

## Second Annual International Conference of Ethiopian Women in the Diaspora Ended with Resounding Success ESFNA commits to future collaboration and support

Center for the Rights of Ethiopian Women (CREW), a non-profit, non-government, peace and human rights organization dedicated to promoting the rights of Ethiopian women worldwide through advocacy and education, was established as an outcome of a successful international conference on Ethiopian women that was held last year in March 2012. CREW held the Second Annual International Conference of Ethiopian Women in the Diaspora on March 23 and 24, 2013. The theme of the conference was “Ending Violence Against Ethiopian Women”

The Conference was opened with a welcoming address by Dr. Maigenet Shifferraw, President of CREW. Dr. Maigenet gave a brief statement about the one year work that CREW had done. Among the achievements that she spoke about was the work that was done on behalf of Shewaye Molla, the domestic worker that was the victim of abuse by the family of Muammar Gaddafi of

Libya. Dr. Maigenet also highlighted the various advocacy and awareness work that was done by CREW members on behalf of Ethiopian sisters who are working in the Middle East.

Ethiopian Sport Federation in North America (ESFNA), sponsor of the Second Annual Conference of Ethiopian Women in the Diaspora, had sent its Vice-President, Mr. Teddy Tamiru, to

address the participants of the Conference. Mr. Teddy Tamiru congratulated CREW on its work and announced that the 30<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of ESFNA, which will be held in Washington DC from June 30-July 6, will have “Celebrating Ethiopian Women” as its theme. In addition, Mr. Teddy Tamiru stated the commitment of ESFNA in supporting and collaborating with CREW in all its work. He also announced that ESFNA will offer CREW its total support at the July event to promote its work. As a representative of a sport federation dominated by men, his speech connoted the unity of women and men in fighting injustices against Ethiopian women around the world. CREW underscores with great appreciation the generosity of ESFNA.

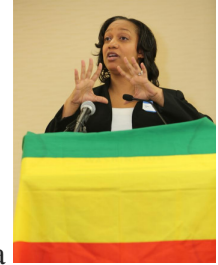


The first day, March 23, covered numerous topics that addressed the violence that Ethiopian women are facing in Ethiopia and outside of Ethiopia.



The session was opened with the Keynote address by Ms. Frances E Ashe-Goins, Deputy Director, Health Science Administrator, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women Health.

Dr. Kesslyn A Brade Stennis from Bowie State University was a featured speaker who highlighted important strategies to combat domestic violence and provided numerous resources that victims of domestic violence can use.

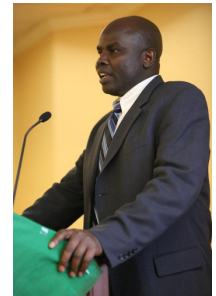


Ms. Peggy Araya and Ms Tanya Araya, the mother and daughter team, made a presentation on “The New Violence Against Women Act.” Ms. Aleme Feyissa, a social worker



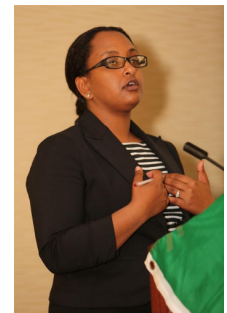
who works closely with the Ethiopian immigrant community in the Washington D.C. area, made a presentation on the prevalence of Domestic Violence among the Ethiopian immigrant community

Mr. Obang Metho, Executive Director of Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia, spoke on forced internal migration of the Ethiopian people due to land grab and the potential negative consequences that is waiting if not halted in time.



Ms. Selamawit Tesfaye made a presentation on, “The plight of Ethiopian domestic workers in the Middle East.” She discussed how thousands of Ethiopian women leave their country and go the Middle Eastern Arab countries to find jobs. However, once they reach their destination countries, they are prone to various forms of human rights abuses.

Ms. Amsale Aberra, the young scholar, who is a graduate student at the University of Washington in Seattle and CREW’s first scholarship recipient to attend the annual conference, made a notable presentation on “Forced Migration and the ugly truth of human trafficking.” She underlined the immense challenges in tackling the trafficking problem in countries like Ethiopia because it is a multi-million dollar industry.



Ms. Birtawit Girmaye Kassa facilitated a session with Ethiopian grassroots activists from Saudia Arabia and Lebanon via video and skype about the work they are doing to help mitigate the violence against Ethiopian domestic workers.

The presentations were followed by in-depth discussions with participants of the conference on the causes, scale of the violence against Ethiopian women and strategies to ending it. Particular focus and discussion was made on the plight, the horrifying abuse and sexual exploitation of Ethiopian women in the Middle East. The tragic

story of their misery was shared by heroic Ethiopian women from Saudi Arabia who are working relentlessly to save the Ethiopian women domestic workers when they have nowhere to turn to. Poems and Videos, depicting the gravity of the atrocity befalling Ethiopian women were shown.

The second day, March 24, was a closed meeting for CREW members and potential members. The meeting was designed for organizational development. The first session was a workshop on “Conflict Resolutions” by Dr. Berhanu Mengistu. The training session was incredibly educational and stimulating. Dr. Berhanu’s presentation highlighted that differences may arise among individuals and organizations that are bound to work together or share a common goal; however, if the problems articulated in a clear and respectful manner they will be resolved.



Ms Hamrawit Tesfa, a young author and a social worker, made a presentation on “Empowering ourselves.” Ms.Hamrawit spoke about the necessity and importance of being strong within ourselves and taking care of ourselves to be able to help others.

Finally, members held a frank and earnest discussions around short and long term activities of CREW for the coming year. In general, the conference brought many men and women of different age groups, ethnic and professional backgrounds. Solidarity message from Shengo, and Ethiopian National Transitional Council was read. The participants vowed to work hard towards ending the oppression of Ethiopian women. The incredible love, empathy and spirit of voluntarism demonstrated by participants were promises of a better tomorrow for our mothers and daughters around the world.



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