

# A "PEACE" of Reality

I have had the pleasure of singing at many occasions, including at the Nobel Peace Prize concert. As you can imagine, that was pretty exciting, but, I have to say, attending the [2012 World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates](#) might surpass even that experience. Among the crowd of laureates was our esteemed Sing for Hope board member and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, who also happens to be my dad.



Let me set the stage for you: every year, the laureates gather at the Summit, and, this year, they asked me to perform and speak about Sing for Hope before the Summit's inaugural youth delegation. During the opening night dinner at the Field Museum in Chicago, I sang two pieces – George Gershwin's *Summertime* and Rodgers and Hammerstein's *You'll Never*

*Walk Alone*. President Clinton delivered the evening's closing remarks to a distinguished audience that included all of the laureates, Mayor Rahm Emmanuel of Chicago, Governor Pat Quinn of Illinois, and hundreds of other guests. Academy Award-winning actor Sean Penn was also on hand to receive the Peace Summit Award. Needless to say, the nerves were elevated. Luckily, the fabulous pianist Craig Terry was with me and to keep me even-keeled.

After the performance, I made my way back to the table and encountered the highlight of my evening: President Clinton proceeded to tell me how much he enjoyed my performance. He demonstrated an impressive familiarity with the history of *Porgy and Bess* and how quickly Gershwin wrote the piece after just five months on the docks of Charleston. After that conversation, I turned around and Mayor Rahm Emmanuel was standing there with a kind word about the performance.





I floated back to the hotel that night, and that was just Day One – there was more to come. The panel discussions formed the core of the summit, providing the audience an opportunity to listen to these global thought leaders on topics that included peace, governance, and women. You would think that these weighty questions would be addressed in a grave tone, but the laureates were both witty and unexpectedly funny.

Students were a major part of this year's summit focus. Partnering with the [Permanent Secretariat of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates](#), the [Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights](#) worked with Chicago's public school system to arrange for laureates to visit local high schools. The Summit also hosted its first youth delegation, comprised of university students from all over the globe, and I had the honor of speaking to this group about Sing for Hope. The theme of one person making a difference was a ubiquitous sentiment throughout the three-day conference, and the students were excited to share their passions. Several other speakers also discussed their work, including Dave Steward, Executive Director of the [FW de Klerk Foundation](#), which is based in South Africa. Hearing him speak about the events leading up to the end of apartheid was riveting.

But that was not the end. On the last day of the summit, there was a luncheon. I don't know how, but I ended up sitting next to the Dalai Lama. Also seated at this table was Nobel laureate Jody Williams, former President of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev, first President of Poland Lech Wałęsa, Professor Muhammad Yunus, and Kerry Kennedy.



Now, please tell me, what would you ask the Dalai Lama, or, for that matter, any one of these peacemakers over lunch? I was totally overwhelmed, not only because I was sitting next to the Dalai Lama, but also because of the mass of security, the crush of the cameras, and my brain's racing to figure out what to say. Ultimately, I didn't get much out, being too awed by the company and the enormity of the history makers at the table.

At the very least, I ended up with some great photos. Wouldn't you, too?

–Monica Yunus, Sing for Hope Co-Founder