



The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)

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*Annual Conference and Graduation
of Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Ambassadors
**Transforming Refugee Crisis:
Lessons Learned and Continued Challenges***

Jen Mount, ATOP Meaningfulworld UN Youth Representative

Over one hundred dedicated dignitaries, academicians, diplomats, civil society, and family gathered in the United Nations Interfaith Chapel, on 2nd June 2016, to celebrate mind-body-eco-spirit health. **The Association for Trauma Outreach and Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld** held its Annual Conference, focusing on transforming the refugee crisis and graduation ceremony for Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Ambassadors - Mind-Body-Eco-Spirit Festival.

Co-Chair, **Dr. Leslie Popoff**, Meaningfulworld's United Nations Coordinator, opened the conference by introducing The Association for Trauma Outreach and Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld program, and **Dr. Ani Kalayjian**, The founder and President of ATOP Meaningfulworld. **Dr. Kalayjian** introduced **Rev. Sharon Hamilton Getz**, Institute for International Social Development, who led the audience through the opening invocation.

The Children's International Chorus, from Brooklyn District 15, PS 10 Glee Club with Fred Ellis & Carol Schwartz, set the tone for the day with their energetic and uplifting set, singing a selection of peace songs from a variety of different cultures and languages.

First Secretary **Mr. Sahak Sargsyan**, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia to the UN, discussed Armenia's contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which they have been working toward in partnership with other member states and civil society. He explained that Armenia has welcomed the SDG goals and has set targets to address steps to reduce inequality and provide adequate access to justice for all to ensure a more peaceful society. **Mr. Sargsyan** discussed the urgency Armenia has placed on the integration of the 2030 SDG goals with the needs and efforts of the humanitarian community, which they hope will ensure better access to quality healthcare and safety in high conflict areas, highlighting the need for integrating early warn and early action mechanisms. **Mr. Sargsyan** also touched on the importance of irradiating racism and intolerance through raising awareness. Armenia is the current co-sponsor of The International Day of Prevention of Genocide. Which they hope will be a continued platform for raising awareness and recognition of state failures and successes.



Mr. Sargsyan, First Secretary, Armenia ~ Dr Kalayjian, President & Founder ~ Dr Leslie welcoming participants

Dr. Ani Kalayjian expressed similar sentiment, stating “Prevention is the best cure or else the trauma will continue through generations. The research has shown this and we need to be vigilant and work together with next generations, civil society and governments to make this a possibility.”

Dr. Kalayjian then shared a short video on ATOP Meaningfulworld. She expressed her wishes that PS 10 school children in the audience take notice of the work that is being done for other children around the world. It is her hope that this generation takes an interest in being a part of Meaningfulworld’s future. The organization has since its inception been adamant in preparing younger generations to serve future communities in need. The video, a short documentary on ATOP’s recent humanitarian mission to Haiti, highlighted our work with the community in the aftermath of the recent earthquake. The video shed light on the process and work that is involved with working in an international setting; a process that requires months of preparation and relationship building with local and international NGO’s, schools, universities, physicians, Minister of Health & Education, and many other partnerships.

The goal of our last Mission to Haiti was to teach the communities about transforming horizontal violence, developing emotional intelligence and caring for the environment. Meaningfulworld was able to guide them to empowerment so that they could support one another in the aftermath and transition of such a devastating natural disaster. We did this by focusing on core values of healing, empathy, and sharing love. Teaching methods for integration of mind body spirit and heart, such as energetic balancing, to work through traumas trapped in the body. We also spent time promoting environmental health, connecting communities to the earth. The ATOP Meaningfulworld team worked with the Haitian community to create Peace and Forgiveness Gardens; planting flowers, herbs, and trees, in effort to create a safe and peaceful place to meditate. We reestablished Ping-Pong clubs to cultivate more community and youth engagement. We also spoke with a voodoo priest on a local radio station who highlighted the importance Meaningfulworld’s work in Haiti, “Meaningfulworld is the cure for Haiti.”

After the documentary, *Children’s Int. Chorus* lifted the audience’s spirits once more by continuing their concert with songs celebrating diversity, peace, and love, in a rather impressive array of languages, inviting audience participation.



Meaningfulworld Ambassadors ~ Speakers, sponsors and graduates ~ Children of PS 10 Dist 13 Brooklyn

Dr. Kalayjian then shared her poem ‘I am a Syrian Refugee,’ about her experience as a refugee. She expressed gratitude for the opportunities she has had, all while containing the sadness that she stills feels from the current unresolved war in the region. She then introduced **Sandra Vines**, Director for Resettlement, with the International Rescue Committee. Sandra reviewed the enormous number of families and children who have been displaced in recent years. She discussed her experience visiting the camps in Jordan and Turkey; which to date has 22 refugee camps around the country. She explained the difficulties these communities face with finding formal employment and enrolling children in schools, both often due to language barrier. Sandra explained the work that International Rescue Committee has been performing such as providing protection and health care for 670,00 people. She explained the types of traumas that are seen and treated in their IRC health facilities in Jordan and Lebanon such as sexual and gender based violence, resulting from cramped quarters and limited mobility. To help the audience understand the day-to-day hardships, she shared a quote from a 14-year-old female refugee, currently living in Turkey. “I wish that I were a boy so that I can do whatever I want and protect myself. She then shared some “promising practices” such as the Makani centers in Jordan, which were established to help children keep up with basic literacy. Lebanon is also creating a program to help get the children get caught up on their work. **Sandra Vines** ended her presentation by sharing all of areas within the United States that refugees are resettling and integrating. She shared the positive and powerful impact that this new population has had on local regions, as it is an opportunity to come together and learn from one another.

During our 15 minute break the audience was able interact with conference Co-sponsors, **Kathleen Booker**, **Rachel Lev**, and **Katherine Hamer**. **Rachel Lev** established an organization called Go

Girl yoga to empower communities around the world. During the event she shared her experience and assisted guests into various yoga poses. **Kathleen Booker** led guests through guided breathing exercises. **Katherine Hamer** taught guests how to use Tibetan singing bowls.

Eric Manigian, a Zen Peacemaker, spoke about “Bearing Witness and the Zen Peacemakers.” His organization, founded by Bernie Glassman, is part of a larger group of socially engaged Buddhists, who work toward social action and spiritual practice. He shared that “Peacemakers are those who make whole again.” There are 3 guiding principles for the organization: not knowing, bearing witness, actions that arise from not knowing and bearing witness. The organization hosts retreats throughout the world where great trauma and suffering has occurred. They work in places such as Rwanda, Bosnia, Greece; bearing witness to the current refugee crisis. As Eric explained “You are not showing up to fix anything, to heal or provide solutions. The purpose is to see and hear others, and keep hearts open in some of the most horrible situations. Creating a moment together to be fully present in the suffering and all that is happening in tandem.” He described an experience at a concentration camp in Auschwitz and the process of being present as a group and bearing witness in the gas chambers and execution spaces. He described how they sat on the ground for 5 days, at the crucial place which was a turning point for the people brought to the camp; the place prisoners were taken off the train and sent in one direction to die or another to work. They sat, reciting the names of the individuals aloud. On the last day of the retreat they held a sunset ceremony to mark the closing. He explained that these were times of deep sadness and also happiness. “A lot of amazing things happen when we open our hearts to one another.” Collective compassion is evoked when lines of identity start to fall away. There are various realizations that surface for the group through these processes.



Kathleen Booker, Breath work ~ Katherine, Singing bowls ~ Rachel Lev-Yoga healing ~ Alex Simmons, Comic healing

The conference continued with **Rev. Jade De Saussure**, Founder of Neighborhood International, who discussed the “push factors” of migration focusing on “The art of listening in the process of healing,” and what communities and individuals can do to mitigate the trauma and stressors for this population. Explaining what it means to have to leave one's home and how this causes a psychic break in the individual. There is often a feeling of mistrust because listening is not happening in a way that is conducive for healing or counseling. She explained to the audience just how important active listening is for building trust and creating a safe place to share with others. Teaching that, active listening enhances trust by encouraging more honest and open interaction. The person feels like they matter. Active listening requires: suspension of judgement, curiosity, respecting others boundaries, validation, being present and focused on the other, emotional self regulation, empathy, and the understanding that you may not understand, restating, and cultural adaptation.



Shivani St George, music ~ Passionate over 100 in attendance ~ Rev Hamilton-Getz ~ Eric Manigian

Dr. Kalayjian closed the discussion with a brief presentation on ATOP Meaningfulworld's affiliation with the United Nations and its work in addressing the Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4,

10, 16, and 17. She described the 7-steps of integrative healing model, which she explained came about and grew organically from working in 45 countries throughout the world. The model which she developed stresses the importance of identify ones emotions, assessing level of trauma, encouraging expression of feelings, providing empathy and validation, and encourage discovery and expression of meaning. It also works as a foundation for providing information and encouraging eco-centered healing, through breath work and movement exercises ***Soul Surfing***. It is through this integrative healing process that people are able to move from victims to victors. The process can effectively create emotionally intelligent and positive, peaceful citizens for our planet. She shared photos from ATOP's recent Peace-Building Mission to Palestine and Israel and explained her view on anger. "Anger is one letter away from danger. We ask people to start disarming themselves from all the greed, envy and rage, and instead empathizing, learning how to communicate assertively." Sending love to those who have hurt us is a major component of the integrative ***Soul Surfing*** practice, which ***Dr. Kalayjian*** uses with all communities around the world to lesson feelings of anger and pain. She closed with a powerful quote for the audience to contemplate: "A bend in the road is not the end of the road...unless you fail to make the turn."



Dr Kalayjian's Heart-To-Heart-Circle of Love and Gratitude at the UN Interfaith Chapel

The festivities concluded with a musical performance by ***Shivani Laura St. George***, of Blue Lotus Way, followed by ***Dr. Kalayjian's*** signature ***Heart-to-Heart-Circle of Gratitude and Love*** with a Native American drummer ***Donna Ohstonha Ohskennonoton***. ***Dr. Kalayjian*** led us through a heart opening experience after which she encouraged the group to spread these feelings invoked from the day, in effort to cultivate more peace and understanding throughout the world.

Congratulations to class of 2016 Meaningfulworld Ambassadors: Remi Alapo, Leslie Popoff, Katrina Selverian, Jen Mount, Irene Tananyan, Andre Der-Artinian, Michael Reda, and We Chen (Felicia).

Special Gratitude to Co-sponsors: Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention, Meaningfulworld, Armenian Constitutional Rights Protective Centre, Psychology Coalition at United Nations, The Institute for Multicultural Counseling and Education, Armenian-American Society for Studies on Stress & Genocide, Jerry Walker, MaGrann Associates, Alex Simmons, Rachel Lev, Rachel McDavid & Associates, MFT, PC, Tipcup Inc., Michael Goldverg, Tamara Tananyan, Lorraine Simmons, Kathleen Booker, Katherine Hamer, and Spirituality & Health.



Fred Ellis & Carol Schwartz with Glee Club ~



Rev Jade De Saussure



Sandra Vines

Founded in 1990, Meaningfulworld, the Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP), affiliated with the United Nations, has achieved international recognition as a leader in training humanitarian outreach professionals as well as responding to two decades of global and local disasters. Meaningfulworld is committed to global education promoting state-of-the-art scientific theory, peace and consciousness research, and the development of technical skills to train mental health professionals, teachers, psychologists, art therapists, nutritionists, alternative medicine practitioners, clergy, nurses, mediators, interfaith ministers, and lay persons committed to service. Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Outreach teams make a daily difference in 45 countries in people's lives helping to transform tragedy and trauma into healing through post trauma growth, guidance, empowerment, mindfulness, and meaning-making through a new world view. Ask yourself ...Ask your friends...What makes your world more meaningful?

Our Motto: When one helps another BOTH become stronger