

Salvationist Teenager to Speak at the United Nations



Kayla Calvo with her parents, Majors Joaquin and Kathleen Calvo and her brother Nathaniel

A fourteen year old Salvationist from the USA is preparing to give a speech at the United Nations in New York. Kayla Calvo was asked by the United Nations (UN) to represent and speak on behalf of young people from around the world on the topic of 'Fulfilling the Rights of Indigenous Children: Successes and Challenges'. She will speak at the UN on Thursday 15 November as part of a day of celebration for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As a descendant of indigenous peoples from Costa Rica, Kayla will bring personal insight to the proceedings. The invitation has allowed her to research and find that, in addition to the difficulties that all children face, there is a need for the UN to look more deeply at the unique needs of indigenous children.

In 2011 Kayla was invited to represent The Salvation Army at the UN's 55th Session on the Commission on the Status of Women. She attended the opening session of the General Assembly while representatives from different countries gave their views on the condition of the 'girl child'. She also attended workshops given by the UN. Kayla was asked, along with two other Salvationist girls, to give a presentation at a parallel event. This presentation was entitled 'Girls Talking about Violence

Against Girls'. During this event, Kayla offered her findings and impressions regarding the violence that girls face every day.

Kayla is an active member of Newark Ironbound Corps (Salvation Army church) in the USA Eastern Territory, where she is preparing to be enrolled as a senior soldier. She is involved in women's ministries and also volunteers at a boys and girls club in Newark, which is run by The Salvation Army.

One of Kayla's great passions is for the plight of the girl child. Kayla has conducted research in order to learn about the conditions under which many girls are forced to live. She has a burden for the many girls who live in subhuman conditions and often have to fight for their right to survival. She and her family sponsor a girl in Burkina Faso.

Kayla is inspired to live her life in line with Matthew 25:40, where Jesus shares an important truth: 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me' (New International Version).

Report by Major Victoria Edmonds

Representative to the United Nations

The Salvation Army's International Social Justice Commission