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## Buddha's Light New York



**CSW66**  
**BLIA IN INDIA**  
Advancing Equality for  
Girls & Women

[www.fgsny.org](http://www.fgsny.org)

March — April 2022

Edition #3

## Welcome to the 3rd issue of Buddha's Light New York Bimonthly Magazine!

Every two months, we'll be giving you a glimpse into what *Buddha's Light International Association* has been working on! From March to April, BLIA has been contributing towards a mission of equality and social progress around the world.

The organization has been at the center of the women's equality movement — from advocating for women's education and employment in India to celebrating the leadership of women at the Queens District Attorney's Office. BLIA has met with the Secretary of Education to provide guidance on a humanistic approach to community issues and has also established a key partnership with UNICEF.



Fo Guang Shan New York Temple

# BLIA in the Community



Donating masks to New York Presbyterian Queens Hospital



Donating supplies to those affected by the earthquake in Haiti



Partnering with CAIPA to administer COVID-19 vaccines



Donating vegetables to those in need

## Executive Board

**President:** Cindy Lin

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**Publisher:** Buddha's Light International Association

**Editors:** Angelina Sun, Emily Wang, Helen Leong

**Design:** Angelina Sun

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# “Let The Dharma Water Flow Across All Five Continents”



**Buddha's Light International Association** (commonly known as BLIA) is a Buddhist monastic and lay organization. BLIA was established by Venerable Master Hsing Yun in 1992. The organization is associated with the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order, the largest Buddhist organization in Taiwan.

BLIA enacts Humanistic Buddhism, which is committed to equality, respect for others, and social progress. With the belief that Humanistic Buddhism is a driving force for social good, the organization works globally for positive action in the 21st century. BLIA supports communities worldwide to make a difference and encourage collective action to scale solutions to benefit the environment and future generations.

In addition, BLIA maintains friendly ties with devotees of other sects and religions. With its religious characteristics and the essence of education and cultural activities, BLIA's motivation toward strengthening the faith of people can be greatly enhanced.

Buddha's Light International Association is headquartered in Los Angeles, California. The organization currently has over 200 chapters in over 70 countries and regions.



South Africa's Nan Hua Temple Performing Arts Group visits the UN for CSW62

## Did You Know?

In 2003, BLIA joined the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with special consultative status, in recognition of its work in promoting health, education, and sustainability on five continents.

BLIA is the 1st Buddhist organization to be granted this status by the UN.



Four former students, Stanzin Samchok, Diskit Angmo, Vijeta Negi, and Tenzin Drema, shared their experiences and thanked Venerable Master Hsing Yun for providing them with the teachings to be a good person and to make the world a better place to live.

Special guests included Voyka Soto, Secretary of the New York Chapter and National Co-Chair of the Afghanistan Women's Project, Hawa Diallo, Chief of the Civil Society Unit of the United Nations Department of Global Communications, and Megan Shellman-Rickard, President of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Club. They praised BLIA's efforts to achieve global success through the implementation of various inclusive education programs and careers opportunities. The empowerment of women and girls, especially in rural areas, has made incredible progress in advancing gender equality.



# Creating a Lifelong Partnership with UNICEF

Austin Chu, Assistant Director of Global Cause Partnerships at UNICEF, visited Fo Guang Shan Temple on March 17th. He met with Venerable You Wang, Director of the UN Office of BLIA, and provided information about UNICEF's current role in the Russian-Ukrainian war, plans to rescue children and families in Ukraine, and future partnerships.



UNICEF's Austin Chu

UNICEF has a history of 75 years since its establishment after WWII. Their mission is to help children in developing countries by providing immunizations, strengthening nutrition, improving sanitation, promoting education, and providing emergency relief in response to disasters. Austin's role in UNICEF is to unite religious organizations of all faiths, bringing their strength together to achieve the mission of supporting children around the world.

Before COVID-19, UNICEF distributed 2 billion vaccines to developing countries each year, 45% of which were from their supply hub in Copenhagen, Denmark, with an emergency response time of 48-72 hours. They are currently seeking to raise \$3.5 million to help Ukraine meet their emergency relief needs.

Venerable You Wang provided Austin with Buddhist literature to distribute at UNICEF conferences. She also provided him with the YouTube link to view CSW66: BLIA in India and invited him to join BLIA's World Council Meeting in October. Austin will also update Venerable You Wang on future UNICEF events to incorporate BLIA's involvement.

Following the meeting, Venerable You Wang and Karina Liu, volunteer at BLIA's United Nations Office, gave Austin a tour of Fo Guang Shan Temple and presented the English editions of Venerable Master Hsing Yun's books "Buddha Shakyamuni" and "Buddhism in the Humanistic World."



Venerable You Wang and Austin Chu



Venerable You Wang and Volunteer Karina Liu

# US Secretary of Education Holds a Discussion with Religious Leaders

## Venerable You Wang Gives Buddhist Advice



Venerable You Wang and Reverend Brian McWeeney



Religious Leaders meet with US Secretary of Education Miguel A. Cardona

On March 18th, Venerable You Wang was invited to a roundtable discussion with the U.S. Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel A. Cardona and other religious leaders to address education, youth, and community issues. With the impact of COVID-19, Secretary Cardona was interested in hearing the perspectives of faith-based organizations on youth traditions of learning and building community, harmony, and social justice, as well as discussing post-pandemic recovery.

Faith plays a very important role in every family, not only on a personal level, but also in the work of the U.S. Department of Education. Secretary Cardona thanked the religious representatives for their hard work bringing the community together over the past two years. He also wants to strengthen his partnership with the religious representatives by listening to their feedback.

Representatives of different religions put forward their points of emphasis on issues such as the lack of nutritious school lunches, student loan forgiveness, weapons brought to school, and the dialogue between police and the youth. They would also like to see schools implement a religious education program to increase teachers' awareness and training of diverse religions, in hopes to reduce discrimination and bullying on campus.

Venerable You Wang spoke to Secretary Cardona and advocated for the education system to include the history of religions and cultures of the world, which will help bring together people of different backgrounds. Discrimination arises due to lack of understanding. School education should focus more on humanistic and moral character education.

Religious representatives at the meeting included Pastor Gilford Monroe, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Partnerships, Pastor Raymond Rivera of the Bronx Sanctuary Church, Reverend Brian McWeeney, Joseph Potasnik of the New York Board of Rabbis, Ravi Vaidyanat of the Hindu Temple Society of North America, Dan Brenner, Executive Director of the United Nations International School, and Sheikh Musa Drammeh of the Islamic Cultural Center.



## Honoring Ancestors During Ching Ming Festival

Maple Grove Cemetery in Jamaica, Queens invited Venerable Yung Ku of Fo Guang Shan Temple to lead a Ching Ming Ceremony on April 9th in their Celebration Hall. Peter Banks of Maple Grove Cemetery believes that the cemetery in Queens, where there are many Chinese communities, should have a Buddhist memorial service that is representative of the Chinese culture.

According to Chinese tradition, Ching Ming Festival, or Tomb-Sweeping Day, takes place on the 15th day after the Spring Equinox. Venerable Yung Ku organized and performed a dharma service in honor of Ching Ming Festival.





# Celebrating the Women of New York



Venerable You Wang, Melinda Katz, and Sharon Lee

On March 24th, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz held an event to celebrate “Women’s History Month.” Venerable You Wang was invited to attend as a member of the Queens District Attorney’s Multi-Religious Clergy Committee and represent Buddha’s Light International Association.

Queens DA Melinda Katz kicked off the celebration with a welcome speech, emphasizing the progress New York State has made in women’s history with more women serving leadership roles in office, from her own position as Queens District Attorney to Governor Kathy Hochul, Attorney General Letitia James, First Deputy Mayor Lorraine Grillo, and Speaker of New York City Council Adrienne Adams.

This celebration recognized four women – Sharon Lee, Audrey Pheffer, Myrna Mateo, and Erica Ford. Sharon Lee was appointed acting Queens Borough President by her predecessor Melinda Katz, who was elected District Attorney. Due to COVID-19, Lee’s original term of two months was extended an extra year. She has led the Queens Borough Council through the worst of the pandemic.

The other three honorees, Audrey Pheffer and Myrna Mateo, two senior staff of the District Attorney’s Office, along with Erica Ford, have spared no effort in advocating “peace as a form of life” for 30 years and have won numerous awards.



Melinda Katz and Venerable You Wang



Sharon Lee and Venerable You Wang

The celebration concluded with performances by NYC-renowned singer Jenna Esposito, 14-year-old TV theme song winner Julie Winter, and the dynamic drum band Fogo Azul.



Fogo Azul



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Fo Guang Shan New York Temple



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