Women of the World Celebrate

The month of March, designated as Women's History Month, was recognized on the Indiana University Bloomington campus with a special event, the "International Women's Day Celebration: Presentations and Festivities," held March 8 at the Leo R. Dowling International Center. The aim of the event, the first of its kind on campus and in the city of Bloomington, showcased diverse cultures and international women's issues to an American and international audience of more than 200 men, women, and children.

The full day's program included presentations on social issues relevant to women, poetry readings, performances of music and dance, and special exhibits. Women from all over the world were represented: Africa, the Middle East, East, Central, and South Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, North and Latin America. The presenters were faculty members, students, and wives of IUB students who shared their academic, professional, and personal experiences and interests.

Visiting Fulbright scholar from Kyrgyzstan, Gulnara Iskakova, talked about women in the context of transition in Central Asia. Graduate students Jennifer Chow (Psychology), Yuko Murakami (Philosophy), and Rohany Nayan (Education) spoke, respectively, on Asian women in the media, Japanese women in the workplace, and interracial marriages. Poetry readings featured IUB Slavics department faculty professor Bronislava Volkova from the Czech Republic, Naciye Akgun from Turkey and Mary Dezember from the United States. A panel on Muslim women included Shabana Mir from the United Kingdom, Imren Kalyuncu from Turkey, Uzma Rehman from Pakistan, and Najeeba Syeed from the United States. There was a performance of Swahili wedding music by the group "Toto Tundu," dances from India and Latina songs from the group, "MISASARA."

This year's celebration was conceived and organized by International Center volunteer, Mayumi Nakano, assisted by Shyamala Keshamouni, and facilitated by a dedicated group of student volunteers, American and international students, men and women. The event was co-sponsored by Altrusa, IU Family Housing, and Women's International League for Peace & Freedom. Refreshments and door prizes were donated by local area businesses. Donations were also collected for the "Asian Student Aid Fund" to benefit students suffering from the currency economic crisis in Asia.

A member of the audience expressed the enthusiastic reception of the event: "This was wonderful. Rarely does one see such a diverse group of women in the state of Indiana."

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Celebration participant

The first-ever International Women's Day Celebration at IUB included performances of Indian dances, featuring (left to right) Sima Thakkar, Kavitha Pai, Zareen Kapadia, Bijal Suryawala, Anusha Kumar, & Ami Gandhi.