, and film maker. Sona discussed her childhood experiences in the United States and in Syria, with a vivid description of her time with family in Syria and the experiences she learned from her Armenian relatives. She shared how important the power of recognition and storytelling, and films are for healing. Storytelling is able to give voice to those who are silenced or unable to share their experience of horror and darkness. “Poetry allows us to go to the source and allow us to understand the cosmic mystery and exchange with our highest self.”



Guest speakers



Interfaith display



Dr. Kathleen Sullivan

Sona shared a few minutes of her film, *“Three Apples Fell from Heaven,”* Door/Key Productions CA, a project she began in 2012 in effort to showcase the trauma of Armenians, the Armenian people and the aftermath of the Ottoman Turkish Genocide. Her film showcases both sides of the story; those who fled and those who stayed behind, in order to teach the world about what it means to hold on to grief or to let go and the opportunities for dialog on both sides of the fragmentation of trauma, explaining “we need to see this as an opportunity for growth and transformation, from fear to love. We must be the custodians to our own path of healing by recognizing what is truth.” Sona’s project is also providing an employment opportunity for Syrian refugees, by creating the costumes and wardrobe for the film. A percentage of the profits will go to the rebuilding of Aleppo.

After this beautiful presentation we were introduced to **Dr. Kathleen Sullivan**, Program Director of Hibakusha Stories. As an activist for over 25 years, Kathleen has travelled nationally and internationally to educate for disarmament. She explained that “children should understand disarmament as they understand environmental challenges.” She shared details about her film projects, including a film she produced called *The Last Atomic Bomb*, that features stories about the survivors from Nagasaki. Her NGO, Hibakusha Stories, works to create a world free of nuclear weapons by educating and empowering youth to take a stand against these weapons. Hibakusha Stories gives survivors the opportunity to share their experiences which would otherwise not be heard and understood. She too believes in the power of truth telling and the process of exchange between the storyteller and the audience. Kathleen then let the audience through a partner exercise by asking everyone to complete the following sentence “Some of the things I really love about being alive are...” The pairs took turns discussing what they love about their lives. Some group responses were “being in the moment” and “remembering why we work for peace and want to engage in a spiritual life.” Kathleen explained how powerful an exercise like this can be for educating our youth “with regard to nuclear weapons, and war, many of the things we love, and everyone that we love is threatened at every moment of everyday because of the existence of nuclear weapons.” She hopes that by working to make this issue a personal issue for everyone, we can bring an end to the threat of violence.



*Dr. Ani introduction*



*Irene leading meditation*



*Sona Tatoyan presenting*

Dr. Ani Kalayjian then took a moment to introduce and welcome retired **Ambassador of Zambia Mr. Isaiah Z. Chabala**, and **Queen Mother Dr. Delois Blakely**, Community Mayor of Harlem and Ambassador of Goodwill to Africa. Dr. Blakely is also the founder of New Future Foundation. Both honored guests shared their gratitude for the symposium topic and expressed the need for continued peace education around the world. Ambassador Chabala shared his view on the power of spiritual communities and urged that these be used to harness the positive force within communities to transform violence.

**Dr. Kalayjian** shared Meaningfulworld’s research on mass trauma and emotional healing around the world. She explained the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals in the process of healing and transforming violence, addressing goals 3, 4, 10, 16 and 17, and how these have been incorporated into Meaningfulworld’s ongoing humanitarian outreach & research. She shared some of the research Meaningfulworld has done on generational trauma. Dr. Kalayjian has developed a method of addressing and healing the generational trauma called the

***7-Step Integrative Healing Model.*** She shared each step of her model, assessing the transmission of generational trauma in Palestine as well as in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. She also discussed the value of learning emotional intelligence, forgiveness, and teaching the world about disarming ourselves emotionally in order to prevent violence. She explained the importance of community development and acknowledgement of ecological connection in transforming conflict and healing and taught the audience about the power of breath work and meditation in order to become more authentic and assertive.

After a short question and answer session, the symposium closed with gratitude to all participants, speakers, and honored guests for sharing their experiences.

Reception and CSVGC-NY monthly meeting and elections followed with the facilitation of Martha Gallahue.

***Special gratitude to our Sponsors:*** Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld, Institute for Multicultural Counseling & Educational Services, Armenian Constitutional Rights Protective Centre, and the Psychology Coalition at the United Nations.