

Women and Dignity

I really love the idea to celebrate the achievements of women and recognize the progress that helped advance their value and rightful position during the past years. Time is too short to even mention a small part of women's contributions to the creation of a culture of peace, in realizing the future we want for all.

The art of the ancient Stone Age shows symbols of masculinity grouped in peripheral positions. This shows that women had an honored and significant role to fulfill. Wall paintings and archeological finds from Siberia to Central Europe lead us to conclude that the concept of a higher feminine deity existed. According to Riane Eisler (author of 'Calice and sword!') the predominant ideology of the earlier Stone Age was goniometric; the woman, represented by a deity in female form, took the central position. The power to give life was most honored in contradiction to later models of society where the power to take life was a sign of superiority. We see the same in matriarchal systems some of them still existing up to today.

We could spend hours to talk about women in history fighting for peace. As for today I am sure you know the initiative Peace Women Across the Globe, the global network of the 1000 women nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. All around the world there are courageous and creative PeaceWomen working for peace, social justice and a secure future, applying a wide range of approaches and methods. Their experience and knowledge and connections are united in the organization PeaceWomen Across the Globe. Another initiative presented a book called "1325 women weaving peace" (1325 mujeres tejiendo la paz).

However further efforts and a strong global partnership for development are needed to accelerate progress and reach the goals by 2015. Still campaigns are necessary and organized, especially on Women's Day 2013 for prevention and elimination of violence against girls and women and to create safer cities

As UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet said in a recent speech, global awareness and momentum on ending violence against women and girls has never been stronger. "With leading women's organizations, including Women in Cities International, the Huairou Commission, Jagori and Women and Habitat Network in Latin America, we strategically placed gender equality

and women's empowerment and safety of women in public spaces within activities of the UN-Habitat's Global Network on Safer Cities."

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been a milestone in global and national development efforts. The framework has helped to galvanize development efforts and guide global and national development priorities.

But as long as the need for similar campaigns is given, we still have not reached the MDG 3, gender equality and the empowerment of women. If we want to realize a culture of peace the importance of women's contribution to our world must be recognized. Women have to be supported and empowered to be aware of their value and importance in all parts of our societies. Peace within our families, societies, countries and worldwide can only become a reality when women's contributions are valued.

Gender equality is, first and foremost, a human right.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (adopted in 1993) stated that the human rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights

This equality does not imply sameness. Men and women are seen as having different strengths and abilities that enable them to better fill different roles. Gender equality refers to the equal valuing of the roles of women and men

Many times this has been misunderstood. There are special feminine and special masculine aspects, both necessary and indispensable for a peaceful world. The culture of peace is a culture of synthesis. In a declaration from UNESCO on the contribution of women to a Culture of Peace it is said:

Only as women and men together in equality and partnership can we overcome the difficulties, silence and desperation and secure the understanding, political will, creative thinking and concrete activities which are necessary for global transition from a culture of violence to a Culture of Peace.

The word which is most important for me here is "together". Every contribution is important. We all have different abilities, talents, and interests. Everything together creates this culture.

However as we are celebrating the contributions of women, let me shortly look at the feminine aspects.

Chris Griscom, a (lady) American author and healer said:

“The feminine strives in all ideas, with creative efforts, to find that which is common and to unite, in that it, in the face of resistance, discovers openings and solutions and finds that which binds people together in all ideologies and philosophies. Which perspective would be better suited to research, fashion and realise the opportunity to achieve peace? Who is most suited to achieve peace and to educate the next generation to pursue peace? “

Let us reflect and look into our families. Who was the one trying to help family members to get along with each other? Who created harmony and embraced everyone with love and warmth, no matter what happened?

Erich Fromm said: *“The principle of motherhood is that of unconditional love. The mother does not love her children because they make her happy but because they are her children (or those of another woman). Thus the love of a mother can also not be gained through “good behaviour“ or lost through “bad behaviour“.* A mother’s love is grace and mercifulness. A father’s love, on the other hand, is associated with fulfilment of various conditions; it depends on the performance and good behaviour of the child; the father most loves the child who is most similar to him, that is the one to whom he wishes to leave his possessions. A father’s love is justness. “

This kind of motherliness is part of femininity, no matter if or if not women are mothers themselves. Look at Mother Teresa.

Thus the feminine aspect of parenthood is the key to sustainable peace making and keeping.

WFWP want to empower women by creating awareness of our specific feminine qualities and thus strengthen our self-respect and understanding, that without us women, respectively feminine qualities, which are also existent in men, there can be no peace and no further development in the society and the world.

This empowerment is an internal process. We cannot expect to be respected if we don’t respect ourselves. We cannot claim women’s right to dignity if we ourselves don’t believe in our dignity. We can’t create peace, if we ourselves don’t find ways to create peace in ourselves. Accusations and demands on men are in no way helpful. Naomi Wolf wrote in her book “The Strength of Women“, that she does not consider it to be so meaningful to place the powerlessness and victim hood of woman in the foreground, thus accusing the

male sex at the same time of imperiousness and aggressiveness. “No-one is served well by such thinking. I would like to set this direction of feminism against power feminism. Its basis is tolerance and respect for feminine individuality and sees itself as feminism of optimism and strength. “

As soon as we become aware how unique and precious we are, will we have the courage, to find out our abilities and talents. We don't need to set ourselves limitations. Everything is possible to be learned. We need to understand our value. This awareness we have to pass on to all women. Then we never have the feeling of inferiority again nor are victims of the male world. We are different, because we are women and we are as intelligent, important and as good as men. To be different does definitely not mean to be less valuable. No FGM is necessary to make us valuable women. Let us help our sisters to free themselves from these ancient traditions.

Feminine optimism, self-respect, dignity and strength are the basis for the realization of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG), specifically the wellbeing of women and girls in Goal 2 (universal primary education) and Goal 3 (promote gender equality and empower women).

If women feel free to live in dignity and to share responsibilities and tasks within the family and society with men, without fears and discriminations, a sustainable peace can develop from the base of our families to the worldwide community. This is true empowerment of women.

I am happy to see, women all over the world claiming their dignity, helping each other to advance and eliminate human rights violations such a human trafficking and forced prostitution, FGM and violence against women. I see advancement in better health care for women, education and taking part in politics and economics. I see women organizing and making the freedom of their countries their own issue. I am proud of my sisters around the world. The Gender agenda is gaining momentum!

Thank you very much!

