



Association for Trauma Outreach and Prevention (ATOP)

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United Nations Commission of Status of Women

Nurturing Emotional Intelligence & Psychoeducation: Mindful Use of Technology

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Why are women paid less than men? Why are there so many women killed in the hands of their spouses? How do the mass traumas impact equity and equality? These questions, and much more were discussed at MeaningfulWorld's virtual parallel symposium at the *United Nations 67th Commission on the Status of Women*. The symposium centered around the theme of Nurturing Emotional Intelligence & Psychoeducation: Mindful Use of Technology, and featured a diverse esteemed international speaker, including Prof. Hrant Avanesyan who is Head of the General Psychology Chair, Yerevan State University and the Director of Psychological Scientific Research Center. Along with being the Founder and President of the Society of Psychologists of Armenia, who spoke on issues in Armenia, Prof. Maria Del Pilar Grazioso an educator in her own right with a background as a psychologist. Receiving education as a Licenciatura in Psychology from Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, M.A in Developmental and Educational Psychology from University of Houston, Doctoral Degree from Universidad San Luis in Argentina and Specialty in Integrative Psychotherapy from Fundacion Aigle, Argentina, who focused on issues within Guatemala, Prof. Khawla Abu Baker a retired educator and founder of the first clinic to treat couple and family problems in Arab society in 1997. Holding a BA degree in Sociology and Anthropology, BA and MA degree in Educational Counseling, a Ph.D. degree in Couple and family Therapy, representing Palestine, and Prof. Frances Boulon, an Adjunct professor at UPR, Ana G. Méndez University, Albizu University and Interamerican University of Puerto Rico, representing Puerto Rico.

Andrew Dolinar, Vice President of ATOP MeaningfulWorld, welcomed over 60 participants registered for the symposium. He then introduced the president and Founder of ATOP MeaningfulWorld Dr. Ani Kalayjian. Dr. Ani shared a poem entitled Gratitude to Mother Earth. The poem illuminates love, understanding and connection to mother earth emphasizing gratitude to Mother Earth herself and for what she has provided for us to thrive even through difficult times especially when looking at the connection between Mother Earth and women. To give a small excerpt of this poem:

I'm grateful for all that you do to nurture love and protect us.

Thank you for being consistently supportive, compassionate, and present.

When I'm feeling tired and weary you energize me with brother son,

empowering me within and energizing my body, mind, and soul.

*When I'm feeling sad and abandoned you guide me to an almond tree.
The trunk empowers me and supports my back,
while the branches give me shade then comfort.
When I'm feeling used and abused, I submerge myself
in the bosom of your sea just like a womb.
Not only do you wash my miseries away but also
nurture, feed and caress me to wholeness.
When I'm feeling hopeless and disenchanted you lead me
to a beautiful sunrise watching the sun come up fills me
with hope, perseverance and faith and let me know that all is okay.*

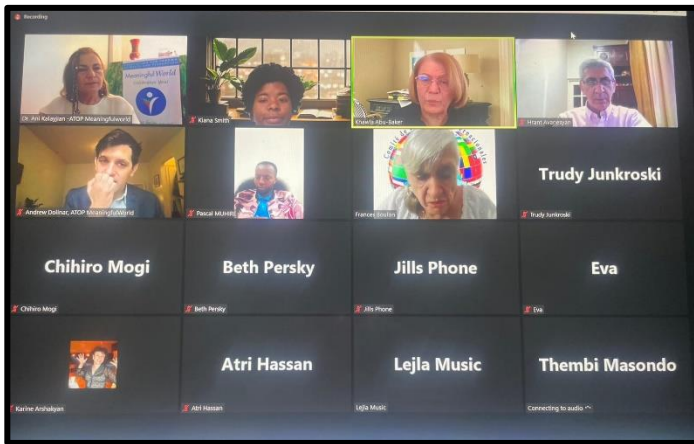
The speakers emphasized the UN Sustainable Development Goals #5 that speaks towards achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls & Goal #10, centered towards reducing inequality within and among countries. Through these goals they outlined the challenges that they face. For example, in Puerto Rico, Professor Frances Boulon shared that some of the challenges they presently face in

Puerto Rico is the continued effects of Hurricane Maria, disparities in terms of compensation for women, increased gender-based violence, lack of awareness of mental health, generational trauma of colonization, and lack of access to technology. Additionally, she mentioned that Puerto Rico is facing issues of poverty, ethnic tensions, and gender inequalities. Professor Boulon mentioned with great emphasis that in order to address these challenges, strategies such as cycle education, mentoring and teaching young men and boys about gender empowerment, and creating multicultural competencies training have been suggested.

In Armenia Professor Hrant Avanesyan highlights that some of the challenges they face there is increased gender-based violence, especially throughout the pandemic. The lack of awareness or knowledge of how mental health is relevant, being exposed to several and very significant trauma, a history of trauma, and human made disasters such as the War with neighboring Azerbaijan and its blockade the last 3 months, have been detrimental. Additionally, there is a lack of access to technology in villages, and women and girls are disproportionately challenged by these difficulties due to taking on multiple tasks in the home and having little help from partners. To address these challenges, there is a need for more education and mental health awareness, that is why MeaningfulWorld assisted Armenia establishing the first Psi Chi and the first Union for Psychologists in Armenia. When looking at the challenges in Guatemala, Professor Maria Del Pilar Grazioso shared with us that in Guatemala they are currently faced with poverty, gender inequality, a lack of knowledge and awareness of mental health, and a lack of access to technology. While also combatting a history of trauma, and a colonial pattern of developing interventions. While in Palestine Professor Khawla Abu Baker shared that the challenges faced in Palestine include the lack of access to quality education, the lack of access



The screenshot shows a Zoom presentation slide. On the left is a graphic of the Puerto Rican flag. On the right, the text reads: 'Women and Technology in Puerto Rico', 'March 16, 2023', 'via zoom'. Below this is a section titled 'Lessons learned, challenges and empowerment' followed by the name 'Frances Boulon, PhD School Psychologist' and a bulleted list: 'Adjunct Faculty, University of Puerto Rico' and 'San Juan Puerto Rico'. On the far right, there are four small video thumbnails of participants.



to health care, the lack of access to technology, the lack of access to economic resources and opportunities, gender discrimination, and the impact of politics, among other issues.

But even through the daunting challenges that each of their respective countries face both during each of their lectures and more in depth within the question-and-answer period the speakers were able to provide possible strategies to help combat these issues and challenges they face. Some of the strategies

mentioned included developing programs at the undergraduate level to train promotions or facilitators, investing in mental health services, increasing access to education, fostering multicultural competencies, providing forums to speak about emotional intelligence, using technology to connect people, supporting a more robust electrical system 9 Puerto Rico), embracing cultural humility, teaching gender equality, mentoring young people, and using children's literature to promote socialization of the new generation. This forward-thinking conversation also allowed further networking for Dr. Ani was able to jump start some of the initiatives by providing materials translated in their perspective languages that can be used to help those struggling both mentally and emotionally & building mental health foundations.

They also shared the importance of adapting strategies to meet specific country needs and cultural differences, as well as the need for international collaboration, social media engagement, and multicultural competencies training. Notably, they highlighted the importance of engaging men and boys in conversations of gender empowerment and equality, as well as addressing the challenges women face, such as the dual burden of work and family.

At the conclusion of the symposium, the speakers expressed several concerns and challenges, and conveyed their desire to create a collective initiative to address emotional intelligence and psychoeducation, being mindful of country-specific needs. These messages reinforced the SDG #17 which emphasizes partnership to achieve the Goals. Dr. Ani asked a pointed question as to how MeaningfulWorld can be of support to transform these inequalities and teach Emotional intelligence to be used in K-12. Other recommendations were supporting similar initiatives towards education and access for girls and women to not only be able to provide and support themselves mentally and physically but also bring awareness to help combat the issues at hand.

Overall, the symposium showcased the need for emotional intelligence and psychoeducation and the mindful use of technology in this context. The professors' passionate and vigorous speeches, despite coming from different backgrounds and experiences, had a powerful core that testified to the importance of a holistic and collaborative approach to addressing global challenges. Through their work promoting mental health education and emotional intelligence, and empowering women worldwide, MeaningfulWorld is making a significant impact on individuals and communities worldwide. The symposium successfully promoted the importance of empathy, unity, and cultural sensitivity in tackling global challenges, and serves as a shining example of how organizations can work together to create a more equitable and just world. As MeaningfulWorld's motto states,

"When one helps another, **BOTH** become stronger!"

