

FFWPU South London, UK Family Festival: Families and Inclusive Societies

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An enthusiastic gathering of about 50 people attended a Family Festival event which commemorated the UN International Day of Families on Sat 26 May 2018. The participants enjoyed a stimulating programme of talks, group discussions, awards and entertainment, as well as food and fellowship, held under the joint auspices of FFWPU, WFWP and UPF and hosted at the South London Peace Embassy in Thornton Heath, London. The theme was also considerate of the migrants to the UK as well the youth.

The proceedings opened with the MC, Martina Coombs, explaining the UN theme for this year's Day of Families observance: "Families and Inclusive Societies", providing the platform for our two featured speakers to offer their profound reflections on this important topic. The first speaker, Dr Zohra Zaidi from the WFWP, suggested that immigrant families can observe several key principles to enable them adjust to life in Britain, including overcoming the language barrier, being open-minded, abandoning stereotypes and mixing with British people in brother/sisterhood, while at the same time retaining one's identity and moral codes. Her statement: "Peace and happiness at home can overcome any obstacle that the family faces", encapsulates the importance of family life in adapting to life in new circumstances.

The second speaker, Sheridan Manga from UPFI, described a formula for building resilient families in the face of disruptors such as social media, adverse morals, materialism and unhealthy lifestyles. His assertion that "the family is a jigsaw where the pieces are constantly changing shape but somehow always fit together" elegantly summarizes the life journey that families undertake, and he went on to mention the capacity for families to share experiences with other families to create inclusive societies.

Following the speaker presentations, the audience broke up into 3 working groups who deliberated questions related to the state of the family unit, covering the nature of the extended family, the attitude of youth towards the family, and adaptation to a different culture. Separate reports have been compiled for each of the working group discussions, which are also available from the organisers.

The programme additionally included several awards to worthy individuals and couples. UPF presented Ambassador for Peace awards to Denise Taitt and Cynthia Henry for their sterling work in the community. Exemplary Couple awards were conferred on the two main speakers and Nilesh Koria by the Family Federation.

Beautiful performances from young musicians and a colourful dance by Dr Jyoti Rathod and her friend Sima provided entertaining interludes during the proceedings. The event concluded with a wonderful meal with delicious Indian culinary contributions from the Koria family, to round off a lovely celebration.

Reported by Lance Gardiner
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