

## **Culture of Peace Award Ceremony in the German Parliamentary Society in Berlin**

**Nobel Prize Laureate Wole Soyinka, Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., UNESCO Prize Winner Yvonne Bezerra de Mello, human rights expert Pierre Sané (Senegal/France), Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences (UNESCO) received the European Culture of Peace Award in Berlin on June 14, in recognition of their fight against human rights abuses, racism, and discrimination, and of their efforts on behalf of the victims of oppression. The award was presented by Professor Amy-Diana Colin on behalf of the City for the Cultures of Peace—Cité des Cultures de la Paix—Cité der Friedenskulturen and the European Cultural Foundation: Pro Europa.**

**In her welcoming remarks, Dr. Elke Leonhard, Honorary President of the German Parliamentary Society, stressed the significance of holding this Award Ceremony in the *Reichstagspräsidentenpalais* that frequently hosts State Presidents. As premises of the German Parliamentary Society, which comprises members of the German and European Parliament, the *Reichstagspräsidentenpalais* has come to be regarded as a symbolic center of German Parliamentary power. It is located right across the palace of the German Parliament, the *Reichstagspalais*.**

**On 15 June, one day after the Award Ceremony, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Professor Dr. Horst Köhler, received Nobel Prize Laureate Wole Soyinka and Professor Henry L. Gates in his presidential palace, Schloß Bellevue. The red carpet was rolled out for them.**

**“The European Culture of Peace Awards honor key cultural mediators who stand up for peaceful conflict resolution, build bridges between heterogeneous peoples, and inscribe the idea of peace into the consciousness of the present,” underlined Professor Amy-Diana Colin, founder of the City for the Cultures of Peace, in her opening address.**

**Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), the President of the African Community of Culture, received the European Culture of Peace Award for Civic Courage and the Defense of Human Rights for his courageous decades-long opposition to human rights abuses and his advocacy of equality and democracy, both in his native Nigeria and internationally. Gates, the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and the Director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University, received the European Science and Culture Award for his books, films, and teaching about the history of Africans and African Americans and for his eloquent support for the struggle for equal rights in the United States. Yvonne Bezerra de Mello (Brazil), the founder of the children's foundation Projeto Uerê, received the European Culture of Peace Award for Social Engagement; Pierre Sané (Senegal/France), Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences**

(UNESCO) received the European Culture of Peace Award for the Combat of Human Rights Abuse.

Other recipients of Awards included Florence Sitruk (Switzerland/Germany), renowned harp player, who received the Elias Parish Alvars Award for Music as a Culture of Peace; and Bacari Suso (Germany), Abdourhamane Gilbert Diop (Senegal), and Akin Fansom (Nigeria), who were awarded the *Förderpreise für Musik und Friedenskultur*, for further studies in music and culture of peace.

Former recipients of the Culture of Peace Awards of the City for the Cultures of Peace and Pro Europa include the famous German literary critic Professor Marcel Reich-Ranicki, former editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*; Stanley Hoffmann, the Paul and Catherine Buttenwieser University Professor at Harvard; Yale-Professors Geoffrey Hartman, Sterling Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Peter Demetz, Sterling Professor of Comparative and German Literature, and Wolfgang Leonhard, leading expert on Soviet history. Among political figures receiving these awards are Dr. Elke Leonhard, Honorary President of the German Parliamentarian Society and former long-term member of the German Parliament. The first Forum on Cultures of Peace held in Lucerne 2003, the renowned peacemaker President Martti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland, received the Euro–Atlantic–Bridge Award of the European Cultural Foundation. Pro Europa laureates also include Anne-Sophie Mutter, Daniel Barenboim, Placido Domingo, Frank O. Gehry, Mario Botta, and Lord Foster.

The City for the Cultures of Peace—Cité des Cultures de la Paix—Cité der Friedenskulturen is an international network of distinguished scholars and scientists from a variety of disciplines, artists, musicians, social workers, and other professionals, established to promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts and to develop new solutions and strategies to confront problems facing contemporary societies around the world. The network was formed as a response to two World Wars and the genocides overshadowing the twentieth century.

The 2007 Award Ceremony capped the Cultures of Peace Forum, "Personal Engagement in History and Society" (June 13-14), which focused on the deteriorating human rights situation in many African nations, the dire plight of street children and children in need, strategies to prevent genocide, and the ongoing struggle against all violations of human rights. The Forum featured Bezerra de Mello's lecture about her work on behalf of street children in Brazil and several African states, Sané's speech about his efforts to defend human rights in several totalitarian nations, and a conversation between Soyinka and Gates about their efforts in African countries and the United States to combat racism, discrimination, and the abuse of human rights.

The Forum was organized by Professor Amy-Diana Colin and Joseph von Radowitz with the support of the City for the Cultures of Peace, the Zeit-Foundation Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute at Harvard, the

**Kulturwissenschaftliches Seminar at the Humboldt-University in Berlin, Comcat Design, Joseph-Radowitz-Events, and THE REGENT (Berlin).**