

Daniel Pearl's Life Commemorated Through the Arts

October 25, 2009



The energy, talent, and emotion at the 8th annual Daniel Pearl World Music Days (DPWMD) was dynamic, entertaining, touching, and inspirational. Set on the beautiful grounds of the Paa Ya Paa Arts Centre, many talented artists celebrated slain Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl's life in style and with purpose last Sunday afternoon, October 25. Celebrating "harmony for humanity," the afternoon began with the wonderful Bush Bach ensemble setting the mood as artists and guests roamed the grounds looking at the colorful artwork hung beautifully on wooden panels, and the inspirational "heroes corner," with its life-size banana fiber replica of Abraham Lincoln and numerous other world "heroes" like Indira Ghandi, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and Pope John Paul II. Paa Ya Paa Director, Elimo Njau welcomed the group and invited them to witness the watering of the Daniel Pearl tree that was planted eight years ago at the first DPWMD. Then he and U.S. Embassy Cultural Attaché, Ellen Bienstock, lit a bonfire "to unleash the creative spirit of artists, writers, musicians and poets." For the next couple hours, the musical, dance, acrobatic, vocal, and poetic talent mesmerized the crowd of 200 guests and thoughtfully celebrated the theme "harmony for humanity."

Daniel Pearl was covering "the war on terrorism" for the Wall Street Journal when, on January 23, 2002, he was abducted in Karachi, Pakistan as he was retracing the steps of "shoe bomber" Richard Reid and hoped to meet with a spiritual leader named Sheik Gilani. As the Daniel Pearl Foundation describes it, "For weeks, millions around the world -- from heads of state, to religious leaders and ordinary people -- rallied for Danny's release. In Danny, the terrorists believed they abducted a media figure, an American, and a Jew. But they had much more -- a true citizen of the world and an embodiment of civilized values, whose death, like his life, would inspire millions of people in the cause of decency and cultural understanding. "Several weeks after his abduction, Daniel Pearl's murder was confirmed, and about six months later, four of the kidnappers were convicted, though others may still be at large. A few months after his murder, his wife Mariane Pearl gave birth to their son, Adam, and she along with many of his friends and family established the Daniel Pearl Foundation to promote peace, tolerance, and humanity.

Daniel Pearl World Music Days seeks to celebrate Daniel Pearl's life and strives to bring about harmony for humanity through the arts. Indeed, at Paa Ya Paa last Sunday, talented Kenyan artists set us on the right path.