

World Federation of Ecumenical Women
CSW65 International Convention
“Girls On Fire” Pt. 1
March 17, 2021 via ZOOM

I attended Morning Worship everyday from 8:00 – 9:00 am.

The workshop I attended was Girls On Fire - End Gender Based Violence Pt. 1 & 2

Presentee: Claire Jackson, an 18 year old senior at Brum High School in Brum, NJ. She is President of her chapter of Girls International, an international organization working to empower and educate middle and high school students to advocate for human rights, its equality and universal education in the us and around the world. She told a story of a classmate/friend who was a survival of domestic violence. Realizing that girls ae being abused and not talking about it and no one is doing anything about it. This caused her to do something. With the stay at home mandate resulting from the pandemic, many of those who are abused are forced to stay at home with their abuser. She started a chapter in her school that can be a safe haven for girls to come, talk about what’s happening to them and receive help. Girls all over the world are suffering from Gender Based violence and chapters like this are opening the door to end the silence.

A young lady named **Sonia from Nigeria** gave her testimony of her journey of being kidnapped, sold out in prostitution and her final escape.

Panel:

R Evon Idahosa, Esq., a Nigerian, founder and Executive Director of Path Finders Justice Initiative, and also a US Attorney, spoke of modern day slavery in Africa. She is a survivor of human trafficking and a part of the group #NotForSale End Human Trafficking campaign which has assisted in the rescue of hundreds of youth caught in sex-trafficking in South Africa, bring back our girls campaign in Nigeria, nominated in 2016 by the White House as a change maker. She spoke of the abduction of 276 young women ranging from 15-15, in Nigeria from school in. They were taken by terrorist, raped and sold into prostitution. She resigned her job in New York to work in this area.

Rev. Sally N. MacNichol, PhD – Co-executive director of CONNECT, a New York City non profit organization dedicated to preventing interpersonal gender violence and promoting gender justice. Has worked in this area for over 3 decades. She started the battered women’s group and worked at opening shelters. In the 80’s and 90’s people didn’t want to talk about this, so she reached out to the faith community for help.

Not on the Panel:

Rima Salah – A Jordanian high ranking UN Official, former deputy executive director for UNICEF, worked with rape victims from all over the world.

Professor Ezra – Expert in religion and gender violence.

The panel was presented with questions from the audience relating to their expertise.

Rev. Dionne Boissiere ended the session by asking the panel: In order to win violence against women and girls, and all forms of gender-based violence, we must _____. A thought-provoking question!

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Risk Takers Journeying With Us

Greetings came from:

Victoria Edmonds – Working Group on Girls WGD

Rev. Nicole Ashwood – World Council of Churches who gave greetings and explained what Thursdays in Black was all about. She gave stats of the number of women who are either abused or killed as a result of domestic violence. She said that in addition to praying for those who are abused, we must also pray for the abusers.

Rev. Dionne Boissiere announced that interpreters were available in French and Spanish.

Act Alliance gave a report on girls in South Asia. Act Alliance is a global alliance of more than 145 churches and related organizations working together in over 120 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people. She stated that young girls need to educate themselves on gender based violence.

Panel:

Rev. Aunderia Alexander, Esq. – National Council of Churches and Associate General Secretary Action and Advocacy for Justice and Peace. She leads the National Council of Churches in its initiative to reverse the rising trend of mass incarceration in the United States. She stated that there is power in our collective rage. Speak up, be an advocate, engage with others.

Claire Jackson – President Girls Learned International (GLI) & **Twanna Brown** – Vice President Girls Learned International (GLI) Girls Learned International (GLI) empowers and educates middle and high school students to advocate for human rights, equality and universal education in the United States and around the world. GLI is building a movement of informed advocates for universal girls and a new generation of leaders and activists for social change. Both young ladies advocate to end gender base violence. Ms. Brown is a survivor and told her story as a survivor of domestic violence.

Allies:

Dr. Ulysses Burley, III (UBTHECURE LLC.) & Bishop Fernando Martinez Diaz (Lutheran World Federation) – Allies to the cause. Stated that we should be more vocal, campaign against gender violence become holy agitators. Dr. Burley stated that he had to learn to relinquish power where possible. Don't just talk the talk, but walk the walk.

Claire Jackson came back and said that we have to get angry, educate yourself, fight against the abuse. Act Alliance ended with a video to encourage you to get involved #ThursdaysInBlack

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Dr. Valerie A. Maness
AME Zion Church