



The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)

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#RealLifeHeroes: MeaningfulWorld Celebrates UN World Humanitarian Day

Isly Rove and Dr. Kalayjian

As the United Nations World Humanitarian Day was celebrated on 19 August, 2020 with grand ceremonies to honor special people all over the world, MeaningfulWorld celebrated their own ambassadors and volunteers remotely on 27 August 2020. The event was to celebrate and honor the giving and compassionate spirit of the many people who have volunteered generously while on humanitarian outreach missions over the past 15 years.

Dr. Ani Kalayjian, president, and founder of MeaningfulWorld began with a welcoming moment of silence and a brief introduction on the history of World Humanitarian Day. She shared that in 2009 World Humanitarian Day was officially founded by the UN in remembrance of the tragic loss of lives in Bagdad 19 August 2003. With emotional conviction, Dr. Kalayjian dedicated the program in honor and memory of those who were killed from the bombing at the Canal Hotel in Bagdad, Iraq. Twenty-two people were killed in this bombing including Sergio Vieira de Mello who was the chief humanitarian in Iraq. Meaningfulworld's remembrance is also in honor of those who are working towards understanding the effects of COVID-19, and to the aid workers all over the world who have been working tirelessly over the past 6-months and who continue to be at the forefront of the pandemic to this day. In addition, to celebrate the generous spirit of all humanitarians, and what they give to the world's vulnerable people.

The theme of this year's celebration was #RealLifeHeroes. Over 20 people gathered on zoom to share their stories and memories of their times on humanitarian outreach missions. They shared their insights and how they have changed due to their work helping others with Meaningfulworld. People who participated in the program came to us from many states in USA, Texas, California, Missouri, and Florida, and Puerto Rico. There was excitement in the air as people connected again, people who have not seen each other for years were happy to be together. Everyone expressed gratitude for being acknowledged for their humanitarian contributions.

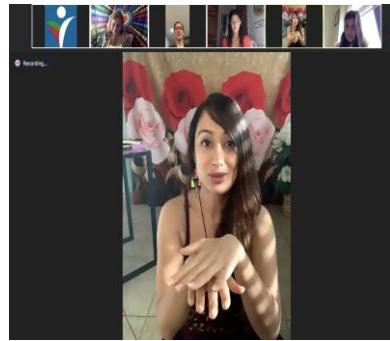
Nicole Zamkoff, Co-Chair, and Intern Coordinator for MeaningfulWorld, shared a PowerPoint presentation in which she highlighted a United Nations video honoring humanitarian worker. Followed was the United Nations Chamber Music Society performance, and a short video clip highlighting Zainab Murtala's humanitarian efforts to support vulnerable people during COVID-19 in Nigeria.

The names of MeaningfulWorld humanitarians, who have joined our humanitarian relief missions in 48 countries and 26 states in U.S.A., were read and those present were invited to share their feelings and respond to the questions that Dr. Kalayjian raised: "How has your humanitarian experience changed your life? What meanings have you discovered, or past meanings reinforced? How have these experiences helped you be the better version of yourself?"

Meaningful World #RealLifeHeroes honored were: Mileka Ackie, Rita Alexander, Victoria Alexander, Blanka Angyal, Emily Bales, Leysa Cerswell, David Dawud, Dr. Jennifer De Mucci, Dr. Daria Diakonova-Curtis, Dr. Edmund Gergerian, Michele Gonen, Dr. Richard Griff, Adrian Hansen, Kathy Hansen, Dr. Beth Hedva, Art Jaffe, Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Raman Kaur, Katherine Kaze, Haik Kocharian, Sowmya Kshatriya, Crystal Lee Barry, Rev. Julie Lira, Rev. Dana Mark, Nanar Nakashian, Abigail Ortega, Dr. Leslie Popoff, Yasmine Qaddoumi, Michael Reda, Lisa Schiller, Lorraine Simmons, Susan Smith, Georgiana Sofletea, Shayla Tumbling, Marian Weisberg, and Ghen Dennis Zando.



Rev. Julie Lira



Raman Kaur



Shayla Tumbling

Michele Gonen expressed her thankfulness for the opportunity to work with MeaningfulWorld in Haiti. She remembers practicing healing methods in orphanages there as well as setting up trauma training workshops. She recounted her deep appreciation for the experience, which helped her be a passionate clinical psychologist.



Lorraine Simmons



Dr. Ani Kalayjian



Michele Gonen

Raman Kaur shared her gratitude for working in Haiti and how she appreciates the 7-step Integrative Healing Model, as it integrates mind-body-spirit, mental health, and ecological health. She followed up emphasizing her appreciation of how integrating spirituality and

connecting with mother earth helped her connect with others more authentically. She concluded by sharing the importance of what she carried with her from her mission work and the inspiration she gathered from the heart to heart connections she made.

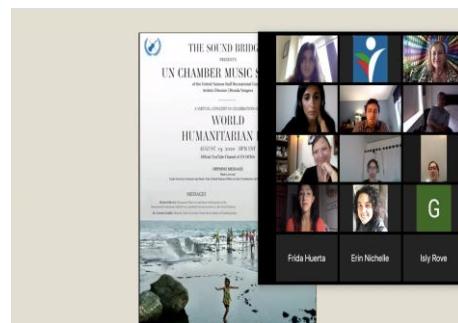
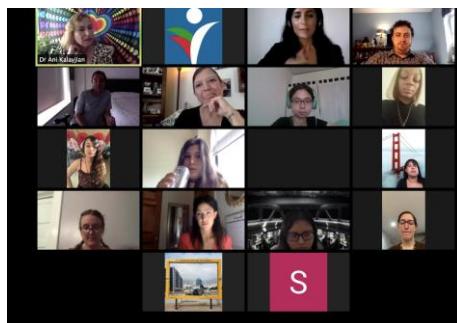
Sowmya Kshatriya shared her gratitude for the three years that she has volunteered with MeaningfulWorld. She had volunteered for a mission in Haiti where she collaborated with residents on an outreach program. During this experience she found that kindness and connection are incredibly important in any situation because we are all human. She concluded by talking about the hard and intense nature of humanitarian work and how immersing yourself in the moment while working on a mission “lets one feel one with the pulse of a nation.”

Dr. Kalayjian then shared a traumatic situation that had happened on one of MeaningfulWorld’s humanitarian missions in Lebanon. The Israeli Military had bombed the building next door to where the volunteers were, causing a shock, fear, and confusion. She noticed the similarities between this event and the recent explosion in Beirut. In both events she recognized the resilience of the Lebanese people, especially in these times of tragedies. During both hard times, communities came together to give support, healing, and strength. She then sent heartfelt prayers to the people of Beirut in the wake of this crisis & emphasized the importance of giving donations to Lebanon, as Meaningfulworld is planning to organize a relief mission.

Next, Rev Julie Lira shared how she has learned so much when connecting with people, especially by listening to survivor stories. She shared the importance of coming together with the team while on humanitarian missions, finding that sharing what everyone’s day was like in the evenings as an important part of processing what everyone experienced.

A video clip about MeaningfulWorld 2017 Puerto Rican mission in response to Hurricane Maria was shown next. MeaningfulWorld had traveled to Puerto Rico to work towards empowerment, healing and transforming trauma due to both the ecological and social crisis of devastating hurricanes. Workshops were held working with local organizers to facilitate emotional release and healing through the 7-step Integrative Healing Model.

Shayla Tumbling followed, speaking about how MeaningfulWorld has impacted her life long after the actual mission work was completed. Shayla expressed about the energy that connects us through life and how the mission changed her perspective. Shayla spoke of how hard the volunteers of MeaningfulWorld work while on missions; they work long hours with intense daily processing, and they balance it with enjoyment of dancing, cultural immersion, and enjoying local cuisines. She shared about Dr. Kalayjian’s high energy levels and how even while they worked hard, they also enjoyed laughter and fun, as well as engaged in all important self-care.



Lorraine Simmons shared her memories from the multiple missions in Armenia, Haiti, and Puerto Rico. Lorraine experienced being taken out of her comfort zone and how this empowered her to be confident in her relief work. She expressed how mission work is about helping people who need the mental health resources and guidance to be empowered too.

A video clip was then shared about the Meaningful World mission to Haiti. This highlighted how to transform generational trauma as well as Horizontal Violence. The goal of all Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Missions is to secure sustainable programs to serve the community, including making international chapters (such as the chapters in Haiti, Puerto Rico, Africa, Armenia, and Canada) and inspiring and giving local people the mental health coping tools to continue to heal and share what they have learned with their families and communities.

Dr. Kalayjian concluded the celebration by stressing the importance of togetherness; she shared our motto: Shared sorrow is half sorrow, while shared joy is double joy!

MeaningfulWorld's Research Coordinator shared about supporting our latest research project involving a survey related to COVID-19 and its mental and emotional health effects. We have close to 300 completed surveys and our goal is a 1000. We urge you to please share the survey to help us reach our goal.

Remember our motto: ***When one helps another, both become stronger!***

It was an emotional event, with lots of joy, laughter, and even tears shed, as some recalled the challenging traumas we endured while on a humanitarian relief mission. A moment of silence followed with appreciation, gratitude, and remembrance. A certificate of appreciation was emailed to each volunteer.

MeaningfulWorld celebrates and appreciates all those who have volunteered their time, health and sometimes lives for humanitarian causes.