



U DAY ETHIOPIA 2018: A Convergence of Fire in the Land of Origins

In Celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week

January 30 – February 7, 2018



Unity Earth, in partnership with the United Religions Initiative, the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia and the World Peace Prayer Society, gathered more than 65 religious representatives of many faiths and musical artists from a wide range of nations to celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week in Lalibela, Addis Ababa and Shashamane, Ethiopia.

Natives of Aboriginal Australia, indigenous leaders from North and Central America, Buddhist monks from Thailand, Sikhs, Baha'is, Sufis and Hindus from India, Jews, Christians and Muslims comprised a colorful and diverse gathering of people standing for **unity**, **peace** and **compassion**.

Highlights of the 7-day U DAY Festival included visiting sacred sites in Lalibela and Shashamane, joining in a **Convergence of Fire** torch-lighting ceremony, and taking part in a most impressive event at the African Union, featuring Dr. Mulatu Teshome, the President of Ethiopia; His Holiness Abune Mathias, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; the leaders of the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia; and a World Peace Flag Ceremony with fifty Ethiopian children raising the flags of all the nations of the world with the prayer, "May Peace Prevail on Earth."

The mission of the U DAY gatherings, which have been held previously in Thailand in 2012, at the Church Center for the United Nations in 2016, and in Crestone, Colorado in 2017, is to bring people into joyful harmony through interfaith understanding and the common language of music. Unity Earth (www.unity.earth), under the leadership of Ben Bowler and an international team from Australia, India and

the United States, brought religious, spiritual and indigenous leaders, heads of international organizations and inspirational musicians together for a powerful experience of unity through diversity in the “Land of Origins.”

Cultural Ambassadors



H.E. Ambassador Mussie Hailu

H.E. Ambassador Mussie Hailu is a peace activist who is working at national, regional and international levels in promoting peace, reconciliation, interfaith & inter-cultural harmony, disarmament, world citizenship, building right human relationships, constructive dialogue and building bridges for international cooperation and promoting the teaching of the Golden Rule which says “Treat others the way you want to be treated” as a guiding principle to enhance respect and human dignity. He also actively

works against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa.

He served as Diplomat and Ambassador at large. He is a founding member of United Religions Initiative (URI) and currently serves as Global Envoy of URI, Representative of URI to the African Union and UN office in Africa, and Regional Director of URI for Africa. He also serves as special advisor of the African Union–Economic, Social and Cultural Council (AU-ECOSOCC)

He participated for many years at:

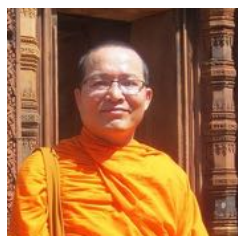
- UN General Assembly in New York
- African Union Heads of States Summit
- Peace, environmental protection, security and countering violent extremism conferences at national, regional and international levels.

Amb. Mussie Hailu travels the world extensively addressing the issue of Culture of peace, Reconciliation, Environmental Protection, right human relationships, interfaith & inter-religious harmony, dialogue among civilizations, eradication of poverty, the need to practice the Golden Rule and compassion.

Amb. Mussie Hailu pioneered an interfaith movement in his own country of Ethiopia and in many other African countries. He also took the initiative with the Former President of Ethiopia to establish a Council of Former African Heads of States and Governments for Environmental Protection and Climate Change in Africa. His initiatives include a “Declaration for Peace” distributed worldwide during the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in 1995 to encourage people to make a personal commitment to stand for global peace, human rights, environmental & animal protection, cooperation and international unity.

After the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, he worked with the National and Unity Commission of Rwanda on the issue of peace and reconciliation in Rwanda.

He introduced *Golden Rule Day* to the world to foster inter-religious, inter-cultural harmony and to build a culture of peace and constructive dialogue and respect in the world. The Golden Rule Day is now celebrated in many parts of the world and he also drafted *the Golden Rule Proclamation* which is endorsed by organizations in over 120 countries.



Dr. Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai

Dr. Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai is a senior Buddhist Monk from Chiang Mai, Thailand where among his many roles he is a lecturer at Graduate School Center, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU). He was also a vice rector of MCU, Chiang Mai Campus. For decades Phramaha Boonchuay has been a leading interfaith activist in Thailand and abroad and is the Chairperson, Asian Interfaith Network on HIV/AIDS. He is also involved in Peace Building in the troubled southern

part of Thailand and other parts of the country. He is Vice Chair for the Niwano Peace Prize Committee in Japan and was the Convener and Host for the first U DAY Festival in Chiang Mai, Thailand in 2012.

**Ben Bowler**

Ben Bowler of Australia, Executive Director of Unity Earth, is a serial entrepreneur with a background in sales and marketing. In 2006 he and his wife Jildou moved to Thailand to volunteer along the Thai-Burma border. In 2008 they founded Blood Foundation together, a NGO focusing on education projects. In 2008 Ben founded Monk for a Month in Chiang Mai offering men and women the opportunity to experience Thai temple life and temporary ordination.

In 2010 Ben launched Muslim for a Month in Turkey offering guests a first-hand experience of Turkish Islam and Sufism, underneath the spiritually inclusive banner of Rumi.

In 2011 Ben launched World Weavers, offering spiritual immersion programs in Tibetan India, Nepal, Cambodia and Ethiopia.

In October 2015 at the Parliament of World' Religions Ben launched 1GOD.com, an online platform aimed at countering religious fundamentalism, relativism and western materialism.

Ben is a Social-Entrepreneur-in-Residence at the prestigious INSEAD Business School and a blogger for the Huffington Post.

**Haji Syed Salman Chishty**

Haji Syed Salman Chishty is the 26th Generation Gaddi-Nashin (*Hereditary Custodians/Key Holders*) through his Chishty family which has been engaged in serving at the globally famed, acknowledged and renowned center of Peace and Unity for the whole of Humanity – THE BLESSED DARGAH AJMER SHARIF SUFI SHRINE of the 11th Century Sufi Grand Master Teacher Hz.KHAWAJA MOINUDEEN HASAN CHISHTY(R.A.), whose blessed Shrine's keys have been

passed on to the present family of Gaddi-Nashins through generation to generation over the last 800 years. From an early age he has been passionate about the World Sufi Spiritual Traditions with a special focus on the Chishty Sufi Order. After completing his basic education from Ajmer Sharif, he got a Bachelors Degree in Economic and Commerce from Wilson College, University of Mumbai. Subsequent years have been completely dedicated towards his practical Sufi spiritual research studies on World Sufi Traditions and their impact on the different cultures and traditions of the world and vice versa. He has been regularly invited to speak and participate in International Sufi and Inter Social Conferences on Spirituality, Interfaith Dialogue, top Global University Conferences such as Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University's annual Student Events, as well as interactive sessions on campus through conducting workshops on Chishty Spiritual Understandings with a special focus on *Khidmat e Khalq* (Service towards Humanity), Importance of Sufi Musical renderings in Chishty Sufi Order, Sufi Arts, Sufi Poetry, and Sufi Literature. He has represented the Chishty Sufi Order in countries as diverse as Al Hijaz – Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, Senegal, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Singapore, United States of America, United Kingdom, Greece, Bosnia Herzegovina, The Netherlands, Iran, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, China, Hong Kong, Myanmar, and many more.

He has been constantly engaged in sharing the blessed Sufi teachings of great Sufi Grand Masters; teachers such as Hz.Khawaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishty(ra) and Hz.Mevelana Rumi(ra), as well as other great Sufi Spiritual Masters–teachers from last 1400 years through The Islamic Art of Calligraphy, Islamic Architectural Sacred Designs patterns, Islamic Monuments Photography, Sufi Poetry Culture and Sufi musical renderings which unite all of Humanity in Oneness towards Truth and Divine Reality.

**Monica Willard**

Monica Willard is the Main URI Representative to the United Nations and coordinates the team of URI Representatives to the United Nations.

She has worked with the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) on the annual Student Observance for the International Day of Peace at UN Headquarters since 1997. She served as a founding member of the International Day of Peace NGO Committee at the UN in 2002 and is currently serving as the Co-Chair. As President of the Committee

of Religious NGOs at the UN (2010-2013), she organized programs for World Interfaith Harmony Week, including two held in the UN General Assembly. She was a founding member of the Tripartite Forum, a

group of UN Member States, UN Agencies and Religious NGOs who worked together from 2005-2010 to promote cooperation within the UN system on religion, peace and development. Monica was Chair of the 49th Annual DPI /NGO Conference at the United Nations. Her awards include the Spirit of the UN Award from CSVGC-NY and The Chapel of the Four Chaplains Award.



Dr. Mohinder Singh

Dr. Mohinder Singh is presently Director, National Institute of Panjab Studies, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi. He also served as Member, National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions, Government of India, (2010 – 2014) . He was Director, Guru Nanak Foundation, New Delhi (1982-1990). Professor of Eminence, Punjabi University, Patiala (2012 – 2016). Visiting Professor of Sikhism, Centre for Global Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara (2016)

In 1974 Dr. Singh was awarded Fellowship by the Indian Council of Historical Research to carry on his research work on the Akali Movement in the United Kingdom, which later earned him his Doctorate. Author of several standard works on Sikh history and religion, Dr. Singh sits on the Advisory Boards of several national and international organizations. He has lectured on Sikh studies at several Indian and foreign universities including the University of California, Berkeley and Santa Barbara, Dr. Singh had the rare privilege of representing Sikh religion in various international forums and had audience with Queen Elizabeth II during Commonwealth Observation Day at Westminster Abbey in June 1975, and with Pope Francis in November 2014 in Vatican and in September 2016 in Assisi.



Ahmed Tijani Ben Omar

Ahmed Tijani Ben Omar was born in Accra, Ghana. His hometown is Asamankese, West Akim Municipal District, Ghana. He specialized in Islamic Law and Jurisprudence, including comparative religion, astronomy, spiritual science and healing, divine poetry and chanting, fine arts and culture.

Tijani is a leader of the Tijaniyyah, which came to the United States in the 1970s. He is also the National Advisor International Association of Sufism USA; Advisor Islamic

Studies and Research Association ISSRA USA; President and Imam Universal Islamic Center USA; Member of the World Council of Religious Leaders under the auspices of The United Nations Millennium World Peace Summit.

He has traveled to over 115 countries worldwide giving numerous lectures and presentations at conferences, universities and public gatherings around the world, and hosted and directed several national and international Islamic conferences for peace.

Tijani spends his time between the United States and Africa. He has been involved in peacemaking work in Chicago's inner cities and inter-faith activity across the world. He is an ardent public opponent of literalism and extreme theology.



Rabbi Gabriel Hagai

Gabriel Hagai is an Orthodox Rabbi, lecturer, linguist, philologist, paleographer-codicologist, mediator, poet, calligrapher and singer. Educated in Jerusalem and Boston, he is a researcher and a guest lecturer at a number of Parisian universities and higher institutes.

Very invested in interreligious dialogue, he is an active member and a councillor of several interfaith organizations in Europe and worldwide. Father and grandfather, he is also a Master-Initiator in a non-dualist mystical tradition of Sephardic Judaism whose uninterrupted spiritual lineage goes back to Moses.

Gabriel Hagai is co-author of the books: *“Rites – Fêtes et Célébrations de l’Humanité”* (dir. Thierry-Marie Courau et Henri de La Hougue), Bayard, 2012; and *“L’Aventure de la Calligraphie”* (dir. Colette Poggi), Bayard, 2014.



Dr. A. K. Merchant

Dr. A. K. Merchant is a Trustee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India since 1989 & the Lotus Temple in New Delhi; Trustee & Executive Secretary, Temple of Understanding India Foundation; National Trustee, Sarvodaya International Trust; Member, Governing Board, Shanti Sahyog; Secretary, Parkash Foundation (Resource Centre for differently-abled children); Visiting Faculty, Centre for Cultural Resources & Training, Ministry of Culture, Government of India; Expert for research scholars enrolled for “interfaith education and Indian culture” of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund; Honorary Director, Messrs. MK Aromatics Limited, Chennai. Dr. Merchant is the author of three monographs: (i) *Communal Harmony—India's Greatest Challenge* (1991), and (ii) *Hindu Dharma evam Bahá'í Dharma* (1999), (iii) *Five Basic Human Values & the Bahá'í Faith* (2009), and over two hundred articles and research papers published in national and international dailies, journals and books. Dr. Merchant has addressed conferences, symposia and seminars in India and abroad since 1985. He represented the Indian Bahá'í Community at the 8th Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace, September 1990, held in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. He is an alumnus of the United States State Department International Exchange Program 2005 for the project on “religious diversity in America post 9/11”; he was invited by H.H. Pope Benedict XVI as National Trustee of the Bahá'í Community of India to the interfaith conference to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Assisi and the World Prayer Day for Justice and Peace held at the Vatican and Assisi in 2011. He has been participating in the deliberations of the Parliament of the World's Religions held in Chicago (1993), Cape Town (1999), Barcelona (2004), Melbourne (2009), Salt Lake City (2015). He was invited by H.H. the Dalai Lama to address interfaith conferences and assist with organization of international conferences and seminars in India. He is an active promoter of the interfaith movement; gender justice, world peace, and Agenda 2030–Sustainable Development Goals of the U.N.



Sam Cook

Sam Cook has an extensive career in the arts and entertainment industry spanning close to thirty-years. A retired musician, she was the Director of The Dreaming Festival and a programmer of the Woodford Folk Festival.

Artistically, Sam is a playwright, writer, visual artist and graphic designer.

Administratively, Sam started working in publishing ahead of becoming the CEO of a leading Australian Theatre Company before launching her company KISSmyBLAKarts which has tentacles into Artist Management and Apparel. Recipient of the UK Arts Council Fellowship in 2007 and 2011, winner of National Aboriginal Youth of the Year in 1999 and Broome Aboriginal Artist of the Year in 1998, Sam's the founding Aboriginal columnist for Artshub, Tracker and founder of Australia's Black History Month. Most recently she led a 20million global movement through #SOSBLAKAUSTRALIA and has recently founded Kaltja International an ethical economic disruption and cryptocurrency for Indigenous people worldwide.



Chief Phil Lane Jr.

Hereditary Chief Phil Lane Jr. is an enrolled member of the Ihanktonwan Dakota and Chickasaw Nations and is an internationally recognized leader in human, community, and economic development.

During the past 50 years, Chief Lane has worked with Indigenous Peoples from the Americas, Micronesia, South East Asia, China, India, Bhutan, Hawaii, and Africa. He served 16 years as an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada (1980-1996).

On August 15, 1992 in recognition of his hereditary lineage of leadership and longtime service to Indigenous Peoples and the Human Family, Indigenous Elders from across North America recognized Phil as a Hereditary Chief of the Hinhan Wicasa and Deloria Tiospayes of the Ihanktonwan Dakota, through a Traditional Headdress Ceremony.

In 1982, Chief Lane founded the Four Worlds International Institute (FWII). As well, Phil is Chairman of Four Directions International and Compassion Games International.

Since 2008, Chief Lane has stepped into global leadership. He currently serves as a member of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, (AISES), Council of Elders. He is host of the Shift Network's Global Indigenous Wisdom Summits. Chief Lane is an Honorary International Advisor to the Help Foundation of the Beijing Women's and Children's Development Foundation and is a Global Trustee of the United Religions Initiative.

In 1982, with Indigenous elders and spiritual leaders from across North, America, Chief Lane founded the Four Worlds International Institute (FWII). FWII became an independent Institute in 1995. With Chief Lane's guidance and applied experience, FWII has become an internationally recognized leader in human, community, and economic development because of the Institute's unique focus on the importance of culture and spirituality in all elements of development.



Mindahi Bastida Munoz

Mindahi Crescencio Bastida Muñoz is the Director of the Original Caretakers Program, Center for Earth Ethics, Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York (2017-), and General Coordinator of the Otomi-Toltec Regional Council in Mexico, a caretaker of the philosophy and traditions of the Otomi-Toltec peoples, and has been an Otomi-Toltec Ritual Ceremony Officer since 1988.

Bastida Muñoz is also the President of the Mexico Council of Sustainable Development, a member of the Steering Committee of the Indigenous Peoples' Biocultural Climate Change Assessment Initiative (www.ipcca.info/), and has served as a delegate to several commissions and summits on indigenous rights and the environment including the 7th World Water Forum in Daegu and Gyeongju, Korea, April 12-17, 2015.

Born in Tultepec, Mexico, he holds a Doctorate of Rural Development from the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana. He has written extensively on the relationship between the State and Indigenous Peoples, intercultural education, collective intellectual property rights and associated traditional knowledge, among other topics.



Jon Ramer

Jon Eliot Ramer is an American entrepreneur, civic leader, community organizer, inventor, and musician.

He was a co-founder of Unity Project Seattle with John Hale and the Interfaith Amigos, Imam Jamal Rahman, Pastor Don Mackenzie and Rabbi Ted Falcon who started working together after 9/11.

He is also the designer and co-founder of the International Campaign for Compassionate Cities, that led the effort to make the city of Seattle the first in the world to affirm Karen Armstrong's Charter for Compassion. There are now over 400 cities around the world that have started similar campaigns.

Most recently, Ramer conceived of and produced the "Compassion Games: Survival of the Kindest" in response to a challenge from the mayor of Louisville, Kentucky to other cities to outdo Louisville's compassionate action as measured by hours of community services and numbers of people served. In five years the Compassion Games has served over fifteen million people in over 40 countries.



Jason Kelly

Jason currently works as a Koorie Engagement Support Officer with the Department of Education. Jason's passion for the job is in supporting the development of Individual Education Plans that identify and meet individual students' academic points of need in numeracy and literacy. Also developing strategies for social connections and setting short term GOALS that enable young people to experience measurable academic success that leads sequentially to long term success.

Jason is the Mutthi Mutthi Wuthunghi (man) responsible for ceremony and calling on the ancestors in ceremonies such as funerals or healing and cleansing ceremonies such as traditional smoking ceremonies. He led the smoking and welcoming ceremony in Balranald for the Return to Country of Mungo Man, and his passion is healing through our connection to mother earth, our ancestors, and the universe.



Rev. Deborah Moldow

Rev. Deborah Moldow is an ordained interfaith minister committed to assisting in the transformation of human consciousness to a culture of peace.

Deborah is the founder of the Garden of Light, an online platform for the emerging global spirituality. The purpose of the Garden of Light is to provide a virtual home for a new community rooted in shared spirituality that transcends differences of culture so that it can become visible as a powerful force in uplifting the human spirit.

She is Co-Director with Diane Williams of the Evolutionary Leaders circle, a project of the Source of Synergy Foundation that brings together visionaries committed to the acceleration of the conscious evolution of humanity in these critical times.

Deborah served for more than 20 years as the Representative to the United Nations of The World Peace Prayer Society, which promotes the universal prayer “May Peace Prevail on Earth.” At the United Nations, she co-chaired the International Day of Peace NGO Committee and the Values Caucus, and founded the United Religions Initiative multi-faith cooperation circle at the U.N.

Rev. Deborah leads monthly Interfaith Sundays at the Chapel at Croton Falls and a local Spirit Salon.



Darcy Demas

Warm greetings! My name is Darcy Demas. I’m a Dakota man from Pipestone, Manitoba, Canada. I was born and raised in Manitoba until 1996. I was raised in poverty, high rates of alcoholism and violence. I moved to British Columbia in November 1996 with my six-year-old daughter Desirae.

I have been involved with Dakota culture for more than thirty years. I have danced in the Sun Dance for twenty years. I have been singing and assisting the elders for eleven years now. My passion is teaching my Dakota culture. I specifically appreciate being able to sing and write songs in my Dakota language. I am, also, a Dakota cultural artisan. My understanding of my cultural values and beliefs are the spiritual foundation in my life and have given me sobriety and the ability to maintain sobriety. I am a member of the Four Worlds International Institute (FWII) NGO.

Musicians



Pato Banton and the Now Generation

Born in Birmingham, England, Pato Banton is a Grammy-nominated Reggae legend that has recorded and toured the world with The English Beat, Steel Pulse, UB40 & Sting. During the year 2000, while in the midst of a global trek for Peter Gabriel’s WOMAD organization that combined huge festivals with outreach to poor and underprivileged communities, Pato learned that two of his sons had been shot in a drive-by shooting. He immediately put his career on hold and turned his sorrow into the impetus

for community and educational initiatives that would consume the next six years of his life. Pato created an organization called “Musical Connections” and, in partnership the Community Safety Team, provided tuition and counseling for “at risk” young people in 16 different communities across his city of Birmingham, UK. This project was so successful that Pato was approached by the West Midlands Police Department to tackle the ongoing problem of gun crime in some of the poorest neighborhoods. Within a few years this partnership greatly reduced gun crime across the entire city and Pato was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the BBC and entered into the British Music Hall of Fame during the same year.

Pato Banton’s four-decade public presence has increasingly transcended music to convey a positive and uplifting message of global peace and love for humanity. Now based in Southern California, he continues to tour the world extensively while simultaneously serving as a teacher, counselor and mentor to his fans worldwide. See www.patobanton.com.



Antoinette “Rootsdawtah” Hall

Antoinette “Rootsdawtah” Hall is a world renowned keyboardist in the Reggae Industry. She became involved in the Spiritual Community after working with Pato Banton and joining on his Mission of spreading the Good News that “we’re all God’s Children, brothers & sisters.” Since then she has become very proactive in Global Outreach Ministry, which includes The Urantia Movement, U-Day Thailand, Parliament of

the World’s Religions, 1GOD.com, Harvard Divinity School and most recently, a presentation for the Convergence Gathering at the United Nations Chapel in New York. Antoinette’s Facebook spiritual communities also include, MinisterPatoBanton, Urantia Aspirations, Ministers For Christ Michael, Urantia 101 for New Readers, and COEXIST! Her present musical works include the “*Thoughts of Paradise*” Meditation CD, “*The Words of Christ*” and the “*Joyful and Happy*” soundtrack which is featured in the spiritually motivated documentary called “*Return to Happiness.*”



Rocky Dawuni

Grammy nominated musician and activist, Rocky Dawuni, straddles the boundaries between Africa, the Caribbean and the U.S. to create his appealing *Afro Roots* sound that unites generations and cultures.

A galvanizing performer, Dawuni has shared the stage with Stevie Wonder, Peter Gabriel, Bono, Jason Mraz, Janelle Monae and John Legend. Named one of Africa’s Top 10 global stars by CNN, he has showcased his talent at

prestigious venues such as The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center and The Hollywood Bowl.



Kristin Hoffmann

Kristin Hoffmann is a Julliard trained singer-songwriter-musician with extraordinary artistic range. Her music has been heard on major record labels, film and television, and she has performed throughout the world, collaborating with musical luminaries on projects ranging from individual albums to grand symphonic productions.

Kristin’s songs reflect her personal luminosity, her warmth, and her talent for bringing out music’s healing power.



Premik Russell Tubbs

Premik Russell Tubbs, a composer, arranger, producer and an accomplished multi- instrumentalist, performs on various flutes, soprano, alto and tenor saxophones, wind synthesizer and lap steel guitar.

Since 2008, Premik has been part of the house band for Sting’s Rainforest Foundation Fund benefit concerts at Carnegie Hall, where he has backed up such diverse artists as Sting, Elton John, Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, Lady

Gaga, James Taylor, Vince Gil, Rosanne Cash and many others. He has been collaborating and performing with Kristin Hoffmann since 2003.



Sydney Salmon

Sydney Salmon was born in Kingston, Jamaica and now lives in Shashamane, Ethiopia. Sydney’s mission is to use music to promote and support the *Jamaican Rastafarian Development Community* (JRDC) Organization in Shashamane. His lyrics have weaved their way into the hearts of reggae loving Ethiopians with his unique brand that incorporates traditional Ethiopian styles and melodies with a pulsating Jamaican drum and bass. Tune

in to Sydney Salmon music on [iTunes](#).



Lyla June Johnston

Lyla June Johnston is of Diné (Navajo), Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne) and European lineages. She is a musician, poet, anthropologist, community organizer and servant of humanity. She is currently working with an intergenerational cohort of Diné peoples to develop a community-based curriculum and summer school. Her poetry, her music and her message has been honored nationally and internationally for its allegiance to non-

violence, women's health, faith and forgiveness. Her dream is to revitalize indigenous systems of sustainable living.



Kwadjo SPiRi

Kwadjo SPiRi of Ghana socializes his universe experiences on the platform of music and the output is always a blend of philosophy, spirituality, and science.



Dane Kennedy

From the remote community of Ivanhoe in Western NSW, Australia, proud Ngiyampaa man Dane Kennedy has performed alongside acts including Christine Anu, Coloured Stone, Bonja, Sarah Mcleod, Dean Lewis and Jeff Martin, and co-written with the likes of Kevin Bennet, Mike Carr and Fanny Lumsden.

Dane is based in Wagga Wagga NSW and has travelled to the USA to record his first original track titled *In My Mind* at House of Blues in Nashville, which was written after the loss of his brother. It expresses his struggle to come to terms with this tragic event.



“Chi” Suwichan Phatthanaphraiwan

“Chi” Suwichan Phatthanaphraiwan is a prominent Karen artist, musician, composer, educator and community activist based in Thailand. Chi is no ordinary singer. There is passion in his words and a seraphic quality to his lofty pitch that gently drifts among the rolling mists and towering pines of his beloved homeland. Chi is a member of the Karen tribe of northern Thailand. His people have lived there for centuries, yet the current Thai

government does not recognize them as citizens. Chi becomes a prominent voice of the Karen people, both for his music and also for his many years of being at the forefront of indigenous peoples' activism — fighting for their rights.

Lalibela

The group began its World Interfaith Harmony Week experience by journeying to the historic town and UNESCO World Heritage Site at Lalibela. The cultural ambassadors, musicians and delegates were warmly welcomed by the priests in a moving ceremony. They visited the extraordinary churches carved into the stone, offering prayers from many traditions, including Judaism, Buddhism and Islam, in this special atmosphere infused with deep faith.



The Abbot of the priests, Aba Yared Miseganawe Kosmos, visited the group. He received thanks and gifts from Jewish, Islamic, Baha'i, Buddhist and Sikh faith leaders, and was serenaded by one of the singers.



The love and light from this multi-faith group was contagious. Mr. Qumelachew Muluneh Taye of the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, who coordinated the group's visit with the blessing of the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, summed it up beautifully:

"You have done here a very historical work. It was the first time in the history of our country here that many faith-based organizations speak together in one language according to their Religion."

Convergence of Fire

During the visit to Lalibela, the Convergence of Fire ceremony was held at a multilevel restaurant situated on a hilltop over 2,500 meters high. The date of January 31 was extremely auspicious, being both a full moon and a lunar eclipse.

The event began with indigenous leaders Mindahi Bastida of Mexico, representing Center for Earth Ethics at Union Theological Seminary; Hereditary Chief Phil Lane, Jr. and Darcy Demas of Canada; and Jason Kelly and Dane Kennedy of Australia building a sacred fire and leading a Four Directions ceremony. This was followed by the Convergence of Fire, led by Rev. Deborah Moldow of the United States.



The three torches were lit: **The Torch of Compassion, the Torch of Peace and the Lamp of Unity:**

- Hereditary Chief Phil Lane, Jr. brought the **Torch of Compassion**, used worldwide in the **Compassion Games** – *Survival of the Kindest*. This torch has been passed to many leaders and celebrities around the world including at the Parliament of The World's Religions. Jon Ramer and Sommer Joy of the Compassion Games, were in Ethiopia for these ceremonies as part of U DAY Festival. This torch was also passed symbolically around the world as the Compassion Games activity honoring World Interfaith Harmony Week.
- Internationally acclaimed spiritual musician Kristin Hoffman brought the **Torch of Peace**, which has a rich global history. In 1986, at the height of the cold war, this torch of peace was passed around the world in the **First Earth Run**, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund, directly engaging 25 million people and 45 heads-of-state in 62 countries including Ethiopia. Over a billion people watched the torch via the media circumnavigate the globe. For 86 days, wherever the torch of peace went all wars stopped and the world was united as one.
- Ten Buddhist monks, led by Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai from Chiang Mai, Thailand, where U DAY first took place in 2012, carried their own beautiful **Lamp of Unity**.



Kristin Hoffmann, accompanied by Premik Russell Tubbs, offered her magnificent song, “Re-Entry,” as a closing to the ceremony, while the Torches of Compassion and Peace were passed around the group to receive everyone’s prayers and blessings.



The African Union

On February 2, all participants took part in an historic event in a gracious hall at the African Union, observing World Interfaith Harmony Week there for the very first time. This event, organized by Unity Earth in partnership with the United Religions Initiative, the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia and the World Peace Prayer Society, included President Dr. Mulatu Teshome of Ethiopia, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the leaders of the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, and other local dignitaries.



Programs were distributed along with copies of the U.N. General Assembly Resolution 65/5 establishing World Interfaith Harmony Week on 23 October 2010 and a poster of the Golden Rule as expressed in twelve religions.

Greetings and prayers were offered by His Holiness Abune Mathias, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and Shieikh Muhammed-Amin Jamal Omar, President of Ethiopia Islamic Affairs Supreme Council. Welcoming remarks were offered by:

- Pastor Zerihun Degu, General Secretary, Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia
- H.E. Amb. Mussie Hailu, Regional Director of United Religions Initiative-Africa and Representative of URI to the AUC and the UN Office in Nairobi and Geneva
- H.E. Mrs. Fozia Amin, President of Africa Ombudsman and Mediators Association
- Mr. Ben Bowler, Director of U DAY Festival
- Mr. Ahmed El-Basheer, AUC-CIDO

All stressed the value of harmony among people of diverse religions and the significance of the Golden Rule in demonstrating the common values across religious divides. Members of the Unity Earth delegation read the way the Golden Rule is expressed in each of twelve different faith traditions.

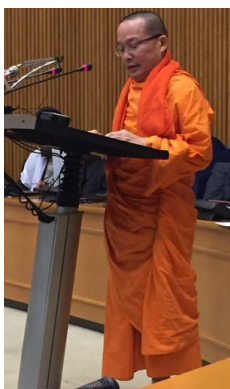


President Teshome mentioned that the General Assembly Resolution establishing World Interfaith Harmony Week is based on the shared principles of love of God and love of neighbor, noting that “Ethiopia is a diverse nation well known for long as a land of peace and religious tolerance with a longstanding heritage of peaceful co-existence.”

A message from Mr. Hiroo Saionji, President of the World Peace Prayer Society and the Goi Peace Foundation in Japan was read by Mr. Patrick Petit; Ms. Subji Dhupar read a message from Rev. Victor Kazanjian, Executive Director of the United Religions Initiative; and a message from Ms. Frewot Worku, Secretary General of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society was also delivered.



Amb. Mussie Hailu spoke compellingly about the significance of the Golden Rule in uniting people of different faiths, and he presented the African Interfaith Harmony Award of the United Religions Initiative to the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia.



Then it was time for the Unity Earth guests to showcase their great diversity. Speakers were:

- Ven. Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai, Thai Buddhist monk
- Mrs. Monica Willard, Representative to the United Nations, United Religions Initiative
- Rabbi Gabriel Hagai, Orthodox Jewish leader
- Dr. A.K. Merchant, representative of the Baha'i faith from India
- Dr. Mohinder Singh, representative of the Sikh faith from India
- Syed Salmon Chishty, head of the Chishti Sufi Order
- Dr. Mindahi Bastida, Center for Earth Ethics, Union Theological Seminary
- Hereditary Chief Phil Lane, Jr., Indigenous Ihanktonwan Dakota and Chickasaw Nations of North America
- Ms. Sam Cook, Mr. Jason Kelly, Mr. Dane Kennedy, Australian indigenous representatives
- Prof. Peter Blaze Corcoran, Christian educator and sustainability expert



Rev. Deborah Moldow, founder of the Garden of Light, closed this portion of the program by inviting all the Unity Earth participants in the hall to come forward as “a living demonstration of World Interfaith Harmony Week,” including the three “Convergence of Fire” torches of compassion, peace and unity.

Ben Bowler presented the UNITY EARTH CHAMPION "Keeper of the Flame" Award to Ambassador Mussie Hailu for his outstanding contribution in the fields of Interfaith Dialogue, Peace Building and Social Inclusion.



Ms. Fumi Johns Stewart, Executive Director of The World Peace Prayer Society, then presented the World Peace Flag Ceremony with fifty Ethiopian children raising the flags of all the nations of the world with the prayer, “May Peace Prevail on Earth.” This beautiful and moving ceremony concluded with children – along with the Unity Earth delegates who hailed from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa – holding the flags

of the continent of Africa, followed by the Unity Earth indigenous representatives bearing a special flag of the indigenous nations. Two Peace Poles were also offered to the African Union.



The program ended with a vote of thanks sung out by Ahmed Tijani Ben Omar, an African Sufi leader.

This day brought representatives of many religions and many nations to share their light at the African Union in a very special remembrance of World Interfaith Harmony Week, offering great hope for a future of compassion, peace and unity.

The event received widespread television and press coverage, including in the English language Ethiopian Herald and The African Dream. (See Appendix for press links.)



Words from the message read from Rev. Victor Kazanjian, Executive Director of the United Religions Initiative, summed up the experience beautifully. He wrote:

Dear friends, the world is blessed by all of your work and by this convergence of peacemakers from different religions, cultures and nations. At a time of deepening divisions and escalating violence between people throughout the world, Interfaith Harmony Week reminds us of the vision of a world in which our differences are seen not as barriers to peace but as essential resources for weaving together the fabric of our common humanity.

U NITE CONCERT

It was time to celebrate! The U NITE concert on 3 February continued to honor World Interfaith Harmony Week by bringing together musicians of many different national cultures and faith traditions at the Villa Verde in Addis Ababa. Music reflecting the painful history and wisdom for the future of indigenous people from Australia (Dane Kennedy and Jason Kelly), North America (Lyla June Johnston) and Thailand (“Chi” Suwichan Phatthanaphraiwan) met the strains of the spirit-inspired melodies of Pato Banton and Antoinette Hall with the Now Generation, Rocky Dawuni, the Sydney Salmon Band, the King Shiloh Sound System, and Kristin Hoffmann with Premik Russell Tubbs.



The Unity Earth group celebrated its diversity in musical praise with a dancing rabbi, a drumming Sufi and everyone united through the joy of music.



The performers had also taken part in a one-hour radio interview on the EBC (Ethiopia Broadcast Corporation) to promote the U DAY Festival. This show is the largest English-speaking language radio show in Ethiopia, hosted by DJ Ez. Erik Rabasca of Light Warriors shared the Unity Earth vision, talking about the importance of beginning the Road To 2020 in the Land of Origins. The other artists who attended were Kwadjo Spiri, Rocky Duwani, Kristin Hoffmann, Premik Russell Tubbs and Sydney Salman.



GLOBAL ONLINE MEDITATION

Simultaneously with the concert, an online global meditation led by Dr. David Nicol of the Gaiafield Network attracted hundreds of participants live across the globe – see <http://udayfestival.org/convergence-of-fire>. People of good will around the planet were invited to help “light” the Global Torch of One Love with their collective presence and prayers for planetary healing. This torch is intended to carry the spiritual energy of multiple streams of global healing initiatives, representing millions of people, and will be lit at the subsequent U DAY Festivals planned between now and 2022.

The free virtual meditation event was offered by [Unity Earth](#) in collaboration with the [Gaiafield Project](#), was co-sponsored by a broad international coalition of visionary organizations, including: [The United Nations NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns](#), [U DAY Festival](#), [The United Religions Initiative](#), [The Interspiritual Network](#), [Empowerment Institute](#), [The Compassion Games](#), [World Weavers](#), [1GOD.com](#), [The Convergence at VoiceAmerica](#), [The Convergence Magazine](#), [We.net](#), [We The World](#), [Source of Synergy Foundation](#), [Forum 21 Institute](#), [World Peace Prayer Society](#), [Pathways to Peace](#), [Humanity's Team](#), [Heart of the Healer](#), [Garden of Light](#), [Children of the Earth](#), [Osage Forest of Peace](#), [FIONS](#), [Academy for Future Science](#), [The Interspiritual Multiplex](#), [Light on Kundalini](#), [One Spirit Learning Alliance](#), [One Spirit Interfaith Seminary](#), [The Coming Interspiritual Age](#), [Films for the Planet](#), [Inside Out Journeys](#), [Self Care to Earth Care](#), [The Community of The Mystic Heart](#), [VISTAR Foundation](#), [Leadership Training Institute](#), [Edentia](#), [Pato Banton's Now Generation](#), [Until That Day](#), [Sourcing The Way](#), [Omnipresent Entertainment](#), [One Love Rising](#), [Global Center for Human Evolutionary Change](#), [Contemplative Life](#), [Kosmos Journal](#), [The Peace Pledge Project](#), [Greenworld Campaign](#), [A Better World Radio](#), [WholeWorld-View Community](#), [Lama Surya Das](#), [Dzogchen Center](#), [Davi Nikent Center for Human Flourishing](#), [The SHIFT Network Catalyst](#), [The Oneness Center NYC](#), [The National Ethical Service](#), [Ubuntu League Foundation](#).

SHASHAMANE

The culmination of the U DAY Festival celebrating World Interfaith Harmony Week was a voyage south to Shashamane, the territory originally set aside by Emperor Haile Selassie for the practitioners of the Rastafari religious community that gifted the world with Reggae music from Jamaica. Shashamane leaders warmly welcomed the U DAY delegates and brought them to see community improvement projects, including a school under construction. Everyone gathered at the Temple of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, where a ceremony of “uniting the tribes” was led by members of diverse faith traditions in demonstration of a world of interfaith harmony to come, where every religion is respected and all peoples honor the gifts in one another.



On the night of February 6, an outdoor “Earthstrong” concert was held as a fundraising event for the Jamaican Rastafarian Development Community School (JRDC) towards their 2018 initiatives and also to commemorate musical legend Bob Marley’s 73rd birthday.

Once again, the uplifting, positive lyrics of Reggae with its joyful beat were heard along with the music of other cultures from around the world in deep unity of spirit.



The U DAY delegates returned to Addis Ababa as a community bonded in a love of sisters and brothers that transcended their deep commitment to their own religions, traditions and spiritual paths. The music that arose from the bus that rolled along the beautiful countryside of the “Land of Origins” had a Sufi drumbeat and refrain accompanied by an American guitar. Verses alternated from the Australian outback, in Hebrew, from Christian inspirational sources, of hip-hop from Ghana, Beatles songs, and that contagious Reggae beat.

CONCLUSION

Ben Bowler of Unity Earth had these words for all who experienced World Interfaith Harmony Week through U DAY Ethiopia 2018:

As I see it, we have experienced together a week of profound manifestation of the possibilities of life on this world. Many revealed religious traditions talk about a future era of Light & Life on our planet, comparable to the Christian Kingdom of Heaven on Earth or the Mahayana Buddhist ideal of The Pure Land. For me, our time together in Ethiopia was a foretaste of that Reality, the love and beauty, the mystical spirituality, the grace, the divine synchronicity, the fellowship, the joy, the music, the laughter – it was nothing less than a very real experience of Light & Life. SO whatever else happens in this world, to have experienced that all together in such a profound way is a spectacular gift.... for which I am forever grateful, to each of you, to our unseen friends and the Divine.



All in all, from Lalibela and the interaction with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, to the events in Addis Ababa and down to Shashamane, it was a constant flow of powerful spiritual energies converging in Love of God and Love of Neighbor. This format of working towards a *highly-visible* new iteration of what interfaith can be, involving spiritual ceremonies, the diplomatic arena and public musical performances, worked exceptionally well, through the wonderful collaboration between so many of us and the organizations: Unity Earth, the United Religions Initiative, and many others.

This journey of the heart demonstrated beyond any doubt that when people of good will gather together with the joy and conviction of their individual religious and spiritual traditions, they will produce a “Convergence of Fire,” igniting a Global Fire of One Love. This is the gift of World Interfaith Harmony Week, a time to reflect on the power of faith to unite all peoples for a new culture of peace across our beautiful planet Earth.

APPENDIX

Reports on 2018 U DAY Observances of World Interfaith Harmony Week



U Day Festival makes Interfaith Harmony front page news in Ethiopia!

World Interfaith Harmony Week Participants Praise Ethiopia for Practicing Religious and Cultural harmony (Ethiopian News Agency)

<http://www.ena.gov.et/en/index.php/politics/item/4254-world-interfaith-harmony-week-participants-praise-ethiopia-for-practicing-religious-and-cultural-harmony>

Ethiopia: A Nation With Interfaith Harmony - Religious Leaders, Theologians (AllAfrica.com)

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201802070424.html>

U DAY Festival 2018: Convergence Of Fire In The Land Of Origins

<http://1god.com/2018/01/22/u-day-festival-2018-convergence-of-fire-in-the-land-of-origins/>

Ethiopia, Land of Origins, Hosted Interfaith Event for a Culture of Peace, Harmony and Human Dignity (Center for Earth Ethics)

<https://centerforearthethics.org/ethiopia-land-origins-hosted-interfaith-event-culture-peace-harmony-human-dignity/>

Ethiopia is a land of tolerance: FDRE President Dr. Mulatu Teshome • Religious leaders call for Inter-religious dialogue for building peace, tolerance

<http://www.ethpress.gov.et/herald/index.php/news/national-news/item/10785-ethiopia-is-a-land-of-tolerance-fdre-president-dr-mulatu-teshome-religious-leaders-call-for-inter-religious-dialogue-for-building-peace-tolerance>

World Interfaith Harmony Week Praise Ethiopia for Religious and Cultural harmony (The Ethiopian Herald)

<https://www.theafricandream.net/2018-world-interfaith-harmony-week-ethiopia/>