



**Association for Trauma Outreach &
Prevention (ATOP)**
www.meaningfulworld.com

Annual Mind-Body Conference & Graduation of MeaningfulWorld Ambassadors for Humanitarian Relief

5 June 2025

Trishla Saran & Dr. Ani Kalayjian

What are the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)? What are the requirements to be a MeaningfulWorld Ambassador? How can we continue to create and maintain peace in times of conflict and wars? On 5 June, 2025, The room of Fordham University was filled with banners displaying positive messages, fresh white roses, flags, candles, and a delicious reception with a cake with MeaningfulWorld's logo celebrating the 30th Krieger contest for Genocide Prevention. The conference opened with sharing sage essential oil to cleanse the air around and energy within. ATOP MeaningfulWorld organized and presented an informative, poignant, and timely program. The theme of the program was the Annual Mind-Body-Eco-Spirit Festival, the Graduation of Humanitarian Ambassadors, Krieger 30th anniversary, & celebrating the achievements of those who have dedicated their time volunteering at MeaningfulWorld. Guests received a warm reception from **Trishla Saran**, Education Coordinator of ATOP MeaningfulWorld who introduced **Dr. Ani Kalayjian**, the Founder and President of ATOP MeaningfulWorld. Dr. Kalayjian gave a brief overview of the organization's outreach practicing the SDG's in 50 countries & 26 states in the USA.

David Young, an award-winning artist, author and musician, performed an invocation "Choose Love", which set the stage for an organic development of harmony for all speakers. **Professor Takooshian**, a psychology professor from Fordham University, was recognized for his contributions. He explained how the Krieger Award was named after Fr. Krieger who survived the Ottoman Turkish Genocide of the Armenians, his nephew, Dr. Gergerian, and Dr. Kalayjian. He included three influential individuals, since both Fr. Krieger & Dr. Gergerian have transitioned, he presented Dr. Kalayjian with an outstanding achievement award by Fordham University's Psychology Department. Dr. Kalyjian focused on the organization's efforts to engage

youth in genocide prevention and human rights education through various initiatives, including essay contests, rap, poetry, and short films. She highlighted our partnership with the United Nations and our dedicated work on Sustainable Development Goals, particularly focusing on education, health, gender equality, equity, peace, ecological health, and partnership.



Professor Takooshian honoring Dr. Ani for her tremendous work at ATOP MeaningfulWorld

The meeting focused on honoring graduates of the MeaningfulWorld Ambassadors. Graduates included **Sharon Feldine**, **Diana Shipman**, **Paulina Sipilian**, **Sena Ummak**, and **Carmen Velez**, each sharing their personal journeys and goals. The graduation ceremony concluded with the presentation of certificates & special hand-painted scarves in recognition of the graduates' achievements. Graduates must complete 4 stages of didactic theories about self-care, disaster relief, trauma healing, peace building, conflict transformation, energy healing, moving to release trauma, emotional intelligence, and mindfulness. They lead a healing support group, conduct soul-surfing, present in front of classmates, and write an integration paper. As an Ambassador, they are ready to join humanitarian relief programs around the world.



2025 Graduates of MeaningfulWorld Ambassadors (who were present) with Co-Chairs

Professor **Helen Verdeli** was introduced as a key figure in humanitarian relief work and psychotherapy research. She is an Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University, and the Founder and Director of the

Teachers College Global Mental Health Lab. She discussed the mission of the lab, focusing on reducing mental health burdens in low-resource settings worldwide, including both poor countries and rich countries with underserved populations. The lab conducts research, builds capacity, and consults with organizations like UNHCR, using locally adapted versions of interventions like interpersonal psychotherapy, which are translated into multiple languages and delivered by local experts. She emphasized the importance of balancing fidelity to the original intervention with cultural and contextual adaptation, using methods such as task sharing and locally relevant assessment tools to ensure sustainability and effectiveness. Professor Verdeli discussed the importance of adapting mental health strategies to different cultural contexts, particularly in addressing grief and ambiguous loss. She highlighted the development of the apprenticeship model to build capacity and phase out mental health services, with emphasis on evaluating programs through randomized controlled trials. Finally, she emphasized the importance of equity and justice in mental health services, particularly for marginalized groups, and the need to respect the rights of individuals with disabilities. Professor Verdeli was honored by Dr. Ani Kalayjian for her outstanding humanitarian work with a medal and a gift.

Professor **Kumru Toktamis**, an Associate Professor in Political Sociology at Pratt Institute, discussed the intersection of violence and education, highlighting how extreme violence and diminishing educational resources coincide during times of uncertainty. She explored the correspondence between Einstein and Freud in 1932, where Freud addressed the instinctive nature of violence and proposed human cooperation and connectivity as solutions. She emphasized the importance of acknowledging humanity's violent instincts while reinforcing the need for compassion and solidarity to overcome these tendencies, suggesting that social conditions can be both competitive and compassionate. Professor Toktamis discussed Dr. Greg Tewksbury's four tenets of critical pedagogy and healing, emphasizing the importance of balancing individual and community perspectives. She highlighted Tewksbury's influence from Paulo Freire and explained how healing involves collective reflection, creativity, and the development of a relational home. The discussion also touched on the concept of presence as a bridge between personal experience and social context, and the need to understand and transform social relations of domination. Dr. Ani Kalyjian honored Prof. Toktamis for her collaboration with MeaningfulWorld in the field of education about genocide and its origins. Dr. Kalayjian honored Prof. Toktamis with a medal and a gift.

Dr. Kalayjian then introduced **Dr. Michele Bell** (The Grief Warrior), an author, end-of-life practitioner, and intuitive life coach specializing in soul transformation, who delivered a powerful speech about grief, healing, and transformation, sharing personal experiences and offering insights into the healing process. She emphasized the importance of listening, pausing, and allowing oneself to feel in order to transform grief into purpose. She also highlighted the need for a spiritual renaissance to foster empathy, compassion, and peace in the world. The speech concluded with a call for attendees to embrace their sensitivity as a strength and to engage in inner work to contribute to collective healing. Dr. Bell transformed her multiple

personal losses into a successful career to help others. She was honored for healing people with grief and for her incredible support for those suffering.



Prof. Lena Verdeli



Prof. Kumru Toktamis



Dr. Michele Bell

We then focused on acknowledging and celebrating team members who have volunteered at MeaningfulWorld. **Natalia Tomassini, MEd, LDTC**, was recognized for her 10 years of service as an Ombudsperson and her involvement as a Reiki Master. **Rev. Dana Mark, LMSW**, was acknowledged for joining our missions to Haiti and her upcoming doctorate in divinity. **Dr. Sowmya Kshatriya**, who is now a psychologist and adjunct professor, was celebrated for dedicating 8 years of service to MeaningfulWorld. **Mary Ng Tedjasukmana, LCSW**, was recognized for being our visionary speaker and Reiki practitioner. **Mary Ryan Garcia, LCSW**, was recognized for her service to MeaningfulWorld as a proctor as well as a supporter, **LaShann Selby, MPH** was recognized for graduating as an Ambassador & serving as an Intern Coordinator.



Volunteer Honorees present with Dr. Ani



David Young playing 2 flutes at once

David Young then guided everyone into a 15 minute meditation, playing peaceful music on his flutes. Cake was cut by the graduates and distributed to the guests. Convocation was led by **Guru Dileepkumar**, the Global Chairman and Main NGO Representative of the World Yoga Community to the United Nations. The conch was blown at the end of our program symbolizing

our reverence for the divine and the purification of our inner and outer space. He reinforced the importance of our partnership, and committed to continued collaboration.



David Young playing a guitar



Guruji blowing a conch shell for peace

The speakers, the graduates, the honorees, and attendees gathered for photos and a ceremony. The event included presentations and the distribution of pouches with a timely message: "Love wins". Dr. Kalayjian emphasized the importance of sharing the event's teachings with a minimum of three other people, and asked those to share with 3 others, to spread positive vibrations and transformations.



Interns & volunteers of MeaningfulWorld ~ Faculty with co-chairs



Overall, the ATOP MeaningfulWorld annual conference succeeded in instilling a renewed sense of responsibility with love, passion, and hope. Throughout the event, the theme "**When one helps another, BOTH become stronger**" resonated, highlighting the communal and supportive approach advocated by ATOP MeaningfulWorld. The conference not only educated attendees on the historical and contemporary issues but also fostered a sense of community and shared responsibility among participants.

Below kindly find expressions from the audience and faculty:

- Dr. Ani: “I was so impressed that although speakers were to address partnership for UN Sustainable Development Goals, & healing ❤️ they organically built on one another’s energy & on ‘Choose love’ meditation and all talked about love, empathy, compassion, and nurturing healing communities! They all emphasized that healing is a community responsibility! To tame the destructive & competitive ego instinct within us, we must increase the healing light within & build a healing community, such as MeaningfulWorld!”
- Janet Marcarian: "Dr. Ani is the carrier of light, empathy, and love! She embodies the innate gift of compassion and camaraderie! Her leadership is so inspirational and palpable, which in retrospect gives us hope for a better world! “



Happy and informed audience waving with gratitude with the celebratory cake

- Maro Partamian: “I went to Fordham University to hear great healing messages of guest professors and award winners headed by Dr. Kalayjian at MeaningfulWorld. I enjoyed it immensely, it was extremely inspirational and I am so happy that I was able to attend. Each speaker's message was full of compassion, empathy, and LOVE.”
- Dr. Sowmya Kshtriya: “The program was so beautiful Dr. Ani!!! Your spirit is magnanimous - you attract the best souls!!! Everyone and I felt rejuvenated after the event!”
- Prof. Kumru Toktamis: "Thank you for organizing the compassionate Annual Conference & graduation. It was lovely, inspiring, and the MeaningfulWorld graduation scarves are so beautiful. Meditation & chanting was so relaxing, I didn't want to leave. When I went home, I slept soundly!"

Our next event is our upcoming **Garden Gratitude & Healing party on Saturday 26 July**, which will include 7 various integrative healing private sessions, live DJ, international foods, film, fireworks, gifts, and much more.

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