



# embracing GLOBAL WOMEN

By Mikell Worley

COMMON THREADS THAT BIND US

**t**he parallels between the organizations Embracing Global Women (EGW) and *Women-CONNECT* are striking. For starters, Patricia Gadsden, founding publisher and editor of *Women-CONNECT*, has been involved with EGW since its creation in 2000. "I was extremely excited and honored to participate in the very first Embracing Global Women annual event," Patricia comments. EGW founder "Mary Howard Powell's and my vision definitely connect," she adds. "We both want other women to understand, respect, and learn about women from different cultures. We therefore complement each other's formats and have decided to collaborate on specific events and projects."

As for Powell, her work as an intellectual property attorney has provided a unique opportunity to see issues from a global perspective. She views global education as an avenue for increased understanding and harmony, and she passionately believes that we should strive to learn about all cultures. "We need to understand different value systems, not for the purpose of change, but for the purpose of education. One's role in society fits into the global scheme of other cultures. If we have an appreciation and understanding of these values, we will be more accepting and compassionate," she declares.

Through EGW Powell hopes to nurture the hunger for that kind of appreciation and understanding. The organization's mission statement reads, "Embracing Global Women is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering and educating by embracing global cultural awareness and American history through entertainment that facilitates learning about every country on the globe from the eyes of women." EGW leaders say their vision for the organization is that "Embracing Global Women will be recognized as an innovative cultural experience that partnerships with community entities to promote cultural education, American history, empowerment of women and international insight."

With no paid staff, consultants, or endowments, EGW is volunteer driven, and the energy and dedication is contagious with participation increasing annually. A number of core volunteers have been involved since the idea was conceived including Trudy Gaskin, Patricia Gadsden, and Patricia Wood.

When asked if the disastrous events of September 11, 2001, influenced the mission of the EGW, Mary responds that the concept of celebrating cultural differences was not a reaction to a single event or circumstance but had evolved through her own personal experience. When Mary attended college, she became involved in activities that improved her school and community, including serving as president of the African American Society. She was also the first female representative to sit on the college's board of directors. At that time, blacks were just beginning to feel empowered and interested in the white collaboration concepts. The young college student witnessed the benefits of networking and how it lead could lead to increased understanding and initiating change.

Change can come from small things. Mary learned this firsthand when she took a job as a non-discrimination lawyer in a small office in Dallas, Texas. She worked in an office with six other lawyers, and the atmosphere was often tense. Feeling frustrated, Mary suggested they hold a luncheon where they could eat together and share recipes. "The luncheon was a success. The work atmosphere changed," recounts Mary. It became obvious to her that "increased understanding through a sharing atmosphere improved communication and created an atmosphere of respect, replacing one of judgment and discord."

EGW organizers realized that big changes could come if they could enhance EGW's visibility in the community. So, in 2001, EGW along with members of the congregation of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where the Powell family worships, collaborated with community leaders to organize the first Celebration of Global Women. The festivities proved a great success, and the volunteer coordinators decided to make it an annual event.

Now held every year in March in honor of National Women's History Month, the celebration continues to grow and flourish. It embraces all of the women who live in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. "Women in Bloom" was the theme of the 2008 event. Offerings there included an Intercontinental Breakfast, a Health Initiative, a Celebration Program, Women's Intercontinental Legal Roundtable, and the Women-of-the-World luncheon. Every year since 2005 two undergraduates and two graduates are selected dur-



ing the celebration to receive EGW scholarships totaling \$3,000. Pennsylvania and our own community are fortunate to have individuals as well as businesses that understand and embrace the value of global education to improve understanding and encourage networking and cooperation among all women throughout the world.

Embracing Global Women and *Women-CONNECT* are committed to collaboration and are working creatively to utilize resources and reinforce their similar missions. The women featured from Embracing Global Women will appear in the Spring 2009 edition of *Women-CONNECT*, and the EGW "save the date" artwork will be on that issue's cover. The magazine will be posted at the EGW website [www.egw-women.org](http://www.egw-women.org). EGW is also offering an annual \$50 membership fee that will include a one year subscription to *Women-CONNECT*, a quarterly

publication; one all-day ticket to the 2009 Celebration of Global Women; an EGW membership card; and discounted admission to certain EGW and *Women-CONNECT* events.

EGW offers unique cultural awareness programs that encourage the acquisition of cultural competency. "Other than Native Americans, Eskimos, and Hawaiians, Americans are immigrants, or descendants of immigrants, to the United States. We come from diverse backgrounds and we use information from our own perspectives to make decisions. We have differences but more often we have similarities," observes Mary. "We have 'Common Threads That Bind Us.' This concept has been the theme for each of our events." She adds, "We encourage women to learn about every country on the globe through the eyes of women from seven continents." ❀



Mikell Worley is the founder and president of Mikell's Treasures. She has spent over 20 years designing and delivering self-improvement trainings, has had several cover stories in various magazines, and recently illustrated her first children's book. She is an advocate for women and children. She has two grown daughters.