

ACS Acceptance Speech - IPPF London - Nov 26, 2011

Members of the Governing Council, my fellow honorees, Staff
Members of the IPPF, Distinguished Guests, including my wife and
photographer, Jeannette, who journeyed with me and to whom I
owe so much.

When I grow up I want to be Fred Sai.

Thank you for this great honor, but it is my honor to volunteer for
this great cause and to work in partnership with the Board and Staff
of the WHR Office, including our distinguished GC Delegates, Jackie
Sharpe, Esther Vicente, Diana Barco, Andrea Cohen and Jovana
Rios, and our extraordinary Regional Director, Carmen Barroso.

Whenever I am in London, the land of that dismal prelate, Thomas
Malthus, I reflect on the words of my grandmother's great friend,
and sometime lover, H.G. Wells, who wrote, in the introduction to
one of my grandmother's books, that "Civilization is in a race

between education and catastrophe.” His prescription, and hers, was birth control, the term she invented almost 100 years ago.

Because of a small cadre of incredible volunteers, the IPPF was founded to stave off catastrophe. Because of our volunteers worldwide, we have been the greatest social movement of the 20th Century and are poised, and the world needs us to be, the most effective social movement of the 21st.

Failure is not an option. Women, girls and children depend on us, not just for healthy productive, and reproductive, lives, but for their very survival. Improving the status of women will not happen without us. Prevention of HIV and other STIs will not happen without us. A proper balance between population size and the environment will not happen without us. The ability of nations to live within their borders and to refrain from poaching on or invading their neighbors will not happen without us.

Our volunteer founders came from a 19th Century world without family planning - they saw maternal and child mortality, with

women as slaves to reproduction, disease rampant, and back alley abortion the norm. As for sex, my grandmother's implacable opponent, Anthony Comstock, said that sexual pleasure within marriage was "bestial and base". The judge who sentenced my grandmother to jail in 1917 for opening America's first birth control clinic said, "A woman has no right to copulate without fear of pregnancy." Our opponents, those self-righteous forces of Fundamentalism, Orthodoxy and Puritanism, want to return women to the 19th Century, to the World of the Rhythm Method, which is not how we in the Western Region dance the salsa but is instead a game of Ovarian Roulette, where women lose. Sexual and Reproductive Freedom threatens the very foundations of those who would control our lives. The only thing that stands in their way is us, or more properly, our volunteers.

Our founders, Lady Rama Rau, Elise Ottesen-Jensen, and my grandmother, among others, weren't paid to do this. My grandmother never received a penny in salary from PP over her 50 years of dedication to our cause. She and her colleagues did this in the Spirit of Civilization, to win the race against Catastrophe. They

suffered ostracism and abuse for bringing things out into the open that weren't even discussed in bedrooms. They broke the prevailing rules of decency, taste and decorum. They were fearless. And blunt. My grandmother delivered herself of statements like, "Women are not meant to be brood animals for the masculine civilizations of the world." In late 1921 she said that, unless Japan adopted birth control, there would be a war between Japan and the United States in 20 years. She was right almost to the day. My grandmother said in her last interview, "The law against birth control was asinine, I broke it, I went to jail."

The word 'volunteer' from the Latin originally referred to volunteers for the Roman Army. We need to grow our army of volunteers. They bring to our Cause a strategic worldview with learning from other causes and disciplines, political savvy and connections, economic resources and, one hopes, the shamelessness to fight for those who cannot fight for themselves. In this task, we volunteers will be an almost constant source of embarrassment to our children. My sons, ages six and nine, were watching me on a televised debate on sex ed one day. After a few minutes of frank

exchange of views between me and my opponent about what should be taught when to schoolchildren, my nine-year-old turned to my wife and said, “Mom, should we be watching this?”

The extra good news in these times of fiscal contraction is that volunteers are really cheap!

My grandmother was accused once of having no sense of humor. She replied, “I am the proponent of women who have nothing to laugh about.” I have personally seen illegal birth control and illegal abortion, and I have seen the effects women as a result. I refuse to go back to those days. Failure is not an option.

To follow in my grandmother’s high heels is daunting. There are places I am not welcome, nor was she. There are awards you do not get because some Puritan Blue Nose will be offended. My grandmother and her founding colleagues never got the Nobel Peace Prize though she was nominated several times. She received exactly one honorary degree. That is why this honor is so important and so

special to me and my family and why I am so very grateful. Thank you.