



The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)

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29 March 2014 ATOP Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Certificate Training Program

Stage III: Sacred Activism & Forgiveness

Alanna Miyajima & Evelyn Lopez-Castillo

On Saturday, March 29, a diverse group of students, interns, medical practitioners and community organizers filled in the Upper East Side beautiful space to attend an all day workshop on humanitarian outreach certificate program on Sacred Activism & Forgiveness. The training provided attendees with trauma education to prepare them on how to handle and analyze trauma, how to help self and others transform trauma and grief. In addition, the program is designed to teach, organize, inspire, and spread awareness about ATOP's peace building and humanitarian missions around the world.

After completing a questionnaire about previous traumas and life experience, Dr. Ani opened with a moment of silence. Introductions followed where participants shared their passions and declared their personal goals for the day.

Through an engaging PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Kalayjian explored two themes in depth: Making meaning from trauma and Forgiveness. Emphasizing the need to "Remember fully and forgive" rather than to Forgive and Forget, she began with a call to give care to one's self and the world, before ongoing and hurting one's self and others, and getting on with one's life. She provided a number of different interpretations and practices of forgiveness by different cultures and religions, including Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Also provided, were



The group discusses Dr. Kalayjian's presentation and 7-step Integrative Healing Model

different definitions and types of domestic violence and meaningful sacred activism. To illustrate the themes and messages of the day, Dr. Kalayjian shared stories from ATOP's missions to Armenia, Africa, and the Middle East. Dr. Kalayjian concluded her presentation by dispelling myths about forgiveness and trauma, including the misconception that "I have to wait for the enemy to acknowledge and ask for forgiveness first".

spirituality, was the Visionary Speaker for the

For Release

more

day. James continued the theme of forgiveness for the day, providing his own definition of forgiveness: "Daring, bold surgery on the self righteousness embedded within avoidance, rumination and vengeance, so that we may reweave the painful memories into awareness, compassion and surrender." James further went on to say (in summary) "that in forgiveness we make allies of our darkness and friends of our brokenness, so that they become (as it were) angels at the gates of that paradise of assumed innocence, from which we have voluntarily exited, so that we may recreate a new social, philosophical ontology based upon sustainable relationships." Dr. Kalayjian expressed her appreciation by presenting James with a Certificate of Gratitude, a Medal of Celebration, and a meditation CD, *From War to Peace*.



Dr. Ani presents James Lawer with a certificate and medal honoring his work with ATOP and appreciating his spirit of forgiveness.

After an organic, healthy, homemade lunch prepared with love by Dr Ani, the group watched a short series of YouTube films chronicling ATOP's 2009 outreach mission in Sierra Leone. After the films, the group discussed and processed Dr. Kalayjian's signature *7-Step Integrative Healing Model*.

During group processing, where the 7 steps are applied therapeutically, three members shared a traumatic experience. Although specifics varied, each person touched upon the subject of family betrayal and loss. Group members actively listened and empathized with each person, giving them positive reinforcement. Group members were encouraged to ask open ended questions to help each sharer delve a little bit deeper into their current feelings and make meaning from their trauma. Meaningful connections were discovered between the three members, specifically the lessons gained from the traumatic experience of embracing and acting on their giving and receiving of love from family. Group members offered different sources of literature to help others continue to process and making meaning of their traumas. As for ecological sustainability, group members shared a variety of ways: recycling, composting, star gazing, watching sunsets and sunrises. The process was facilitated by two participants who will be graduating in June as Meaningfulworld Ambassadors.

The *7-Step Healing Model* is a Biopsychosocial & Eco-Spiritual Healing Model. The steps are (1) Assess Levels of Distress, Disagreement, or Conflict, (2) Encourage Expression of Feelings (3) Provide Empathy and Validation (4) Encourage Discovery and Expression of Meaning (5) Provide Information (6) Instill Eco-Centered Caring and (7) Demonstrate Body Breathing and Movement

Centered Healing. Further details are provided on the website www.Meaningfulworld.com.

Chakra yoga balancing exercises were practiced at the close of the group processing, allowing group members to release body tension and gain balance with their inner and most authentic self. The training program concluded with a ceremonial Heart-to-Heart-Circle of Gratitude and Ubuntu Circle.



Dr. Ani leads the group in the heart-to-heart circle of gratitude



Concluding with Ubuntu Circle of Unity and Love

This program was organized and sponsored by Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld, which has reached out to over 45 nations since 1990, throughout 45 disasters, to conduct workshops on healing, resilience, and peace building. Uplifting individuals and communities through the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model (Kalayjian, 2002, Kalayjian & Eugene 2010), trauma and suffering are transformed into new meaning--the birth place of empowerment. This innovative model incorporates many theories including: psychodynamic, interpersonal, (Sullivan, 1953), existential and humanistic (Frankl, 1962), Electromagnetic Field Balancing (EMF, Dubro & Lapierre, 2002), Forgiveness (Kalayjian & Paloutzian, 2010), Learning Theory, flower essences, essential oils, Physical Release Techniques (van der Kolk, 1987), chakra balancing, prayers and meditation.



These programs will continue to take place monthly, on the last Saturday of each month till May, with the graduation as *Meaningfulworld Ambassadors* taking place at the United Nations on June 2014. Our next program will be held on April 26. For those interested, kindly contact Alanna Miyajima, Educational Coordinator at EdCoordinator@Meaningfulworld.com, or visit our website at www.Meaningfulworld.com