

JOAN B. KROC

*Distinguished Lecture Series*

Peace & Justice Theatre

**Noeleen Heyzer, Ph.D.**

*Women, War and Peace: Mobilizing for Security  
and Justice in the 21st Century*

JOAN B. KROC INSTITUTE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE



University of San Diego



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*Distinguished Lecture Series*

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JOAN B. KROC INSTITUTE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

University of San Diego

San Diego, California

Noeleen Heyzer, Ph.D.

*Women, War and Peace: Mobilizing for Security  
and Justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

Edited by Emiko Noma

*Fostering Peace, Cultivating Justice, Creating a Safer World*



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## JOAN B. KROC INSTITUTE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE



The mission of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ) is to foster peace, cultivate justice and create a safer world. Through education, research and peacemaking activities, the IPJ offers programs that advance scholarship and practice in conflict resolution and human rights. The Institute for Peace & Justice, located at the University of San Diego, draws upon Catholic social teaching that sees peace as inseparable from justice and acts to prevent and resolve conflicts that threaten local, national and international peace.

The IPJ was established in 2000 through a generous gift from the late Joan B. Kroc to the University of San Diego to create an institute for the study and practice of peace and justice. Programming began in early 2001 and the building was dedicated in December 2001 with a conference, “Peacemaking with Justice: Policy for the 21st Century.”

The Institute for Peace & Justice strives, in Joan B. Kroc’s words, to “not only talk about peace, but to make peace.” The IPJ offers its services to parties in conflict to provide mediation and facilitation, assessments, training and consultations. It advances peace with justice through work with members of civil society in zones of conflict and has a focus on mainstreaming women in peace processes.

The Women PeaceMakers Program brings into residence at the IPJ women who have been actively engaged in peacemaking in conflict areas around the

world to document their stories, share experiences with others working in peacemaking, and allow time for reflection on their work.

A Master’s Program in Peace & Justice Studies trains future leaders in the field and will be expanded into the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, supported by a \$50 million endowment from the estate of Mrs. Kroc.

WorldLink, a year-round educational program for high school students from San Diego and Baja California connects youth to global affairs.

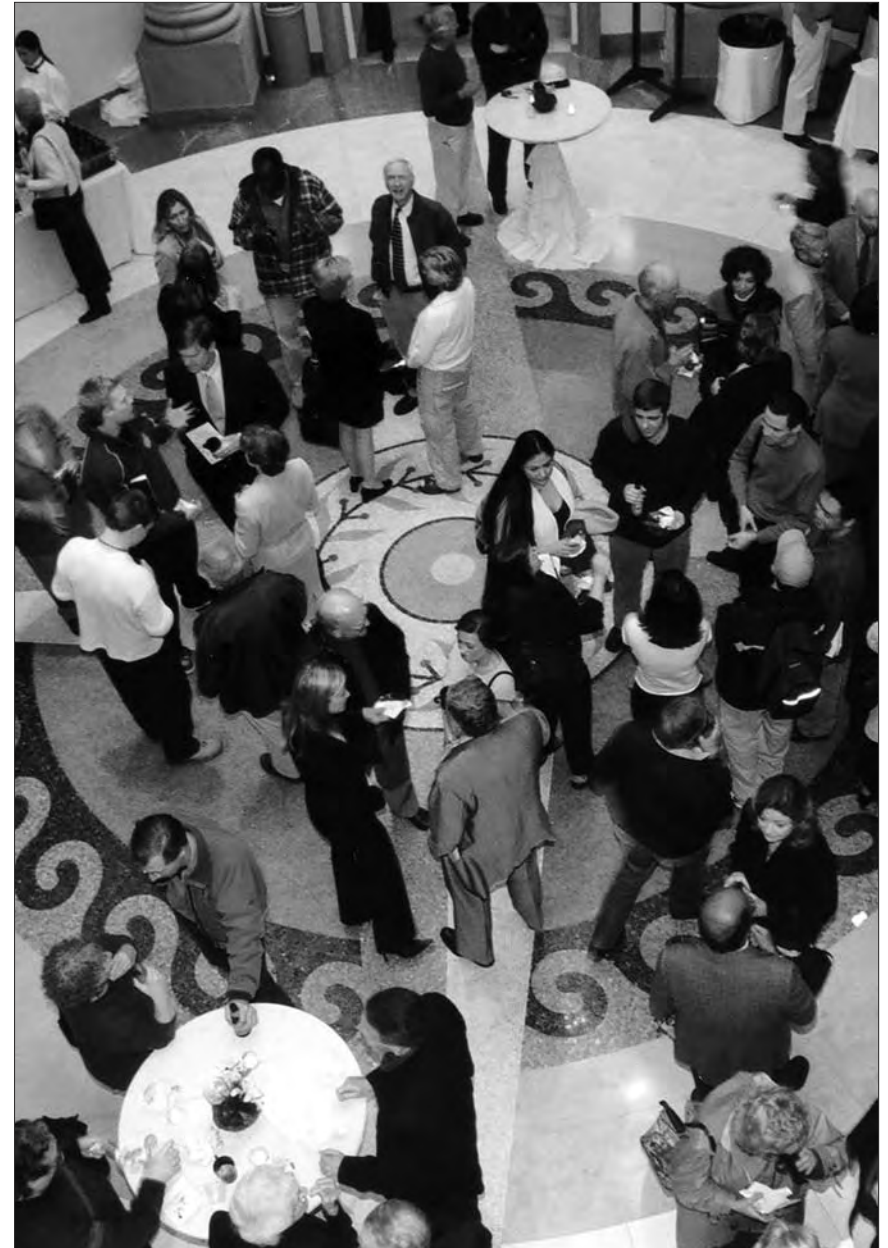
Country programs, such as the Nepal project, offer wide-ranging conflict assessments, mediation and conflict resolution training workshops.

Community outreach includes speakers, films, art and opportunities for discussion between community members, academics and practitioners on issues of peace and social justice, as well as dialogue with national and international leaders in government, non-governmental organizations and the military.

## JOAN B. KROC DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

Endowed in 2003 by a generous gift to the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice from the late Joan Kroc, philanthropist and international peace proponent, the Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series is a forum for high-level national and international leaders and policy makers to share their knowledge and perspectives on issues related to peace and justice. The goal of the series is to deepen understanding of how to prevent and resolve conflict and promote peace with justice.

The Distinguished Lecture Series offers the community at large an opportunity to engage with leaders who are working to forge new dialogues with parties in conflict and who seek to answer the question of how to create an enduring peace for tomorrow. The series, which is held at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego, examines new developments in the search for effective tools to prevent and resolve conflict while protecting human rights and ensuring social justice.



## DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES SPEAKERS

- April 15, 2003 Robert Edgar, Ph.D.  
General Secretary, National Council of Churches  
*The Role of the Church in U.S. Foreign Policy*
- May 8, 2003 Helen Caldicott, M.D.  
President, Nuclear Policy Research Institute  
*The New Nuclear Danger*
- October 15, 2003 Richard J. Goldstone  
Justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa  
*The Role of International Law in Preventing Deadly Conflict*
- January 14, 2004 Ambassador Donald K. Steinberg  
U.S. Department of State  
*Conflict, Gender and Human Rights: Lessons Learned from the Field*
- April 14, 2004 General Anthony C. Zinni  
United States Marine Corps (retired)  
*From the Battlefield to the Negotiating Table:  
Preventing Deadly Conflict*
- November 4, 2004 Hanan Ashrawi, Ph.D.  
Secretary General – Palestinian Initiative for the  
Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy  
*Concept, Context and Process in Peacemaking:  
The Palestinian-Israeli Experience*

- November 17, 2004 Noeleen Heyzer, Ph.D.  
Executive Director – United Nations Development  
Fund for Women  
*Women, War and Peace: Mobilizing for Security  
and Justice in the 21st Century*





## BIOGRAPHY OF NOELEEN HEZYER, PH.D.

Noeleen Heyzer is the first executive director from the global south to head the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the leading operational agency within the United Nations to promote women's rights and gender equality. Under her leadership, UNIFEM has almost tripled its resources and successfully advocated to put issues affecting women high on the agenda of the U.N. system.

Since joining UNIFEM, Dr. Heyzer has pioneered new approaches to strengthening women's economic security and rights in the context of feminized poverty and globalization; promoting women's leadership in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconstruction; ending violence against women; and combating HIV/AIDS from a gender perspective. She spearheaded the U.N. inter-agency regional campaigns to end violence against women and was responsible for the establishment of the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, which UNIFEM administers. She played a critical role in the Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and in ensuring that it is implemented U.N. system-wide in order to make a difference to women's lives on the ground. Her work has taken her to many conflict situations around the world to assess first-hand the impact of war on women and to develop programs of action in partnership with women organizations, the U.N. system and donors.

Before joining UNIFEM, Dr. Heyzer was a policy advisor to several Asian governments on gender issues, playing a key role in the formulation of national development policies, strategies and programs from a gender perspective. She has done extensive work at the community level with women migrant workers, women in the informal sector and in plantations, young women in prostitution, and female workers in free trade zones. She also worked as a textile worker in a free trade zone, organizing women and assisting trade unions to address issues affecting women workers. In 1994-95 she played an important role in the preparatory process for the Fourth World

Conference on Women in Beijing, including organizing over 1,000 NGOs [non-governmental organizations] in the Asia Pacific region to develop the first ever NGO Action Plan.

Dr. Heyzer has been a founding member of numerous regional and international women's networks and has published extensively on gender and development issues, especially economic globalization, international migration and trafficking, gender and trade, and women, peace and security. She has served on numerous boards and advisory committees of international organizations and universities. She chaired several U.N. ministerial roundtables including on Gender and HIV/AIDS, and on Poverty, HIV/AIDS and Conflict, and has received several awards, including the UNA-Harvard Leadership Award and the Woman of Distinction Award from the UN-NGO Committee on the Status of Women.

Born in Singapore, Dr. Heyzer received a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Singapore, and a doctorate in social sciences from Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.



## INTERVIEW WITH NOELEEN HEYZER, PH.D.

The following is an edited transcript of an interview with Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, conducted by Dr. Dee Aker, Deputy Director of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, on November 17, 2004.

NH = Noeleen Heyzer

DA = Dee Aker

**DA: Dr. Heyzer, I'd like to interview you about how you came to a leadership role, and learn a little bit more about what path led you to your global work and becoming the Executive Director of UNIFEM. I would also ask you to share just a few of those "ah ha" moments, as well as those "oh no" moments, when you saw what had to be done to begin to address a conflict-affected world, one particularly brutal to women. If we have time we'll talk about some of the folks that you see emerging who could do this work as well. So, Noeleen, who was Noeleen Heyzer as a child? Are you a natural leader?**

NH: I wouldn't call myself a natural leader. There were circumstances that made me a leader because I saw so many things falling apart as a child, both in the country and within the home. I found that either I took leadership and found solutions, or things would get worse or just wouldn't get done. Other people around me were falling apart because of the circumstances we lived in. So the times made me and chose me as a leader.

**DA: What was Singapore's, your ethnic community's, attitude about girls and leadership?**

NH: Well, I grew up in Singapore at a time when it was one of the region's poorest countries. It was seen as a dumping ground for poor people that fled or were deported and sent as bonded labor from other parts of Asia, and I grew up in a very poor community. In that sense, I knew the situation of poverty

for many people was created, and I saw the effects of colonialism, especially on "coolie" labor, and the way migrant workers were treated. But I also saw the power of the community organizing, especially among the Chinese and Indian workers. The Chinese migrant workers who came from some of the poorest areas of China were so good at community organizing. They had funeral parlors, networks, clanships, and the whole community was organized, street by street, so I saw community organizing at its best. And I also saw community leadership and the fact that people—even in the worst circumstances—refused to submit to suffering; they found ways of overcoming it, and they found ways to be happy at an everyday level against all odds. I still remember their eyes—I noticed eyes that shine, and smiles in the most difficult situations; that spirit really impressed me.

In terms of ethnicity, I come from a mixed background. In a way, this was very difficult because, at that time, you had to fit into ethnic and identity politics and I could never fit into any ethnic box. And so, in a sense, I grew up at the margins and I knew what it meant to grow up at the margins. But it also gave me a lot of power because I didn't have to conform. I could break rules without the whole community coming down on me; but at the same time I also understood what it meant to be excluded because of ethnicity.

**DA: What impact did the education you received in Singapore and Cambridge have in influencing your career?**

NH: Education has made a big difference in my life. My grandmother was the one who really instilled in me the need to be educated. She herself never had any education and she felt that education was essential for women to have some options in life. I almost never went to school until I was eight, and even then it was not easy because, as I said, we were extremely poor. I didn't have books and so on until much, much later. But I was lucky because I was surrounded by people who were very supportive. My uncle and aunts were





extremely supportive, and I had mentors who were very supportive. What I think really made a difference was that I enjoyed ideas, I enjoyed discussion, and eventually I was able to win a series of scholarships that brought me to Cambridge. So I was blessed, despite all my disadvantages, with curiosity and the capacity to break boundaries at a very young age and not be stopped by the big hurdles that I confronted, and blessed to also have the stamina and courage of overcoming very difficult situations. I also drew from the strength of people whom I saw—ordinary people, men and women and friends—who were able to, not consciously but just by everyday living, show a way of being in the world with grace and generosity.

**DA: Was there one moment or experience that led you to think that women must be more engaged in a solution to the global challenges we face?**

NH: At that time Singapore was a country just coming out of colonialism, that wanted to get the power to shape its own future, that wanted to put away its suffering, and that wanted to come into a new vision of a high-growth state. It was about economic security. It was really putting away the past, almost like blocking it out so that a new country could actually emerge. I went along that path for awhile: I engaged in banking but I found it didn't suit me. I was also trying to find a legitimate voice, and so because I had my Ph.D. from Cambridge, I got the highest legitimacy in the society. I was seen as a bright, upcoming young woman who could come into various positions.

But what kept pulling me back was actually my outrage over human suffering and injustice. Even if it was silenced because speaking about it was dangerous, it kept speaking to me. At the time I could not fully participate in this new society in Singapore because of what was happening to the migrant workers. We were re-creating a community very, very quickly, in terms of the high rise flats, hotels, roads, construction, shipyards and so on. But we had one of the highest accident rates, people were literally falling off buildings, there were shipyard fires, and the migrant workers that were very much a part of the construction community were not being taken care of. There were no safety regulations and no labor rights in the work they did.

We were put into a position where we had to accept that these migrants were not our citizens, and the countries they came from were even worse than what we were offering them, or else they wouldn't take the jobs. The rationale was that we don't really have any accountability or responsibility towards them. I couldn't go along with that. I have a deep sense of common humanity and responsibility to reach out; I drew so much from the original migrant community and I could not watch what we were doing to the new wave of migrants. For a long while, I couldn't enter any of the hotels that were being built; I couldn't go to the coffee houses because I knew who built these buildings—and who fell from them. I focused my research on shipyard workers because they had the highest accident rates due to fire on the ships. I committed myself to safe and better working conditions for all.

It was during that time that I came across the women migrant workers—very young migrant workers, working in the free trade zones. Then I realized that our new society was being constructed on the backs of migrant workers. As we dealt with reducing our own poverty through a high growth economic strategy, we were drawing labor internationally and we were a part of an international economic system. So I was drawn to understand what was happening to employment and migration in our region, as well as within the global economy.

**DA: You do go from that understanding in Singapore to an international focus. I mean, you are a person of the world. Was that the impetus to really look at how you deal with things internationally or did you gradually move into the international world?**

NH: I think also that the time I spent in Cambridge was one of the most transformational periods of my life because for the first time I had time to read, to go to libraries, to reflect, and that was a time when I had a room to myself, a place of my own. I began to read from the perspective of my own framework, my own mental framework. I saw the interplay of international forces and peoples' everyday lives. I saw what happened in Singapore in the community, not just as something that was located in the community—it

was almost like the global became local. It was the coming together of the colonization forces from Europe, the movement of migrant workers from India, from China, as part of the functioning of the global economy at that time. I studied the international movement of capital, of labor and of people working all their lives within these larger international forces. So from then on, I think the human drama created by the international forces intersecting with the local was definitely my passion.

**DA: You can see all those things, but at some point, sometimes, there are models for people. Were there any women or men who spoke to your heart and your mind about what to do when you saw this kind of crisis?**

NH: Yes, I was influenced by many things, mainly because of my mental and emotional curiosity. And certain kinds of leaders spoke to me. There were those who were really passionate, and those who were compassionate, who had a vision beyond themselves and who were able to transcend all kinds of situations. There were those who had boldness and vision and moral courage. I would say that when I was growing up, I was blessed in that there were a number of priests or missionaries who were motivated at that time by the theology of liberation, and I was very influenced by that thinking, as well as by a Jesuit priest who became a very close friend. That started me thinking in much larger terms. I never became an institutionally religious person; it was more the thinking and the spirituality behind it, and the sense of selflessness, leadership as service, and leadership as a calling that influenced me.

The other important influences were all the conversations and the struggles taking place around nation-building. There was a big discussion at that time about the “Third Way.” We were caught between capitalism and communism and we were forced to think, what are some of the more sustainable methods of development and institutions that could sustain community and deal with the hard questions of inequality, poverty, employment and helping communities? I was very fortunate to become international secretary of the Democratic Socialist movement at that time, and I was sent to Scandinavia for about two months to look at the Democratic Socialist’s Third Way in those countries.

There I met Gunnar Myrdal,<sup>1</sup> a Nobel Prize winner who gave me a whole volume of his writings on *The Asian Drama*. I also realized that in many of the things we were doing, we were not alone. There was an international community of support trying to find ways in which countries can come out of colonialism and make it. I felt very connected internationally.

But my own family still influenced me a lot. I think of my grandmother’s determination not to give up even though she had a very, very hard life as a widow during the war. She had to send her children to orphanages so that she could work, but she made sure that all her children got a strong education and then I benefited from that. My aunt ran most of the girls’ schools, the convent schools in Singapore and Malaysia, and the orphanages as well. She was a woman of service. Her strength and her values and that of her community influenced me a lot. My husband was also a strong influence in the early part of our relationship, especially regarding the politics of our time.

**DA: It’s interesting to put that in the perspective of where you are right now. I mean, it may have been an advantage for you not coming from a developed country, what you saw first-hand and were exposed to, the great thinkers. But that brings us to where you are now. What are your priorities now in your work? What is really important?**

NH: I think that we are at a crossroads in human history, which is forcing us to re-think some issues. I think that the reality of violence as a tool of agency has to be broken. We have to deal with violence in daily life, issues of poverty and inequality, which are still very pertinent. The particular way in which globalization is taking place—how do we influence that so that economic change can support the kind of communities we need at the local level, rather than disrupt them? The issue of conflict and war and how at the end of the day (I hope to be able to see this in my lifetime), we need to be able to outlaw war as a way of dealing with differences, not think of heroism in terms of who it is we can kill. Just as slavery and colonialism were abolished, we need to have

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<sup>1</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, a Swedish diplomat and politician, received the Nobel Prize for Economics for his work on issues of economic development.

a profound re-thinking of what it means to be human. How do we live with the diversity of being human, and deal with the weaknesses and the strength of being human? Another priority is dealing with issues that I call “problems without borders.” I think most of the issues of our time are complex global problems that require us to think even beyond the boundaries of nation-states. We are at a time, because things look so complex, where there is a tendency to try to look for security in the spaces that we feel most comfortable in and in the institutions that we feel most comfortable in, and yet some of the solutions may require us to think outside of precisely those institutions.

**DA: I know that you get to be with women around the world on a very intimate basis and I know their stories become the inspiration for a lot of what you do. But do you personally ever feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenges for women and girls and our communities—the waves of violence or greed or arrogance?**

NH: Yes, I think I feel that more now than before. At times in the last couple of months I have been on the verge of despair—and I just stop myself. I have to stop myself from despairing. And I think that the point is that we need to keep on going. I think we just have to keep on going forward; but, it is extremely difficult. Because there are so many extremisms, I think we have lost much of our common ground, so we need to win back some commonality and common ground. The extremes are pulling us apart. We have to identify leaders, people, spaces in which we can invest. We have to invest in courage, and keep the light of hope burning. And this is a time when we also have to strengthen friendships to keep each other going. We need to find joy and to also show a sense of joy, to find things that bring joy to our lives and to celebrate that. There is so much beauty in living as well, and I think that is something that we need to share.

**DA: Do you find new women leaders emerging? Are there younger women who are actually stepping up to the plate?**

NH: I actually have been very inspired by some of the younger women. Some of the best ways of being in touch with the young are via our daughters, and in UNIFEM, with the young women I work with. Because we came out of a movement of women who tried to push all kinds of boundaries, sometimes we can't see that there are younger women in the movement, and we think that the younger women have taken everything for granted. They may not in fact be in the women's movement, but they are in other movements. That is so encouraging.

The young women in UNIFEM and the young women I see in many other countries are searching and searching and they want to contribute. Somehow we have to provide them with the opportunity to contribute. Many young women have come up to me and said, “Thank you for showing us a way because I didn't know what to do with my life, and now I'm so convinced that this is a possible role.” I can't tell you how many people have come to me, including mothers that come to me, and said, “When my daughter heard you, she changed her life.”

If each one of us can rekindle this capacity of dreaming in young women, they can become more than their circumstances and they can dream of a better world. My own daughter has gone way beyond me, in terms of her intelligence, her capacity to write and to be committed. She's working in a conflict-affected tsunami area and with refugees, and I'm just amazed at her bravery, her intelligence and her commitment.

**DA: You were telling me a story as we were coming over here about your daughter at a time when she had choices to make. The choice she made was in terms of her compassion.**

NH: Yes. Because she was in between universities, she had time during the summer to work. She realized that the first contribution she could make was to serve as a volunteer at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and she did this in Malaysia. At that time, UNHCR didn't

even know that a crisis was building, with regard to the refugees from Aceh [Indonesia] because martial law had just been imposed. She literally trekked into some idle lands to trace the refugee population, and went there alone with a taxi driver. She found that UNHCR had a crisis on their hands and committed herself to work with UNHCR. I could not believe it. She did not want to tell me; but, she made a video of that community in crisis, and brought it back to UNHCR in Kuala Lumpur. She literally changed their policies on the refugee situation, including getting temporary protection papers for many of these refugees who would have been sent back and shot. There were at least, I was told, 2,000 of them. She stayed up nights writing up cases and briefs for UNHCR and negotiating on behalf of the refugees. I thought, I would never have done something like that. I could work in a factory, but I would not have taken that kind of a risk. And I didn't encourage that risk, by the way, but the fact that she had the courage to do that, and make strategic interventions that resulted in workable solutions was quite remarkable.

**DA: Well, I would be remiss if I didn't ask you about young men who are stepping up and looking to the kind of world you think we need to put together—more humanist, more concerned, more connected. What about young men in the U.N. or elsewhere?**

NH: Yes, I wouldn't talk about the men in the U.N. at this time, but I must say that, again, because I've been surrounded by quite a lot of young people, friends of my daughters, young men as well as young women, I am also encouraged. There are many young men who want to throw off the way society has defined masculinity. They are just so fed up because it hurts them. They want to find a role whereby they can become complete human beings as well. I know through UNIFEM's work, a number of young men, and also older men, are now willing to come out to talk about issues of male violence against women, about getting involved with movements to combat HIV/AIDS. There are men who want to find ways whereby they can be more engaged in parenting. So I do find that there is hope; but, of course, this also has to be reflected in our institutions, in power relationships, in the way corporations are run. I

would like to see the change I see beginning at the individual level transform itself into a transformation of power at the corporate level—in the way we generate wealth, in the way we do business, in the way we negotiate. At the end of the day, that is where we have to use all this new energy.

**DA: Male and female?**

NH: Male and female.

**DA: You've worked with prostitutes, migrant workers, as well as national and global leaders, and you're at the point now where you can just about walk into any room, whether it's a boardroom or whether it's a government office, and have some time to talk about who gives you the most hope, the most inspiration. Who is making the greatest transformation, or does it have to come from everyone?**

NH: You know, I think it has to come from multiple levels, and, because the problems of the 21st century are complex global problems, it requires new approaches and new alliances. I try very hard to make sure that those on the ground that are empowering themselves will be able to build these alliances, and include those at the top. Much of what I try to do is to link the grounded realities of people's lives in terms of injustices, grievances and solutions to the policy-making level of frameworks, of institutions, of resource allocation—and make sure that the money goes to the right places. I think we have to somehow link people into a community of change and a community of support.

What I find is that a lot of donor money is now going into peacekeeping and peace operations, with more and more cuts in terms of the whole development sector. And when there are cuts in the development sector, the first cuts come in, or are from, women-specific spaces. This is because we are seen as too small and not able to contribute to what they call efficiency, in terms of reduced transaction costs. I thought, what a way to look at effectiveness. Instead of



looking at it in terms of development, effectiveness of people, effectiveness in terms of what you do, it is more in terms of donor cost-effectiveness, in terms of transaction costs. I find that really to be a problem.

Somehow we have to make sure that at the time when we are at our richest, these riches go to support the kind of peace, the kind of security and the kind of justice that we want to see. Sometimes that requires us to break through how our institutions are today, and I think it requires a re-thinking of institutions. I honestly feel that we have an institutional failure of not being able to reach the ground, and we have institutions that block people out. So I feel that at this time, we need people who dare to think out of the box of new ways of alliance-building, new ways of partnerships, of getting out of some of these institutional failures.

**DA: Some institutions are changing, but will they change as we hope? The Grameen Bank and local micro-credit successes have recently inspired some larger banking institutions to consider smaller, if not tiny, local loans. In the past, the big banks would not and could not be bothered with these micro-credit ventures, in spite of a 97-100 percent payback. They thought the trouble to the bank was too great for tiny loans; there would be no profit. Now there is interest in going local in developing countries.**

NH: Yes, I think that this issue of scaling up is very important and that we definitely have to find ways of doing that. But if we want to do that, the institutions have to change. So I hope that by linking the ground to some of these institutions, you bring about this institutional transformation, and that in the same way as I tried to bring the ground to the policymakers, their policies would change. We can't just remain at the ground and be happy with all these little energies and efforts because these are solutions and alternatives which have come up; but, they need to be invested in, they need to become literally our everyday practice. So the challenge is how not to lose that dynamism.

**DA: Well, finally, let me just ask you, when you look around the world**

**you know what has to be done—this linking—but what are those essential traits that a good leader would have in these times, because we need some good leaders?**

NH: I think you need to have a vision, a very clear and strong vision of what is possible. You need moral courage, you need stamina, you need to be able to connect, you need to be able to think out of the box. Definitely I think boldness is important because if it is true that we are now living in a unilateral world, the shaping of that world has resulted in many voices and people in leadership that have been marginalized. If you do not want to be forced, because of extremisms, to take a black-and-white approach, this kind of marginalization is very dangerous. I would say that humanity's entry into the 21st century is both dangerous and painful because of the kind of leadership that we see. It is so important to have another kind of leadership that looks at common humanity and invests in the international community because we only have one world. The ability to influence and inspire people in such a way that they adhere to international norms and standards is important. We need leadership in which we have the framework of interaction, of oneness, interaction among countries and between communities. I would say that at the end of the day, it is a leadership that will have to learn how to build peace under the rules of justice based on international norms and standards.





## INTRODUCTION BY DR. DEE AKER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE JOAN B. KROC INSTITUTE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

Good evening. It's a pleasure and a privilege to introduce our distinguished lecturer tonight, Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women. This is a woman who has unconditionally and consistently called upon the world to promote women's rights and gender equality, and has succeeded in the process. Her leadership is pioneering and consistently focused on breaking down the walls of feminized poverty and patriarchal arrogance, and ensuring for those most affected by war and rampant globalization—which occurs without regard to the true and intimate connection of humankind on this small planet—that those walls fall, and that women are there ready to help build new communities and a just and peaceful world.



The first time I saw Noeleen she was carrying a large torch with some other women across a field towards 30,000 women sitting at the United Nations NGO Forum for the Fourth World Conference on Women. I took a picture of that moment. Imagine looking out at these women coming across from all the different regions of the world and realizing that there was a force out there that could be tapped and that could change things for us all. You can't hear the "Ode to Joy" that was played by the all-women's Chinese

orchestra, but tonight you can meet the woman who still inspires us all to pick up a torch and carry it.

Noeleen has pioneered new approaches to strengthening women's economic security, women's leadership in democratic governance, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconstruction, and has spearheaded the U.N. regional campaigns to end violence against women. She was responsible for the establishment of the United Nations Trust Fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women, which UNIFEM administers. She played a critical role in the Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1325<sup>2</sup> on Women, Peace and Security, and calls on women to engage in peace negotiations, to become involved, to change the way that we deal with the conflicts in the world. This is the right person to address us this evening on "Women, War and Peace: Mobilizing for Security and Justice in the 21st Century." She brings the voices and experiences of the many women from around the world that she knows so personally. She is a woman who is fighting to bring women to peace and peace to women. It is our great honor to have Noeleen Heyzer here now. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Noeleen Heyzer.

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<sup>2</sup> Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000 and is discussed further in Dr. Heyzer's lecture. See also Related Resources.





*Women, War and Peace:  
Mobilizing for Security and  
Justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

*Noleen Heyzer, Ph.D.*

Good evening and thank you. I want to start by paying a special tribute to Joan Kroc, who gave this gift so that we, and women and men like us, can meet to discuss issues of peace and justice that are so important in today's world. It is a special privilege to be here. I plan to spend the next 30 to 45 minutes, depending on how you respond, on examining issues of security and justice, and then some time in dialogue with you to hear what you think.

I would like to focus on three things. First, on the root causes of conflict and political mobilization; second, on the mobilization for peace and security that exists in the world; and third, on some of the strategies from UNIFEM's programs and some stories from places I've visited as Executive Director of the United Nations Women's Fund: stories of how people—ordinary men and women—are organizing for peace and security everywhere around the world; why we as international community have to support them; and why it is so important that the challenges they throw up to us have to be addressed, and addressed seriously and urgently, if there is to be a peaceful future.

Humanity's entry into the 21st century has been both painful and dangerous. Terrorism and the "war on terrorism": if they have taught us one thing, it is that our lives are intertwined. Our destinies are interlinked in such a way that decisions that are made in Washington and New York and Geneva impact some of the most remote areas in the world. At the same time, decisions that are made in some of the most remote areas in the world also have an impact on what were thought to be the most secure spaces of the world, as we witnessed on September 11, 2001. We need to understand why it is that as we enter the 21st century, when we should be living in peace and enjoying the world with its unprecedented levels of wealth—why is it we are living in so much fear and in so much insecurity?

We need to understand the real causes of conflict. We know from experience that conflicts are organized along the lines of inequalities—political, economic, cultural and historical. By themselves these inequalities would not lead to war. There has to be political mobilization—people are organized on the basis of group identities and lived realities of injustice, and then mobilized along these

same lines. We need to understand why it is that certain groups respond to the political mobilization of hatred and of war. What is it about a call to violence that resonates with these groups? Often it is because of the grounded, lived injustices that many of them have experienced. In situations where official policies, institutions and leaders have failed to provide equal security, opportunity and dignity, a sense of injustice prevails among certain sections of the population; they feel that there is no alternative, that the only way to address injustice is by violence. In situations where many people feel that they have no control over their own destinies, the youth especially turn to violence as a form of agency. As such, it becomes a method of group mobilization: there is collective identity and there is a cause—a cause to die for; a cause to kill for. It is almost like the victims of injustice feel empowered by taking certain decisions into their hands. The bases of this kind of mobilization are linked not only to inequalities—political, economic, cultural, historical—but also to exclusions, and to the fact that people do not feel that they have a common stake, that the doors are closed in terms of seeking justice and security.

On the other hand, not all of these situations have led to violence, and not all those who have experienced violence in terrible ways choose the route of more violence and war. I would like to look at some alternative forms of mobilization, focusing on the situation of women, war and peace, and how women who have been the worst, worst victims of war have become part of the solutions for peace. I will start with the story of how women who have experienced war decided that it was time to engage with international community in terms of accountability and justice. We were very pleased to be able to support many of the women's groups from the conflict zones, to understand how they were organizing for peace at the community level, and to bring their voices to the attention of the Security Council. Until that time, the Security Council thought of peace solely in terms of peacekeepers, and of security solely in military terms. Bringing the women's voices to the Security Council changed some of these ideas. When the members of the Council heard the women's stories about what they had gone through, their bravery and their ideas for resolution, the Security Council asked us to assist them with their first draft of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

This resolution first looks at the entire impact of conflict and war on women and girls. Many of us thought that in war, it is the soldiers who are killed, but increasingly it is the civilians. The battlefields have become our homes; they've become our communities; they've become our villages. But increasingly they have also become women's bodies. The kind of violence that you have seen on television—from Bosnia to Rwanda, and now in Darfur—that violence against women is a weapon of war. It is used not just to humiliate women, but to humiliate the men of the other side, to destroy the capacity of communities to revitalize themselves.

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And yet, women who have experienced these kinds of violence ask for justice. They ask for peace; but, they do not take it for granted. They are the ones who generate communities of peace at the local level. They begin to talk to women from the other side, crossing ethnic and national lines. They ask for systems of justice and systems of accountability. While we know that impunity for certain crimes will never be fully eliminated, women want to make sure that for the sake of justice, the people who are committing crimes against women are not rewarded in peace negotiations with high power jobs, high-profile jobs and political power: that would be the greatest insult to women. Many women whom I have heard say that justice gets sacrificed at the peace table, mainly because it's the warlords who get brought to the peace table. The negotiation takes place with the warlords, all kinds of terms are created, and they find that they are the ones who control the political power. And this has to stop.

The second part of Resolution 1325 looks at the whole issue of protection

and assistance. As it becomes more difficult to distinguish between civilians and militias, the issue of security has become more complicated. The kind of protection that the United Nations once provided is no longer available because the blue flag is no longer a flag of neutrality. That neutral space, the space of protection, has collapsed and humanitarian workers are now also being killed, seen as linked to certain powers. This makes it extremely difficult to protect people who are internally displaced or in refugee camps. And yet, despite all this, I want to tell the story of courage: in the face of the violence, of economic destruction, of failed states, destroyed states and failed economies—it is the women whom I have met who have kept communities going. In many of the countries I have visited, from Liberia to the Congo, women have become the last threshold of hope before children become soldiers. This is something that we have to come to terms with.

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The third part of 1325 looks at the issue of bringing women to the peace table. It acknowledges that it is not all right in the 21st century to have women organizing for peace at the local level, and yet when it comes to the peace table they are totally missing. UNIFEM has worked to change that situation in several countries and I will just give you two examples. The first was in Burundi. At that time, women were admitted only as observers on the sideline: they were asked, what have you got to say about peace? What do you know about peace? We worked so hard and it was only because the facilitator of the peace process eventually was Nelson Mandela that we managed to get the door open for women to come in. He asked us—challenged us—to organize in three weeks a first women's peace conference in Burundi. And we did that.

The impact of this conference was tremendous. Issues that nobody wanted to talk about because of the shame attached all appeared on the peace agenda: issues of rape babies; issues of traumatized populations; issues of land rights, the right to inheritance; how to revitalize the economic sector, the agricultural sector. How do you re-create fractured communities, re-create communities from the fractures and the pieces? How do you deal with the fact that the fighting forces no longer consist only of boys or men with guns, but also consist of women—some who have been kidnapped as sex slaves, others who willingly and knowingly choose to fight as a way of addressing some of the injustices of their lives, to avenge the deaths of their husbands, of their brothers, of their fathers? Girls are also now in the fighting forces. And nobody wanted to talk about that or the implications for the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration—what we call DDR.<sup>3</sup> Given the stigma that many of these women will face when they re-enter their communities, like the women who have been raped, how can they be reintegrated into the communities? All of that was brought into the peace process for the first time. At the end, 19 of the women's recommendations were officially incorporated into the peace agreements.

We went from there to assist women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo very much along the same lines. And yet, when I visited that country last year, many of the women met me at the airport. They said, “Thank you for assisting us, but we have to tell you that we failed. We failed because while we had Article 51<sup>4</sup> in the Transitional Constitution of the country, that article was not implemented in terms of appointments to the transitional government. What it means is that we are going to lose,” they said, “in terms of the political process.” So we organized 300 women during the time when I was there to come up with a strong women's agenda. I asked them, “Tell me what it is we need to do. What is the agenda for change? Given the fact that you managed to get the article into the constitution, what else has to happen? Let's not give up.”

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<sup>3</sup> The process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is designed to occur immediately following the cessation of hostilities and is considered a crucial step towards sustainable peace. See Related Resources.

<sup>4</sup> Article 51 of the DRC's Transitional Constitution eliminated all forms of discrimination against women and ensured the full participation of women in the political processes of the country. See Related Resources.

They identified five very critical areas. They said, “We have to call a nationwide campaign to end rape and all forms of violence against women because of the kind of violence that had been used on women.” Many women suffer from wounds ripped apart and are not able to enter public spaces because they are dripping from the kind of violence that has been used on their bodies. They also said, “We need help in terms of HIV/AIDS. We need help. We need attention. But we also have to make sure we are engaged in the political process. We have to make sure that women are addressed in the demobilization and reintegration process, and given the right level of resources and support by international community.”

I saw the president during my visit and asked him what had happened. He is a very young president, as many of you know, and he spoke frankly: “The reason why I did not include them was because they were of no consequence to me politically. I had all these militias that I had to deal with and I had to use many of the political positions to buy their loyalty.” It was then that I realized what women meant when they said that justice was sacrificed at the altar of peace. And yet, if that happens, peace will never last; it will be a fragile peace as many of us have seen in so many parts of the world.

During that visit, I visited other countries of the Great Lakes region. What struck me was that war is not something that everybody dislikes. There is an economics of war that has to be taken into account. Wars produce winners and they produce losers. There are many people and powers that benefit from war because of the transfer of resources, because of jobs for soldiers, because of looting, because of vulnerability and trafficking. This is why it is so hard to have sustainable peace unless we are able to come up with an agenda in terms of sustainable development, and unless we can provide real alternatives so that there is more to gain from peace than there is from war.

The final part of the Security Council Resolution concerns the role of women in peacebuilding and reconstruction. The reconstruction process provides an opportunity to move people out of crisis into a possibility for



security and justice. The Chinese character for crisis means danger, but it also means opportunity. Crisis in many of our lives has meant that the old, which we are used to, has died; but the new has not yet been born. And because the new has not yet been born, this leaves an opportunity for agency, empowerment and engagement that women everywhere want to get involved with. And there are many opportunities where international community can support women to engage in peacebuilding and reconstruction as countries move out of crisis.

I see three stages in the process of moving out of war and conflict to sustainable peace, with some examples and challenges. The first stage is establishing the rule of law, based on international norms and standards. This is an opportunity to re-craft national constitutions and change legal frameworks to align them with international standards. It is also an opportunity to make sure that one of the root causes of conflict—social and economic inequalities—gets addressed in the legal framework. Addressing the issue of gender equality up front is one way to break into this issue.

One very good example is what women have been able to do in Afghanistan. Even three or four years ago, if anyone had said that out of this crisis, today there would be a constitution—that women, lawyers and judges of Afghanistan would be supported by international community to draft it in such a way that gender equality is there and women are recognized as full citizens—none of us would have believed it. And yet, today that is the reality. We were so happy to see that many women have participated in the elections. However, this didn't happen just because they were liberated. It took a lot of very hard work. It meant going from village to village setting up women's centers; talking with women, making them understand; trying to organize the lawyers' and the judges' networks that UNIFEM supported; trying very hard to have program officers who are able to work with the women's ministry, and not only with the women's ministry, but to get commitment everywhere in the government to make sure that the issue of gender equality is seriously addressed. And we are very happy that that happened.

And yet, the implementation of that constitution remains a challenge. Because there is so much insecurity, this is not going to be easy, and many new threats have emerged: many women have said that one of the greatest threats is the rise of the warlords again because of narco-trafficking, which is one of the largest parts of the economy. In the southeast, the threats are from the resurgence of the Taliban.

In a sense, every step requires so much work in order to mobilize for security and for justice. And yet, there's so much hope. I asked the Afghan women whom we worked with, "Is it not too dangerous for you to be engaged and to be so visible in the work?" Their answer was, "Was it safer for us during the time of the Taliban? We don't have a choice. We have to move forward." And that's the story of courage, the courage of coming out of struggle, knowing the risks and moving forward with conviction and hope for a new future. I asked many of the women in the internally displaced persons camps and those who had just returned from the refugee camps, "What is your name? How old are you?" All of them said, "I can tell you my first name, but I can't tell you my age. But let me tell you why I've come back. I've come back so that my daughter will be able to tell you her age, so that she will be literate." Therefore, the hope they feel



is not for them; it's for the next generation. There is that future—the sense of future—and the sense of commitment for the long-term that will make a big difference.

At the same time, besides the constitution, besides the legal framework, there are new institutions that are emerging in situations of post-conflict. So the second stage is making sure that these institutions are accountable and are functioning according to the rule of law: the court system, the police system, the ministries, the whole partnership with civil society. We're very happy to say that we have been working so hard to make sure that women's leadership gets recognized throughout this whole process.

In Rwanda, because we invested in women's leadership, today if we ask which country has the highest percentage of women in parliament, it's no longer one of the Scandinavian countries. It is Rwanda at 49 percent. If we ask which country has the highest percentage of women supreme court judges, it is Rwanda at 50 percent. Ten years ago this would be beyond our imagination, as the atrocities were so terrible, and the hatred between Tutsis and Hutus so deep, that we did not think there could be the kind of peace and chance for sustainable development that we see today.

In Rwanda, at the end of my two-week stay, I met with women who were deliberately infected with HIV/AIDS during the conflict. Many of them had lost most of their families and most of their children. They were people who were so marginalized that they were the last people who were put onto my agenda, yet I spent the longest number of hours with them. Just listening to their stories, I learned so much. These are Hutu women and Tutsi women who have lost so much—so many of their children—that after telling their stories, they said to me, “Do you know we do not have any money to buy the AIDS drugs that we need? We cannot support ourselves. And yet, we are the ones who have adopted each other's children. We have stopped asking whether they're Tutsi or Hutu. They are the children of the future. We are able to transcend the hatred that we had for one another during the time of the genocide.” And

I thought, what a story. And yet, no one was listening. No one was telling that story to the world as a lesson of what peace must mean, what mobilizing for security and justice must mean.

When I eventually asked them how they spent their time they told me they wove baskets. So I asked them to show me some of the baskets, and told them, “These should be called the peace baskets because you are weaving back your society through the threads of peace. Let me go back to New York and try to organize as many women CEOs as possible to open up markets for your baskets, so that you're not given charity but are respected. You have a story to tell. Let's create a niche market for your product as a product of peace.” I think that's the kind of thing we need to do in terms of partnership, of linking up with people who are trying to move away from violence and social breakdown and to re-create communities with whatever little they have.

It is not just enough to have institutions like parliaments and courts. It is extremely important in the rebuilding process to look at the truth and reconciliation process because it is through this that the pain, the injustice that happened and was experienced, can be recognized and addressed. Until that happens, no healing can take place; yet, we have all kinds of international tribunals, courts and other rule of law institutions. The challenge is that, unfortunately, many of these institutions are not yet women-friendly. I went to the tribunal in Arusha<sup>5</sup> and what was so clear to me was that there was no proper way of treating women witnesses. When I spoke to some of the women who testified, they said they were doubly humiliated and then, because often their testimonies were not kept confidential, they were violated again when they went back to their communities. Many of them also know that they cannot wait for the international tribunals because they're so slow, so they turn to the local prisons and local courts and sometimes to community courts like the *gacaca* system in Rwanda.<sup>6</sup> Yet the problem is that many of these courts do not know how to deal with sexual violence. Training is needed for local judges so they

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<sup>5</sup> The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) is located in Arusha, Tanzania. See Related Resources.

<sup>6</sup> The *gacaca* system is a traditional, indigenous method of justice in Rwanda. The *gacaca* courts were revitalized in 2002 in order to deal with the large numbers of imprisoned suspects as a result of the genocide in 1994.

will treat these cases seriously, not as minor or cultural crimes but as violations of human rights, crimes against humanity. We need to ensure that our rule of law institutions take into account the whole issue of gender justice—justice from the perspective of the lived lives of women.

Initially, I thought that the story of the weaving and the forgiveness that happened at the community level, and the telling and the sharing of the stories—that in itself was a healing process. But the deeper healing process for justice and security involves still a third stage, and that is to recognize women as leaders and allow them to come to the peace process and the rebuilding process, to really allow them to shape a society where gender justice can take root. And that, at the end of the day, is what this is all about.

So how can this happen? It can happen first through a process of restorative justice, addressing the violence that has been used against women. When I visited East Timor, I met a woman named Olga da Silva, who came from the village of Mauxiga. She heard that in Dili they were having these sessions on truth and reconciliation,<sup>7</sup> and felt that her village was totally forgotten, even though they were the stronghold of resistance during that time. She hitched lifts and came to Dili, where she told her own story, but also the story of the village. She said, “No one has ever come to this village—not a single government minister, not a single U.N. person. We are totally forgotten in times of peace.”

So when I visited, I wanted her to know that I heard her all the way when I was in New York. I made it a point to bring UNIFEM and other U.N. staff to Mauxiga. This is a four-hour, winding road to her village. All the people were actually “walking battlefields,” in the sense that they still had battle wounds on their bodies. The Assistant Minister of Health was with us and he made a commitment that there would be a clinic in the village. But they also needed doctors, and since I was from Singapore, I said, “Let me find out if I can bring a team of doctors in.” And a team of Singaporean doctors, led by Dr. Kani Soin,

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<sup>7</sup> Dili is the capital of East Timor. The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor began its work in 2002. See Related Resources.

went. Yesterday I heard from members of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations team, who said that the women in these villages were so grateful because they could not believe that someone would keep their word. I think the weaving of trust—trust between the local community and the government, the local community with the international system, knowing that people care and that people keep their word—is the only way in which there will be trust in terms of international norms and standards. And that is extremely important.

Equally important is the process of economic reconstruction. So far, the issue of distributive justice—one of the very deep causes of conflict and inequalities among groups—has never really been seriously addressed. Very often, after conflict, what happened was that institutions like the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund would come in and they would have community rapid employment programs and community programs. But that is always a short period. Then they have the economic strategy for the country, which has never taken into account the fact that there are deep inequalities along the lines of identities that have to be addressed, and that the road to peace is not just a political road. It is not a military road. It is a road of social justice. It is a road that has to be walked in terms of economic justice. You can only have true peace if you also have economic security and if you have economic rights. This is the challenge that still has to be addressed and addressed very, very seriously.

Another very important part of this overall process is the reintegration process. In many of these countries, the internally displaced form the largest percentage of the population. In Liberia, 1.3 million people—almost one-third of the population—are internally displaced. I visited their camps, and I also visited the camps of the ex-combatants, where they were being reeducated and being reintegrated. I could not imagine how the reintegration process was going to take place. It was so much easier using the system to deal with the militarized part of peacekeeping, that is, the demobilization and the disarmament process. But the reintegration process is so, so important, and yet, there were no communities to reintegrate into because most of the communities were internally displaced and they themselves had to undergo the

reintegration process. At the same time, there are no economies to reintegrate into. And yet, when I visited one of the camps, it was still with hope that many of these people spoke to me. They said, “Give us back our land, give us back our homes, and we will re-create. We will re-create because that’s the only way forward.”

When I went to the demobilized camps, I remembered when I was leaving, one of the young girls—herself carrying a child—said to me, “Don’t forget me, because they will forget me. I have a child and I will not be sent to school even if there are schools to go to.” We need to realize that we are living in a world where there are many girls with children. There are many married girls. When I visited Afghanistan, one of the mothers said to me, “Let me introduce you to my daughter-in-law,” indicating a girl that was not much older than 12. In many of the countries emerging from crisis, girls become women at the age of 12. We need to make sure that we reach them, and realize that they’re married girls and that they are the ones who will be the most disconnected if we don’t consciously target them and find ways to reconnect with them.

So these are some of the stories of women, war and peace, the grounded lives of injustice, grounded lives of hope, grounded lives of courage, of people who refuse to give up because they know that there is no other way forward.

In thinking about next steps, I will tell one last story: this one from Iraq. In August last year, we were planning a national women’s symposium in Baghdad, for which our national program officer helped mobilize 450 women from all parts of the country. A few days before I was to leave for Iraq, there was the tragic bombing of the U.N. office in Baghdad, which killed Sergio Vieira de Mello,<sup>8</sup> who was to open the symposium with me, along with many of our colleagues. The symposium was cancelled; but our national program officer refused to let the network die. She supported it and kept it alive in the local communities. And this was the network of women who then overturned Resolution 137

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<sup>8</sup> At the time, Vieira de Mello was the U.N. Special Representative in Iraq. He had previously been the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2002-2003, and the Head of U.N. Operations in East Timor in 2000.

which had tried to bring back a particular kind of family code and law into the transitional constitution.<sup>9</sup> This group was also responsible for putting in place the 25 percent quota for women in the transitional election process. When the Secretary-General appointed a special adviser to Iraq, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, our program officer made sure that he met with these women wherever he went. Many of them are working in situations of terrible insecurities; yet, she refuses to give up. She feels that in doing so, she would give up her agency. Through our office in Amman, I send her advice on keeping safe. And she said, “Let me take my own risks because this is my country.” I think that kind of bravery only happens on the ground—it is the bravery that we as international community have to support, have to encourage and have to make visible.

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How do we move forward? First, we have to dismantle the industry that supports war. We are living at a time of unprecedented wealth. Yet, \$670 billion a year is spent on weapons. How can we have peace with these weapons everywhere? We need to make sure that the resources of our earth get used to support a future of peace and security for our children. Earth is not ours. It is loaned to us by our children. Let’s give it back in one piece.

We can no longer look at the issue of security as needing simply a military solution. Rather, it requires us to combine an understanding not just of weapons-based security, but also of human security, based on human rights and

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<sup>9</sup> Resolution 137 was initially approved by the 25-member Iraqi Council in December of 2003. It would have instituted Shariah, or Islamic law, and repealed women’s rights.

human development. We need a comprehensive approach that can deal with the root causes of violence by dismantling the architecture of inequality that perpetuates political, economic and social divisions everywhere. No one power, no matter how powerful, can do this alone. We need to involve multiple players. We need to bring the media in to tell the stories. We need to bring the private sector in to make sure that business is done in a way that creates sustainability, that is generated in ethical ways, that can reshape globalization in order to narrow the glaring inequalities it has produced. One of the issues is that of the missing middle class, or the missing common if you like, because increasingly the disparities are so large. We need to look at how we do business across the world in terms of trade, in terms of capital flows, and make sure that it goes to the communities, that it goes to sustain the kind of partnerships that we would like to see.

We need to make sure that there is no break in trust in the rule of law in international institutions. In fact, the U.N. Secretary-General, at the opening of this year's General Assembly, said, "The rule of law is at risk. Everywhere victims of violence and of injustice are waiting for their voice to be heeded." The only guarantee of peace and security in the world is the rule of law based on international norms and standards, and on our commitment to the vision and goals embedded in the Millennium Declaration in 2000,<sup>10</sup> which outlined how we can use our resources to create a world free of violence, free from want and free from fear. How do we bring back hope to people who believe, who have courage, who want to build peace even against all odds? That is something that we as a human community will have to commit ourselves to.

I want to leave you with this thought. We're living in a very difficult time, one that requires a deep urgency of action. And yet, it is in these dark times that any light we can bring must shine brightest. Therefore, I think the challenge to us is to pool together all the resources of hope that we can so that that would be the light that guides the world. At the end of the day, the only security, the only peaceful world that we can give to our children, is one based

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<sup>10</sup> See Related Resources.

on international community that is linked and woven through peace and hope. I want to end by saying that the word "community" is very special. It means common unity, and for a long time we have had to live through common unity built around a place that we come from. We build common unity because we are linked through blood, through kinship, through clans, through ethnicity, through religion. But we are asked, at this time of great challenge, to transcend all that in such a way that there is common unity of purpose—a community of purpose in finding our common humanity in our diversity, and to respect that common humanity and to give that as a gift to our children in peace and justice. I thank you.



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The audience submitted questions which were read by Dr. Dee Aker.

**DA:** I would like to open with my own question: how do we tap into our common unity? How do we find that? There was an article in the *L.A. Times Magazine* just two weeks ago<sup>11</sup> about the fact that there is this rise in the United States of people so interested in money and separation—not only the top level, but upper echelons and corporations, people earning \$29 million a year and saying they deserve it. I mean some surgeons earn \$100,000; police chiefs, \$50,000; workers in a field will be lucky if they ever have \$10,000. And we seem to be, in this country—when we're talking about wanting a rule of law—separating and pulling apart into just a concern for self. Because you live in the United States, how do we address people here? You travel the world and bring us stories, but is there a way we can touch people here?

**NH:** I must say, Dee, that I was very, very touched by what happened after September 11, when some of those here who had lost family members in the attacks went to Afghanistan to meet with some of the people there. I think there's so much good in this country that has to be told as well, because I don't think the media do you justice. Before I came to the United States, I had a very different image, based on the media image. I had never been to the United States before. And it was in coming here that I discovered how much more concerned and aware many of you are. I think that's the kind of story that somehow we who have been here have to tell. Just as I bring stories from around the world here, I think that it is important that I bring back stories of things that I have seen in this country so that there's better understanding, and not this horrible image of what being American means to so many people in different parts of the world.

I have to say that despite the big gap in income within the country, some corporations are trying to change that. I want to believe that it is possible

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<sup>11</sup> See Related Resources.

because I also live in hope. In fact, the Calvert Investment Fund, which manages about \$10 billion in investments, has started a campaign to promote five principles of women's empowerment. The five principles are really very good and should be implemented everywhere. One is to close the wage gap between male and female workers in the factories owned or contracted by companies in which they invest. Can you imagine what that would do? It would immediately impact the huge numbers of women workers whose earnings are too meager to allow them to get out of poverty.

The second principle is the creation of safe workplaces, where they are protected from health hazards such as toxic chemicals, etc. The third is to make their executive boards more women-friendly by equalizing the number of women who serve on them. The fourth concerns civil engagement, to invest some of their savings and profits in community programs and civil engagement. And the fifth concerns the use of more gender-sensitive advertising. They are not going to just apply these principles to company subsidiaries, but also to the businesses they subcontract. These things are doable and should be done. We have to showcase what is possible and shame those who are still continuing with harmful practices. In other words, let's give birth to the new and let the old die.

**DA:** Two questions. First, does UNIFEM help countries such as Iran and North Korea improve peace, justice and women's rights in those countries? If so, how? If not, why not? Second, what are the barriers to women's political participation, especially in post-conflict and transitional governments? It seems that men are making the wars and women are trying to make the peace. How can more men get involved in peacemaking?

**NH:** With regard to the first, UNIFEM is still one of the smallest funds in the U.N. We can't be everywhere, and so we have to choose where we can make the most impact and where it makes sense for us to be. We do not work in Iran. In North Korea we have a small program to help open the market economy for

women, working to improve the access of women entrepreneurs to high-value markets so that their goods and products and services are not always at the low end of the market. We are able to get some niche marketing at higher prices for some of their goods.

In terms of peacebuilding and the political process, the story that I want to share with you is one that I heard from women from the Solomon Islands in the Pacific. They had been organizing for peace even before the Australians or international community came in. Afterwards, they had strong women leaders who wanted to engage in the political process. But their elections involved several run-offs. One woman made it to the last round, but eventually lost. “Do you know why?” she asked. “Because the people who won had criminal networks to get out their supporters, and so much financial support from those networks.” In other words, the political process is tightly controlled and there is no access to political power. She said, as I said earlier, that we have to ensure that those who are engaged in violence do not become political leaders. And somehow international community has got to take that stand: that those who have killed, those who have links of criminal networks cannot take

political office because they do not represent, and they will not be accountable to, the population. Even in less controlled situations, winning political office is difficult—because everywhere it involves money. It involves media skills. It requires leadership capacity. But we are working with U.N. partners to train women to take this on and engage in the process.

I am very happy to say that in East Timor in the first election after winning independence, women made up 23 percent of those elected into the National Assembly. And that I think makes a big difference. But some of these women admitted that it is still not easy for them because important decisions are often made outside the assembly and the women are not where these decisions are made. I believe we not only have to support women to get into parliaments and other leadership jobs, but also to strengthen them so that they can deal with some of the extremely difficult problems they face in political leadership positions. But what is most important is to ensure that when they are in the leadership, they also take on the issue of social justice, and show that they are taking the lead. And I think that international community can help to recognize their leadership through awards that highlight their achievements.

I want to tell you one story of why international community is so important. First, I have to say that international community does not mean only the United Nations. It means all of us. At the time of our 20th anniversary, UNIFEM sponsored an award to honor women in the Panchayat system in India—these are the village councils—at a time when there was a quota for women of about 30 percent. The woman receiving the award was trained in the reading of gender budgets, meaning that although she was not educated, she was able to ask questions on how budgets get spent at the village level. She and her group were able to expose and dismantle some of the village corruption that was commonplace in order to make sure that the money went to schools and clinics and so on. So we asked her to come to New York to receive this award. She went to the local visa office to get a visa and passport to travel to New York. They told her, “You must be mad. How can you mean you’re going to the U.N. to meet the Secretary-General? How do they even know that you exist? It’s not possible.” And so she had to walk away. It was only much later



that a local UNIFEM staff member went with her and got her the passport. She came back as a heroine. So immediately her leadership got recognized. There are so many ways in which we could recognize and support the kind of leadership that we want to see in the world and to make that as visible as possible.

The other thing is that the partnership of men is very important. There is a whole network of men now, in fact, dealing with the issue of ending violence against women and its link to HIV/AIDS, bringing up issues about peacekeepers, and supporting the kind of trauma counseling that men need when they return home. Because what we've seen over and over again is that when the war stops and the men go home, the violence enters into the household. It comes into the household because of shame, because of guilt, and also because men with guns, and especially boys with guns, essentially will be facing a crisis of masculinity—often for a very long time. It is so important that there is a support group of men to help them handle many of these issues. The issues that I speak about should no longer just be spoken about by women. Dealing with them and resolving them is crucial to every peace process and to realizing peace with justice.

**DA: Actually, the next one is a little bit of a follow up to that—what's being done to prevent sexual exploitation of girls and women by U.N. peacekeepers? This was, of course, an issue that came up recently. The second question is, would you discuss the role of religion both as a root cause and as a source of hope? What is UNIFEM doing in regards to women's religious rights? And a third question is, what staff resources does UNIFEM really have to carry out this mission?**

NH: You know the peacekeepers have such a moral responsibility because they're seen as guardians, as international guardians. And they also set the standard of what the local community sees as acceptable. And it is with terrible pain that I have to tell you that all is not well, mainly because despite codes of conduct, there have been abuses—and terrible abuses—by peacekeepers. What is different now is that this is now out in the open. It is something that the

system is addressing, and the Secretary-General has said there should be zero tolerance for the behavior of peacekeepers. At the end of the day, I feel we have to go beyond calling for zero tolerance. I honestly believe that we should be refusing to allow troop-contributing countries to send troops if they do not somehow hold the peacekeepers accountable. I'm going beyond my role as Executive Director of UNIFEM in saying that, but it is something that is so important, precisely because they set the norms and standards. At the same time, the peacekeepers can also be critical in preventing new violence, and protecting and supporting civilians. And not all peacekeepers abuse their roles. So I think we have to also look at who the abusers are and how many there are—even one is too many. And misconduct of any kind has to be addressed very, very seriously.

The role of religion: it is not religion itself that is the problem, but political mobilization around religion—in other words, the politicization of religion. Just look what has happened with Islam, which suddenly has “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims,” and various kinds of extremists. At the same time, there is a network of women religious leaders from all parts of the world trying to re-engage in interfaith dialogues, trying to find where we can build peace. Someone told me that sometimes we are almost like spirits having a human experience; in other words, there is a spiritual side to us, however we express it. We don't have to be religious, but we feel connected in different ways. We are not just material beings; we are also emotional beings and psychic beings and spiritual beings of different kinds. Somehow we have to connect for the common good.

As I walk through your corridors, I see some of the best quotes in terms of the wisdom of religion. But yet, religion has been used: in the name of religion crimes have been committed, mobilization has gone on, misinterpretation and extremism and punishment and guilt—and the institutions are no different than any other human institution. Just look at what has happened with the Catholic Church and the priests' sexual abuses. In other words, let's not just look at the peacekeepers. We have to come to terms with the fact that our humanity includes the best and also the worst. And our institutions are infected

with the worst, but also blessed with the best. Somehow we have to work through it and allow the best to live. And I think that the challenge of our time is that we cannot allow a world like that in the poem by W. B. Yeats, where “the best lack all convictions, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.”<sup>12</sup>

**DA: Two last questions: please address the role of primary education and children to the age of 12 in transforming ethnic hatreds into a willingness to tolerate pluralism and multi-ethnic society. And the last question is, how can one who has a desire to be involved in the peace process get involved with an organization like UNIFEM?**

NH: Thank you very much. Let me just pick up on a question from the last round that I didn't answer, about UNIFEM staffing. I have to say again that UNIFEM is the smallest organization in the U.N. system, and this has been, in fact, one of the major problems. But what we have is a committed group of people—men and women who work in the organization. Everyone that comes in says that the energy is so different. Yesterday, a human resource person from the larger U.N. system said to me, “There's something really strange with your staff. Maybe you already know.” I said, “What is it?” And he said, “None of them that I've spoken to talk about career development. They are not asking for the next promotion. All they want is a secure enough contract so that they can work for their cause.” That was the greatest compliment that he could pay my staff. So it is a small group of very committed people who are trying to change the world through partnership, through commitment and through their lives. And that characterizes the work and the nature of the organization.

We currently need a lot of help in terms of resources, in terms of positioning in the U.N. system. It is unfortunate that in the name of gender mainstreaming, UNIFEM resources are being cut. The idea is that gender mainstreaming should be everywhere and it should be everybody's business, and therefore, you don't need women-specific programs and spaces. And yet, we all know that it is through these spaces that this work can actually take place, and mainstreaming

can happen. For me, cutting money to women's entities within the system in order to make the system itself more efficient is like cutting the heart to save, I don't know what, some little toe, maybe. But this is the same strategy that was used in the structural adjustment programs imposed on countries with balance of payments problems in the 1980s, when to balance their budgets, countries were told to cut spending in education and healthcare. Who then came into these empty spaces—apart from the women—were some of the most extreme groups. And I think the kind of terrorism that we see today also takes its roots in some of the schools that we had evacuated precisely because of the cuts, because of the community service that we refused to give. So I have everywhere been saying, “Please don't create long-term problems by seeking easy solutions because, at the end of the day, it's not sustainable.”

Primary education: I think it's so important. In fact, in the southern Caucasus we started with the schools. Many of the primary school kids talk about what peace means to them. What kind of world do they want to live in? It's never too early to start children, boys and girls, thinking about peace and justice in the world. That is something that we all need to do definitely, and build on.

In terms of involvement, there are so many ways in which one can get involved. Definitely when there are things available in UNIFEM that are put up on the websites, you are most welcome to apply. But beyond that, there are so many nongovernmental organizations, women's networks and other forms of women's organizing that are taking place. There are so many ways and so many things that you can do within your own community from where you are. At the end of the day, I always say to my friends that each of us has to see ourselves as leaders: leaders for the kind of change that we want to be, that we want to see. In other words, we become the change that we want to see in the world, from wherever we are, through our everyday practice. I was very, very pleased that this institute, the Joan Kroc Institute, dedicated this gift—not just to the study of peace but to the practice of peace. May we practice peace.

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<sup>12</sup> From Yeats' poem “The Second Coming.” See Related Resources.

## RELATED RESOURCES

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