

10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY



A Tale of Peace

September 20, 2022 NYC

DINNER & AUCTION

**WPDI Gathers World Leaders and Youth
Peacemakers in New York to Celebrate Ten Years
of Action for Peace and Reconciliation**



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“A Tale of Peace” WPDI 10th Anniversary Gala

On September 20, 2022 in New York City, Forest Whitaker held “A Tale of Peace”, a gala dinner and auction aimed to mark the 10th anniversary of WPDI and renew the tradition of organizing high profile events in support of WPDI in the context of the UN Week.

Forest Whitaker created WPDI in 2012 to help young women and men address the challenges of their community in places plagued by endless cycles of armed violence and poverty. At that time, the very notion of mobilizing youths as partners in “adults’ business” widely departed from established approaches, and remained an original path, hence the need to continue reaching out for partners and donors in a

creative and stimulating way. This was the main goal of “A Tale of Peace”.

Mirroring the diversity of Forest Whitaker’s careers, the guests gathered at the Gala represented a variety of universes, including the arts – notably from the cast of “Godfather of Harlem”, the United Nations, the peacebuilding and development field, the public and private sectors at large, as well as civil society, including sports. The rich program of the evening featured interventions by leaders in the peace and development world, artistic performance by artists – Ondara and Dionne Warwick – as well as sessions featuring young women and men from WPDI, who are the core of its action.

“Forest always finds a way to find humanity in things - and that’s why I support him totally.”

Gayle King

Opening the event as the host, Gayle King, journalist for CBS Mornings and Oprah Daily, praised the work and achievements of Forest Whitaker and his teams for peace, highlighting the approach of WPDI: “When we invest in these young people, they can become some of the world’s most effective peacebuilders.”

After the projection of a short movie on the programs of WPDI, she moved to the first

chapter of “A Tale of Peace”, an interview with Forest Whitaker, shedding light on the first ten years of WPDI and the coming decade. Their exchange covered the origins of WPDI in Forest’s personal journey as a young man and an artist as well as his vision for the future of WPDI, for which he expressed very high expectations in terms of outreach to more beneficiaries and expansion into new countries.



Gayle King:

“Let’s talk about WPDI’s next decade. What is your vision for WPDI’s future?”

Forest Whitaker:

“In one word? It’s big. I envision WPDI building off our success to achieve exponential growth... and start a movement for peace around the world. It’s ambitious, sure. But we see how peace is contagious—how peacemakers go on to create more peacemakers in their communities, who then go on to do the same... So I know it’s possible.”



The second chapter of the Gala opened after a performance of Ondara, a Kenya-born singer-songwriter who represents a new generation of artists that dazzle audiences both on the scene and online. During this chapter, the achievements and ambitions of WPDI were magnified by leaders and longtime partners of WPDI, representing the United Nations – with Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, and Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO - and the business world – with Mr. Hans Vestberg, CEO and Chairman of Verizon and a partner of WPDI since its inception. Video messages by long-

time friends of Forest Whitaker were also projected during the chapter.

Ms. Oprah Winfrey, talk show host, television producer, actress, author, and philanthropist, commended Forest Whitaker for his determination to empower young women and men living in places affected by conflict and violence, and pledged to renew her support to WPDI. Francis F. Coppola, eminent film director and longtime friend of Forest Whitaker, also participated in the Gala through a video message in which he congratulated him and offered to have an experience in his California vineyard to be auctioned during the event.



"Your work helping ex-child soldiers overcome unfathomable trauma and pain and return to their communities as agents of change is another powerful example. Your initiative is a beacon of hope in a world in turmoil."

Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General

"Over the past decade, Forest has used his ability to touch others, to connect to what is deep inside all human beings, to foster exchange, understanding, empathy."

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO

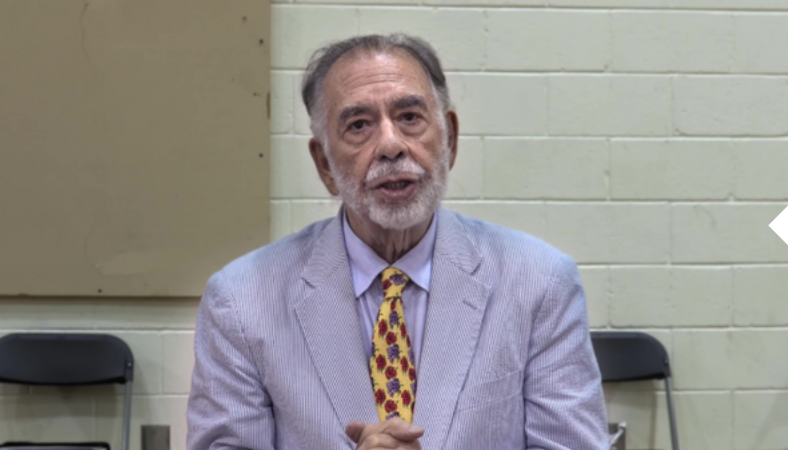


"WPI under Forest's leadership delivers concrete, scalable peace-keeping solutions that are sure to impact generations to come."

Hans Vestberg, CEO of Verizon

"I wanted you all to know how much I value this incredible organization."

Oprah Winfrey, Host, producer, actress



"With all my heart, I want to praise Forest for what he has done."

**Francis F. Coppola,
Film director, producer, and screenwriter**



As one of the highlights of the evening, the third chapter featured an interactive session between Forest Whitaker and four young leaders from WPDI's programs: Khadija Mayman from Cape Town, South Africa, Victor Santiz from Chiapas, Mexico, Ajwok Mary Valentino a South Sudanese refugee living in Uganda, and James Yata Ambrose from South Sudan.

After introducing themselves and explaining how WPDI had influenced their lives, they engaged in a conversation with Forest, discussing on their personal stories with conflict, their commitment to peace and their dreams for the future. The four youths made a strong

impression on the audience, demonstrating exemplary resilience and courage in the face of their childhood experiences – ranging from civil war for James and Mary to poverty and marginalization for Khadija and Victor. It was also striking that, for the differences that could be found among their personal stories, they all agreed that WPDI had provided them with resources and opportunities to carry out dreams they had entertained sometimes from their childhoods. Accordingly, Forest Whitaker concluded this very inspiring chapter by telling them **“You all give me hope for the world we can create.”**

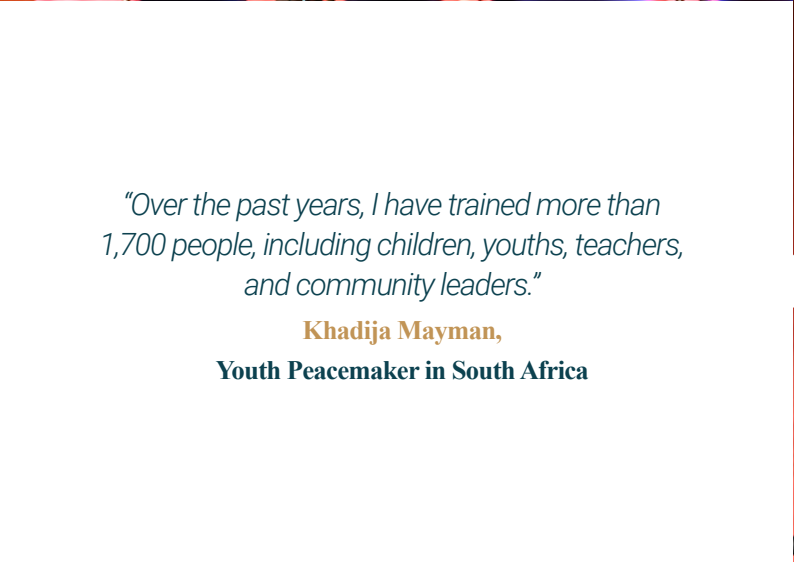
“ This was a very enriching experience for me to share my passion for peacebuilding and the need for education in vulnerable communities with over 300 high level guests. Being on stage with Mr. Forest was humbling and made me appreciate even more the importance of education in the life of a refugee like me, and the efforts of organizations like WPDI that are helping to transform the needy communities. ”

Ajwok Mary Valentino, Youth Peacemaker in Uganda



"As a young refugee woman, transforming lives means success to me and motivation to do more. I strongly believe that for a refugee, education is a lifeline! It is freedom and this is what WPDI is offering."

Ajwok Mary Valentino,
Youth Peacemaker in Uganda



"Over the past years, I have trained more than 1,700 people, including children, youths, teachers, and community leaders."

Khadija Mayman,
Youth Peacemaker in South Africa



"I have grown up in a context of vulnerability in a region marked by strong social movements. In 2015, I joined WPDI and with another Peacemaker Jose, we created a social business to help indigenous families grow healthy products."

Victor Garcia Santiz,
Youth Peacemaker in Mexico



"Conflict has made it a constant struggle for me to get an education. But I always worked hard to go to school and to learn, which is my passion in life. When I joined WPDI in 2018, my dream of learning took a bigger dimension"

James Yata Ambrose,
Youth Peacemaker in South Sudan





Having learned more about the work of WPMI and the people behind it, the audience was very prepared to participate in the very dynamic auction session that ensued and allowed

WPMI to raise funds that will prove critical to support our programs in the months and years ahead.





With the gala coming closer to its ending, acclaimed singer and artist Dionne Warwick took the scene, gracing the guests with a lively song that moved hearts and spirits.

Finally, Gayle King invited Forest Whitaker to close the Gala, giving him an opportunity to thank his partners, the guests as well as the staff and youths of WPDI.

We are grateful to all of those who helped us continue crafting our Tale of Peace



View the event's picture gallery: www.wpdi.org/2022-gala-gallery/

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