

Religions for Peace Restoring Dignity

Women of Faith Leadership Summit

March 2, 2010

Brenda Smith- Talking Points

To: Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General, Religions for Peace, Ms. Jacqueline Ogega, Director, Women's Mobilization Program, Women and Men of Faith:
Good Morning...

In this very room filled with women of faith, there are world changers, pace setters, advocates and public policy influencers who are concerned about the basic needs of all of God's children—of every condition and of every faith.

I begin this morning by sharing with you three great women of faith—two whom all of you know, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, whom many of you may know, whose shadows demonstrated that to achieve justice for all in our global village, we must give unselfishly of ourselves and consider the impact and importance of advancing a society for all ages--A worldwide culture that appreciates that caring for the needs of the defenseless child is as vital as attending to the needs of the older adult, and one that applies the resources to do so. Are we considering centralized goals and visionary ideas...equal rights, equal access, economic equity, or something simple to some, but of great interest to others—the power of hope, that serve to galvanize the energies of tens of thousands of people to make significant changes, not only in this country, and worldwide, but also in our own back yards.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta profoundly stated: “By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus.”

As women of faith, our accomplishments may be voluminous and wonderful, our notoriety widespread and celebrated, our intentions may be bold and visionary, as I imagine is the case of women in this room; but we must not have neglected to care for, to nurture and prune the essence, the character, because it is in the heart of who we are, and what we stand for, its in our spirit, and our faith that we go beyond mere good intentions. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt reminded us that “...it isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it.”

As women of faith, we know that true leadership begins by taking a look inside- by learning that we do for others, what we invest and deposit in the lives of others, in lifting up a fallen sister, reaching out to bring in, reaching down to lift up a fallen woman, a child, a family, that, my friends is what we must be all about. When will sister hurts; we all hurt!

We must mobilize, we must build coalitions to find better ways to make better lives and use the tools, the talents, the experiences and networks that are at our very fingertips; and as stated by the Deputy Secretary-General, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro on March 1, 2010 at the opening of CSW 54, “we must move from commitment to action.”

As women of faith, we must continue to harness the power that is within us; we must continue to build partnerships, to build synergies...foster collaborations among our great women and men of faith and civil society. What will be our galvanizing mission...what goals will bring us together? There is a plan right before us. Right before us are the Millennium Development Goals on which we have been working, but we must also ensure that every member of our faith-based organizations have the opportunity to work hand in hand for the execution of these goals. As women of faith, we must continue to turn to the Higher Power, knowing that with that higher power, all things are possible. We must take special care to ensure that the needs of deprived persons, in our own backyards and in the world, are being served, and we must ask ourselves whether those who are being served are also growing as persons. Do they, while being served, become healthier, do they become wiser, freer, do they become more autonomous. Will the least privileged in society benefit, or at least, not be further deprived? We have such a magnificent responsibility, but a great opportunity to make a difference in our communities and in this world.

We are aware that as women of faith you continue to do such great work and have made a difference in the lives of so many. The list of efforts and work among women of faith is ongoing, and it must be.

According to the Deputy Secretary General, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, “When women are represented, societies are more peaceful and stable.

I mentioned another great woman of faith, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, an educator, a leader of women, an advisor to several American presidents, distinguished as one of the 50 greatest women ever created, a friend and colleague of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt who, among other things, left us faith in her Last Will and Testament. She stated:

“I leave you faith. Faith is the first factor in a life devoted to service. Without faith, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is impossible. Faith in God is the greatest power, but great, too, is faith in oneself...”

Finally, As my friend, The Reverend Wently Phipps wrote and set to music a song called “Ordinary People.”

WE ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE; HOWEVER, AS WOMEN OF FAITH, WE ARE CALLED TO DO EXTRAORDINARY WORK.

Ordinary People; God uses plain, old ordinary people. He uses people just like you and me who are willing to do as He commands. He uses people who will give their all; it doesn't matter how small your all may seem to you, because little becomes

much, when you place it in the Master's Hand. Just like that little lad who gave Jesus all he had, and the multitude he fed with the fish and loaves of bread; When what YOU have might not seem much, but when you yield it to the touch of the Master's Hand, then your life will never be the same. Just ordinary people, God uses ordinary people just like you and me...."

Wentley Phipps