



Advocacy Update

Sent March 4, 2010

Aid Earthquake Victims

The Joint Distribution Committee Jewish Coalition for Disaster Relief (JCDR) has convened a coalition to assist the victims of the massive earthquake in Chile.

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society tells us that although visas to come to the United States have been approved for approximately 55,000 Haitian family members of U.S. citizens and legal immigrants, because of family reunification visa annual limits, they must wait in Haiti for years for available visas. Humanitarian parole would allow them to join their families and wait for their visa here in the U.S., rather than in Haiti.

Restoring Dignity: Women of Faith Leadership Summit

Earlier this week, on March 1-2, 2010, Religions for Peace (RfP) held the exciting Restoring Dignity: Women of Faith Leadership Summit, at which its North American Women of Faith Network was launched. The summit mobilized multi-religious action to confront violence and advance human dignity, a network initiative. Other initiatives are developing young women leaders, as well as addressing maternal health concerns and HIV/AIDS.

A panel on religious teachings and violence against women was keynoted by the Rev. Dr. Marie Fortune, founder of the Faith Trust Institute, which provides multi-religious and multicultural resources to help break the cycle of family violence. She spoke of the prevalence of abuse against women in our religious communities and how their patriarchal perspectives and power structures have contributed to its incidence.

WRJ credited with initial breakthrough:

Rabbi Zari Weiss, from the Women's Rabbinic Network, spoke about our movement's resolutions and efforts to end domestic violence and abuse of women in the 1990s and said that WRJ had initiated these efforts with our 1983 resolution on domestic violence.

Following the meeting, Janet Stovin, WRJ's delegate to Non-Governmental Organization/ Department of Public Information at the U.N. noted that one of the goals of the network is encourage religious feminists to work within their own communities and across faith lines to deal with violence against women and the other network initiatives and to urge women clergy give them visibility from the pulpit. Janet said "the summit revealed that we need to demonstrate the power and strength of women of faith and to emphasize that we are stronger together."

Women, Faith & Development Alliance: WRJ Praised

At the Tuesday afternoon Women, Faith & Development Alliance (WFDA), working session, panelists presented an overview, activities, and achievements of the ninety partners (including WRJ) of the alliance. *One panelist, Dr. Yaser Haddara, chairman of the board of directors, Islamic Relief, in discussing WFDA advocacy efforts singled out WRJ advocacy in behalf of women and girls around the world.* Constance Kreshtool and Judith M. Hertz, former WRJ presidents were in attendance and were surprised and gratified by his comments.

Next week: What can your sisterhood do to address violence against women in your community, North America, and the world? Program ideas, resources, advocacy, and links for like-minded organizations will be provided next week.

For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit www.wrj.org/social-justice-home