



## Ronya D. Foy

Howard University

Received Sylff Fellowship in 2013

Good afternoon to Mr. Sasakawa, President Deguchi, SYLFF Foundation Secretariat, my SYLFF Leaders Workshop family and other invited guests.

My name is Ronya Foy Connor, a wife and mother, originally from Queens, New York, USA. I am the daughter of a retired teacher who taught children with disabilities for 35 years. I am the granddaughter of African-American migrants from the southern United States. My grandfather was a World War II U.S. Navy veteran who lived until the age of 104 and my grandmother was a part-time toy factory worker and full-time mother of four children.

Today, I wear my hair in a modern braid and twist style to represent my literal “roots” in the culture of the African diaspora. I am the first in my family to earn a doctoral degree, thanks to the support of a Sasakawa Fellowship at Howard University in Washington, DC - thank you Mr. Sasakawa. Since that time, two additional “Foy Family” members have earned doctorate degrees.

I now live and work in the tiny but powerful 35-square mile island of Anguilla, located in the Eastern Caribbean. The colors of the flag - which I wear today – are orange, blue and white. The orange represents the vibrancy and strength of the people; the blue is for the crystal clear sea waters and the white is for the peace and purity of spirit in the people.

Working in Gender Affairs for the Government of Anguilla, I assist women survivors of violence and abuse to reach their God-given purpose and create an island community of inclusion and safety. Coming out of this Leaders Workshop, I would like to launch a therapeutic community garden program for gender-based violence survivors. I also work closely with mentoring young entrepreneurs and building social enterprises. This is my passion; the very words that make my heart skip a beat: social entrepreneurship☺.

I want to thank the Sasakawa Foundation and the SYLFF Leaders Workshop for giving me this opportunity to dream big again. I never thought that I would be one of twenty fellows for this first Leaders Workshop in Japan. It has been motivational to share my thoughts, ideas

and experiences while learning about the interests and influence of my counterparts.

I would like to close by saying: No matter how old or young you are, where you come from or what your life path has been, please never doubt your convictions to make a positive change in someone's life. Mr. Sasakawa has made that mark in our lives and I thank him for literally endowing us and creating a legacy that will never end.

Thank you.

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