

# FEMINIST PEACE SERIES

## Perspectives on Feminist Peace

**What Does Feminist Peace  
Mean to You?**

---

**Feminist Peace in  
Workspaces**

Juliet Were

---

**Freedom**

Joyce Diko

---

**Mental Health: A Catalyst  
to Feminist Peace**

Margaret Nassozi

---

**The Path to Freedom**

Adeyeye Adeniran

---

**Self-Care & Self-Love: Why  
It's Important to Feminist  
Peace**

Sharon Eryenyu

---

**Feminist Peace is  
Sustainable Peace**

Wanyana Racheal

---

**Enhancing the Role of  
Women in Sustainable  
Transitional Justice  
Processes**

Tendaishe Tlou

---



ISSN 2788-5593

© Women's International Peace Centre, 2020  
All Rights Reserved

Please direct all correspondence to:

Executive Director  
Women's International Peace Centre  
Plot 1, Martrys Garden Road B, Ministers Village Ntinda  
P. O. BOX 4924 Kampala - Uganda  
**Tel** +256-414-543953  
**Email** [program@wipc.org](mailto:program@wipc.org)  
**Web** [www.wipc.org](http://www.wipc.org)

02

## **WHAT DOES FEMINIST PEACE MEAN TO YOU?**

04

## **FEMINIST PEACE IN WORKSPACES**

Juliet Were

09

## **FREEDOM**

Joyce Diko

10

## **MENTAL HEALTH: A CATALYST TO FEMINIST PEACE**

Margaret Nassozi

13

## **THE PATH TO FREEDOM**

Adeyele Adeniran

14

## **SELF-CARE & SELF LOVE: WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO FEMINIST PEACE**

Sharon Eryenyu

18

## **FEMINIST PEACE IS SUSTAINABLE PEACE**

Wanyana Racheal

22

## **ENHANCING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SUSTAINABLE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROCESSES**

Tendaishe Tlou

## CONSULTING EDITOR

**Rosebell Kagumire**

## EDITORIAL SUPPORT

**Helen Kezie-Nwoha**  
**Sharon Eryenyu**

## CONTRIBUTORS



**Nassozi Margaret** is a Gender-based violence trainer and women's rights activist. She is currently a volunteer- skills building program at the Women's International Peace Centre, She holds a MSc In Counseling Psychology, a Bachelor of Education In educational administration and Evaluation and a Diploma in Education( Biochemistry). She has vast experience in working with local women groups and individuals in conflict and post conflict situations.

**Joyce Diko** is a women's rights activist and Founder of Lady In Action (LIA), a community safe space for young girls providing them with psycho-social support enabling them to derive positive coping mechanisms to address challenges they encounter on a daily basis. As a spoken word artist, she focuses on strengthening the voice and power of women and girls through documentation of their untold stories and She was nominated for Sout al Salaam 2019 Awards, People's Choice Category.



**Tendaishe Tlou** is an independent Human Rights and Transitional Justice Practioner based in Harare, Zimbabwe. Among many, he holds post-graduate certificates in Inclusive Gender in Transitional Justice and Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE); Transitional Justice, Applied Conflict Transformation and Community Development from the Refugee Law Project (Uganda); and the International Citizen Service Volunteer Certificate (the UK). He also has a BSc (Hons) degree in Peace and Governance from Bindura University (Zimbabwe) centered on political and socio-economic issues, and a Masters in Human Rights, Peace and Development from Africa University (Zimbabwe). Tendaishe has written and published over 30 articles in human rights, Peace and Governance issues.

**Racheal Wanyana** is a lawyer and Mediator currently working with Uganda Women's Network as the Coordinator of the Women Peace and Security Programme, and Policy and Advocacy Lead. Wanyana also serves on the National Technical Committee for the Development and Implementation of the National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325, the National Thematic Working Group facilitating conflict resolution on Land and Natural Resources, and the National Dialogue Executive Committee, where she represents young people. Wanyana is also a co-founder of the Peace Maker's Forum in Cairo, Egypt.



**Adeyele Adeniran** is a poet, creative writer and feminist who resides in Lagos, Nigeria. Her poetry and storytelling is greatly inspired by her part as a spectator in a world filled with humanity and chaos. She studies History and Strategic studies at the great University of Lagos. Her works have been published in Kalahari Review, African Writers, Lit Up, NoteWorthy, Resistance Poetry and much more. She hopes to be a voice and influence of change through her writing.

**Juliet Were** is the Deputy Executive Director of Women's International Peace Centre, where she has led research and training for women to amplify their voices and advocate for policies and programmes tackling the impact of conflict. She has co-authored ground breaking research on women's rights in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict in Africa and Asia. Juliet has coordinated physical and psychological rehabilitation programmes for war survivors in Uganda, Liberia, South Sudan and Kashmir.



**Sharon Eryenyu** is an African Feminist and Content Creator. She is presently the Communications Officer at Women's International Peace Centre.

# LETTER TO OUR READERS

Welcome to the first edition of the Feminist Peace Series (FPS). We are delighted to share the understanding of Feminist Peace from everyday practice of peace building. This Feminist Peace Series is born out of the continuous inquiry into what Feminist Peace means in practice.

Feminist theorists like Amina Mama, Cynthia Cockburn and Cynthia Enloe have highlighted the invisibility of women in peacebuilding, the lack of recognition of the gendered impact of war and the way mainstream understanding and practice of peace building is militarized. Since the 1980s women writing on international relations and peace research have made women in conflict and peacebuilding more visible by raising the differential impact of war and armed conflict on women, men, girls and boys deploying intersectional analysis. Feminist research has also emphasized the agency of women during and after war.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) since the end of World War II has been promoting the idea of feminist peace. Building on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security passed on 31 October 2000 and its ten follow up resolutions, feminist scholars have critiqued the language and argued for a transformative approach to implementing the women, peace and security agenda. The transformative approach needs to take into account the diversities of women impacted by conflict and how women's histories, multiple identities and geographical locations make them more vulnerable to war effects.

Our objective is to showcase the different transformative approaches to peacebuilding. This first edition of the Feminist Peace Series therefore provides various understanding of Feminist Peace with perspectives from practitioners, partners and colleagues in the field of peace building. From all the contributions we can summarize Feminist Peace as that which takes into account the differential impact of conflict on women, girls and gender diverse people and profiles their voices, needs and perspective in all peace building processes. Feminist Peace promotes individual and institutionalized feminist



approaches that include wellbeing, self-care, self-love and organizational feminist practices that promotes respectful and inclusive leadership. Feminist Peace delivers gender justice, demilitarized security, challenges social norms that perpetuate inequality and the root causes of conflict and promotes the need to put women, girls and gender diverse people and their needs at the centre of all peace building processes to ensure transformative and sustainable peace.

We start off by asking an open question – what does feminist peace mean to you? The responses range from peace as justice for all to respecting the dignity of women and girls to safeguarding women's choices and agency and applying human security in peace building. Across the world, diverse workplaces are where a significant time is spent, therefore it is important to interrogate what Feminist Peace in work spaces looks like. Juliet Were writes on the importance of providing a conducive work environment for peace builders. Using the African Feminist Charter, she provides the nuggets of Feminist Work Spaces.

Poetry has always provided the language to express that which cannot be expressed in the normative but also is a way to bring out peace building work in a more accessible way. Joyce Diko's poem illustrates how cultural practices and norms such as forced and early marriage take away peace from young women. She points out that harmful cultural practices promote the violation of women and girls' rights with poverty and power relations within the household at the heart. Quality mental healthcare continues to dodge many countries as thousands lose their lives during and following war traumas. Margaret Nassozi makes a case for mental health and wellbeing as important to achieving Feminist Peace particularly for women and girls in the aftermath of crisis.

Voice is the heart of feminist struggles. The politics of who is heard and who is silenced both in homes and in national affairs is essential part of seeking feminist peace. In Adeyele Adeniran's Path to Freedom speaking up as feminist, on the need to live a life free from discrimination based on sex is brought forth. Adeniran calls on feminists to continue to be loud and occupy spaces. The work of peacebuilding is ever present as we know that peace is not the absence of war. Sharon Eryenyu's contribution brings the much needed recognition of the labour that peacebuilders put in to ensure societies are

secure and the reflection of how to take care of oneself while doing so. Eryenyu posits that self-care and self-love should be a political practice for all feminists. She emphasized that self-care is a self-preservative strategy in a world that is full of hate and push back on feminist vision for gender equality.

Rachel Wanyana critiques current peace processes that are militarized and patriarchal. She argues for an alternative peace – Feminist Peace that would address the root causes of conflict, dismantle patriarchy, militarization and neoliberalism. She calls for strengthening grassroots peacebuilding efforts that centre women.

Justice is a foundation of any peaceful society, not only in material ways of delivering justice fairly and effectively but also in communal trust in the ability of prevailing institutions. Writing on this specific aspect of peacebuilding, Tendaishe Tlou reflects on current practice of Transitional Justice that ignores the role of women. She provides recommendations on how to arrive at gender responsive Transitional Justice practices that are equitable, inclusive, transformative and sustainable.

The central argument in this series is that Feminist Peace can be achieved at individual, community and institutional levels. Feminist vision of peace and security must be inclusive, aiming at achieving peace for women, men, girls, boys and gender non-binary people in their diversity. That half of the population should in principle be considered at all levels of peace building processes. This form of peace pays attention to gender justice and challenges the hegemonic power of militarism and how it relies on and feeds into existing gendered power structures to impact peacebuilding processes and outcomes.

We hope you enjoy reading this first edition of Feminist Peace Series.

Helen Kezie-Nwoha  
**Executive Director**

# WHAT DOES FEMINIST PEACE MEAN TO YOU?



It is only when a woman has peace that she can fully enjoy her dignity, potential and full participation in society.



— Neima Grace Khemis





For as long as conflicts have existed, women have challenged their exclusion from crucial decision making processes that have an impact on how and what kind peace is secured for a society. Feminist Peace brings tenets of feminism around dismantling gendered power and patriarchal violence to the practice of peacebuilding. Feminists have joined a number of peace researchers in observing that, rather than being a passive concept, peace is a very destabilizing notion, because it aims at subverting the status quo<sup>1</sup>.

To get a sense of everyday understanding of Feminist Peace, we asked colleagues and partners to share their perspective on what Feminist Peace means to them. We received entries that define Feminist Peace from individual, society and institutional perspectives. Together all the entries reflect that Feminist Peace embodies social justice, demilitarized security, the dignity of women, applying feminist approaches, choice and agency of women, that takes into account the differential impact of conflict on women and address the root causes of conflict.

**The concept that peace is premised on the universal integration of gender perspectives in all spheres as well as equal participation and equality to justice, demilitarized security for women and men at all levels and in all processes, especially in the context of conflict and peace processes** — Akullu Fivi, Assistant Camp Commandant Zone 5, Bidi Bidi Settlement, Yumbe District, Uganda

**Peace is life to a woman. It is only when a woman has peace that she can fully enjoy her dignity, potential and full participation in society. Women have the power and opportunity to influence the society** — Neiman Grace Khemis, Vice Chairperson, Leadership of Refugees, Bidi Bidi Settlement, Uganda

**We can achieve peace, if we are all feminists. Feminism from my perspective means that everyone is entitled to their rights as human beings and not discriminated against because of their sexual**

**orientation or other backgrounds. Feminist peace advocates against gender injustice which violates the rights of women. The absence of war does not mean women are at peace, they are faced with misogyny and patriarchy that deprive them from their freedom.**— Joyce Diko, Women's Rights Activist and Founder of the Initiative, Lady In Action (LIA), South Sudan

**The ability to CHOOSE. Women have always had their power to choose taken away and remain enslaved to the rules of patriarchy that tells us what to wear, who to marry, when to speak, what to eat, where to go and what I should look like. This leaves us in constant hunger for approval at our own expense. With the ability to choose, a woman is free to be her true-self and define what she wants her version of peace to look like**—Sharon Eryenyu, Women's International Peace Centre.

**Feminist peace is peace that takes into account the concerns of women without discrimination. It is when the woman contributes to the search and the strengthening of peace in the household and in her country. Sustainable peace is that which puts the interests of women at the center** — Liberate Niyonzima, Association des Femmes Repatriees du Burundi (AFRABU), Burundi

**Feminist peace means that war or violent conflict affect women differently than men so for women to be the beneficiaries of any peace initiatives, all peace policies and programs should be informed by women's needs, which vary among women based on their context and location. In most cases peace may mean physical security for women that leads to peace of mind and freedom from fear. Feminist peace means access to justice and remedies for survivors of atrocities of conflict such as sexual violence. Feminist Peace must focus on the visibility of women who suffer during and after conflicts, who bear the scars of war such as living on ARVs following sexual violence.** — Sarah Abeja, Co-founder of Women Partners for Health (WOPaH) and Coordinator of Network of AIDS Service Organization (NASOSS), South Sudan

1. What Is Feminist Peace by Catia Confortin: <https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/What-Is-Feminist-Peace-by-Catia-Confortini.pdf>

# FEMINIST PEACE IN WORKSPACES



## INTRODUCTION

Peace is when people are able to resolve their conflicts without violence and can work together to improve the quality of their lives. This means that everyone has the power to participate in shaping political decisions and the government is accountable to the people; everyone has an equal opportunity to work and make a living, regardless of gender, ethnicity or any other aspect of identity, everyone is equal before the law, the systems for justice are trusted, and fair and effective laws protect people's rights; and everyone lives in safety, without fear or threat of violence, and



Juliet Were

no form of violence is tolerated in law or in practice. (Alert International, 2020) <sup>2</sup>

Peace does not mean the total absence of any conflict. It means the absence of violence in all forms and at all times. Peace exists where people are interacting non-violently and are managing their conflict positively – with respectful attention to the legitimate needs and interest of all concerned (Galtung, 1996). Feminism is a movement that calls for social, economic and political equality between men and women. It is both an ideology and practice that should be exemplified and amplified. Feminism is the radical notion that women are people (in the words of activist and academic Cheris Kramarae). It is about the collective. The task of feminism therefore is to assert for, and fight for the humanity of female people.



**Feminist Peace in this context calls for a conducive workplace in which the principles of humanity, justice, equality and accountability are entrenched.**



Any feminism that will help us transform the world today must be capable of including perspectives that challenge white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, capitalism, the prison industrial complex, attacks on the environment, militarism and war.” - Angela Davis, longtime activist, author and scholar. <sup>3</sup> The Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists (2007) stipulates principles that should be entrenched in individual and institutional practices. Some of these include feminist solidarity, non-violence practice, freedom of choice and autonomy, indivisibility, inalienability and universality of women’s human

rights; openness, transparency, equality and accountability.

Therefore, Feminism and Peace (building) have intersecting values and provides an environment within which the feminist principles should be adhered to, respected, practiced and shared. You cannot liberate yourself alone.

## WORKSPACES

Work spaces are both in public and private, in formal and informal spaces, within one’s locality or beyond the borders. In the current context, with developments in information technology, virtual work spaces are a growing norm, in addition to enabling labour migration. The COVID-19 pandemic has further revolutionised the use of Information and Communication Technologies and transformed workspaces. The home space (that has been predominantly women’s work space) turned into an office, school, worship and entertainment space.

Women’s experience in the world of work for many is marked by persistent and widespread discrimination leading to sharp inequalities in productivity and wages, pervasive harassment, violence and exploitation. Globally, women remain concentrated in the lowest paid jobs, and perform 76.2% of total hours of unpaid care work, more than three times as much as men (ILO, 2018) <sup>4</sup>. The report also showed that most care workers are women, frequently migrants and working in the informal economy under poor conditions and for low pay.

Feminist Peace in this context calls for a conducive workplace in which the principles of humanity, justice, equality and accountability are entrenched. It requires the practice of feminist leadership which is oriented to re-distribution of power and responsibilities. <sup>5</sup> The way of work will exhibit “power with” which will include assigning roles along the different operational structures. These can include leadership of committees and working groups, chairing meetings, among others.

Believing what the feminist charter laid down is one thing and making sure the belief and the practices go hand in hand is crucial. Simply calling a workplace feminist doesn’t make it feminist. So here are visions of what feminist peace in work spaces should be:

**Thrive without fear:** This is manifested through welcoming spaces for women, girls and gender diverse persons who are seeking to learn and improve their skills. They may come as interns,



**Feminist Peace starts with the self (inner feelings, power to and power with), it is nurtured in the homes and neighbourhoods and is amplified in the communities, nations and beyond borders.**



— **Juliet Were**

volunteers and trainees. The environment should provide space for asking, questioning, experimenting and exposure through the activities of the institutions. They should not be seen as a threat and competitors by existing team members.

**Policies embedded in equality:** The work space should have policies that ascribe to equality with clear stipulations on punitive measures to all forms of discrimination. These should manifest practical examples beyond the text on paper. It should be a requirement for all to ascribe to standard policies on non-discrimination on gender, sexuality, disability and other grounds, actively provide spaces where any red flags and breach are detected, reported and addressed. There should be equal pay for equal work, and motivation schemes for all across organizational structures.

**Respectful relationships:** Dignity and respect for women, girls and gender diverse people should be a key ethos at all times. Workspaces should be violence free and supportive. In the event that they experience violence, the systems for accessing justice shouldn't suppress their voice and victimize them. Work spaces should put in place mechanisms to provide counselling and rehabilitation to mend the broken emotions and bodies.

**Bold and respectful internal governance structures:** These include boards and executive committees that support the direction and growth of organised groups and teams. These structures should provide the required technical knowledge, allow the teams to thrive, and are ready to provide timely actions and solutions. Women including young women should be nurtured and supported to be part of these leadership structures.

**Voices are not suppressed:** Platforms for amplifying voice should enhance growth and independence of opinion. Every voice matters and is respected because each contribution enhances collective growth and celebration.

**Accountability at all costs:** Work spaces should abide to all systems of accountability. Respect for time, integrity in managing finances, prioritising selfcare and well-being, and self leadership are important in building spaces that exemplify feminist peace.

**Contexts of crisis:** In contexts of crisis like forced migration, COVID-19, the specific needs of women and girls should be prioritized. Breastfeeding mothers, survivors of sexual violence, the elderly and differently abled persons, women living with HIV and AIDS need special attention.

## CONCLUSION

Feminist Peace starts with the self (inner feelings, power to and power with), it is nurtured in the homes and neighbourhoods and is amplified in the communities, nations and beyond borders. It embodies relationships and checks deep-rooted and normalised patriarchal notions of power. It is about the collective good and that no one should be left behind. And that Women and Girls Matter.

- 
2. <https://www.international-alert.org>
  3. <https://www.baystatebanner.com/2019/06/13/angela-davis-speaks-on-radical-feminism-at-bpl/>
  4. ILO, 2018. Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work
  5. Tracy Barton, "Feminist Leadership: Building Nurturing Academic Communities", in *Advancing Women's Leadership Online Journal*, Vol.21, Fall 2006



# FREEDOM



Joyce Diko

Go back  
I knew she'd say so  
Though I hoped she would embrace me and say  
Enough is enough

Go back for he paid 300 cows  
Go back for your family's reputation  
Go back for your child's sake  
Go back for you cannot be unmarried

300 cows is my Freedom  
Freedom!  
Did I ever have that in the first place?  
The only difference in my father's house and husband's house is  
I am My Mother now

My mother who is the first to wake and last to sleep  
My mother whose body toils from doing 'Nothing'  
My mother who gets a slap for a thank you  
My mother whose bed is cold for the younger is Ideal  
My mother who defines love as my father beating her  
My mother who is to be seen and not heard  
My mother who never realized she holds the key to unlock the chain that  
binds her.

My mother  
You, I cannot be  
For being you is my daughter cursing the day her menses start  
For being you is my daughter dropping out of school one day  
For being you is my daughter in fear of being married off to a rich old man  
For being you is my daughter being concerned for only having daughters?  
For being you is my daughter wishing she was a boy

300 cows  
They made Freedom So Cheap

*This poem was written early 2019 when we experienced so many cases of bride bidding in South Sudan. Young girls had their future taken away by selling them to the highest bidders without their consent. The practice is unfortunately a norm and the fact that it was televised and made headlines led to public protests against the practice. I wrote this poem to pour out my anger and tell the story for the liberation of womanhood. The poem reflects a true life story of a young woman who liberated herself from an abusive marriage by legally divorcing her husband. Her family advised her to return just to avoid paying back the bride price. Her resolve to be free made her to work endlessly to raise her bride price and pay for her freedom.*

*Feminist Peace is a world that is just and human rights of all are upheld.*

# MENTAL HEALTH

## A CATALYST TO FEMINIST PEACE



**Margaret Nassozi**

Physical, mental and or Psychological health are linked and necessary for overall human well-being. Feminist Peace to me means that one is satisfied or contented with self and the surrounding environment. The quality of one's thoughts determine how one feels and acts and can improve or deteriorate physical health. For example, if you start thinking that you could be sick, it's possible to wake up sick in reality because negative thoughts raise fear in someone forcing the body to release stress hormones, and if prolonged can weaken the body's immunity hence sickness.

In the current COVID-19 health crisis and its economic and social impacts where one is not sure of tomorrow's survival, the continuous trauma experienced as a result of conflict, insecurity, gender-based violence, economic hardship and lack of social services (health, water, and housing) weighs heavily on the wellbeing of women and girls. With all these exacerbated pressures, there is a possibility of developing psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a direct impact of the traumas experienced and constant worrying. In the absence of professional services to respond to the above challenges in the lives of women and gender diverse persons, feminist peace cannot be realized. Women's psychological and emotional needs during and after crisis need to be given priority.

The mental state of a person determines how one thinks, feels and acts. Realization of feminist peace requires taking care of the mental health of an individual at every stage of the life cycle, from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. To realize feminist peace one has to be psychologically and emotionally healthy. That is to say, being able to recognize one's emotions and constructively dealing with them. This sometimes







may require the services of mental health professionals like psychologists and psychiatrists. Psychologists are trained to help find constructive ways of dealing with anxiety, emotional stress and other mental health disorders hence improving well-being, alleviate feelings of distress and resolve crises within individuals and the environment. Services like counseling restore and enable the individual to function well in all spheres of life and therefore be at peace.

However, these services are not easily available to women and girls. Very few people are aware of where to seek services; others do not have the means to access them. With such limitations the population's capacity to contribute to nation building is restricted. When a society misses capturing and addressing experiences of the people, there can be no peace at individual and community level.

The response to COVID-19 pandemic has shown how mental health is not a priority for governments. The protocols put in place to curb the spread of the virus through the use of quarantine and social distancing, the increased sexual and gender-based violence, loss of jobs and economic hardship has led to enormous psychological impact. Yet none of the responses is addressing the mental wellbeing of the population even for direct survivors of COVID-19 hence, the mental health effects of COVID-19 will shape the health of many for long. It is important to pay particular attention to health workers and those supporting people infected and affected by the pandemic.

Given the potential for long-term mental health effects extending beyond the duration of the pandemic, there is a need to take steps to safeguard mental health by ensuring that people have access to the services of mental health workers who are uniquely situated to provide support to victims and the entire community. This support can be in the following ways; disseminate accurate, up-to-date information on COVID-19 to counter the misinformation especially on social media that lead to fear, care for populations at special risk of stress such as people with pre-existing mental health conditions, take responsibility to ensure responsiveness to the mental health needs of people acting as first-responders and care providers for populations affected by COVID19.

As a psychologist, I would argue that feminist peace can only be achieved if we collectively take care of the physical, mental and emotional well-being of all through a combined effort of both medical doctors and mental health professionals and the individuals themselves. For instance, by eating a balanced diet to strengthen our body immunities, social distancing at all times, washing hands thoroughly with soap and clean water but also through managing stress and anxiety through mind-body exercises that reduce stress reactions such as breathing exercises, meditation, physical activities and social support. Other personal mental health care strategies include; self-compassion, limiting exposure to media and avoiding reading about COVID-19 before bedtime. Actively seeking a peace of mind is important to feminist peace in our community amidst and post the COVID-19 health crisis.



**As a psychologist, I would argue that feminist peace can only be achieved if we collectively take care of the physical, mental and emotional well-being of all through a combined effort of both medical doctors and mental health professionals and the individuals themselves.**




**— Margaret Nassozi**


# THE PATH TO FREEDOM



Adeyele Adeniran



i have walked this route  
so many a time  
wondering if today I live or die  
perhaps I should slither through  
the bushes unheard  
or strut the path with pride  
if seen I might pay with my life  
but what good is an existence  
paid with silence at no price




what good is my silence  
when if I don't roar  
the others behind me  
would not know of the evils ahead  
what good is my submission  
when it arrests my voice  
and restricts the strength  
i hold in me


i have been told to do nothing  
because it is good to be good  
even when goodness doesn't reward you



but what more do I have to give  
other than my devote  
to all my sisters in the world




if I must walk this route  
i would rather die  
than swallow my roar  
the price of freedom  
is what my silence cannot buy



to live and exist without  
a chain hooked from my sex  
up my womb and  
through my throat  
to the root of my womanness  
is all the reason I need  
to walk this path  
armed with claws and my roar.

- to all the lionesses out there, keep roaring,  
keep strutting.



*The Path To Freedom is a poem that speaks on how life has been projected to be a trial for every woman. It is a lamentation and proclamation for women to own their right to exist loudly. We live in a world that is largely dominated by gender prejudice in form of patriarchy and misogyny which makes way for oppression, subjection, harassment, assault, mistreatment and violence against women all over the world. The poem was inspired by a series of photographs that captured women who were victims of acid attacks in the Middle East, calling attention to the rise of domestic violence during the lockdown in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. It is a call to action and an assurance of collective support to every woman in the world, they are seen and they are heard.*



# SELF-CARE & SELF LOVE

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO  
FEMINIST PEACE



Sharon Eryenyu

Self-care is paramount for those involved in anything political. To practice self-care is to understand that you are political. Feminist authors like Audre Lorde and bell hooks have written about self-care as an instrument in the constant battle against oppression. **“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare,”** wrote Audre Lorde on living with cancer and the need to resist overstretching herself.

Selfcare is an exceptionally flexible term and has been practiced by individuals and communities in various societies for centuries. It includes nearly any activity people use to calm, heal and preserve themselves in the face of hardship. It is an endeavor to pay as much attention to ourselves as we do others that we love. Some common forms of self care include getting enough sleep, eating well, physical exercise, drinking water, meditating, walking, yoga, journaling, meditation, talking to a friend, breathing, even amidst chaos, just stop, everybody can wait.

## HOW IT IS PRACTICED BY INDIVIDUALS AND COLLECTIVES

### How do we as feminists, both individually and as a collective, practice looking out for ourselves?

Self-care is about setting clear boundaries, about honoring who you are, understanding who we are in our worth. By deciding to prioritize yourself, you are using the power within to defy the patriarchal expectations imposed on us right from birth.

Through selfcare, we are reclaiming and tapping into our power every day. The idea of women taking back control over their own minds, bodies and spirits is exactly what is needed to survive in a system that constantly tells us that our wellness isn't important. Self-care is a radical act because, let's be honest, sometimes it's easier to take care of everyone else except ourselves. We take time every day to help other people achieve their goals: whether they are goals of the organization(s) we work for, helping our children meet their educational goals, or fulfilling the expectations that go unspoken within our relationships, we put energy into fulfilling the goals of others all the time. So when do you make time for your own goals? Women have been indoctrinated to believe that they should put themselves last — but putting ourselves first is key.

Self-care also requires one to be intentional; what

you put into it is exactly what you get out of it. Society teaches us to constantly rely on oppressive systems that constantly marginalize us, invalidate our experiences and emotions, and foster insecurity and make us see self-love and self-care as unworthy practices. Radical self-care takes the power back and places it back into your hands. When you prioritize your needs, your feelings, and your desires ahead of others, you find yourself worthy and deserving of care. The goodness that you pour to others channels inward to your own self. The love that you channel to yourself heals the wounds you've accumulated every day of your life. Love channeled inward creates a safe space where you feel protected, where you can recharge, rejuvenate, and where you can tap into your own power and manifest the highest expression of yourself!

So how do I start, you might ask...create a holistic daily ritual that works for your life. For instance when you wake up in the morning, we each have a routine; prayer, making your bed, stretching and so much more that you do to kick start the day. You also think about the things you need to do and set yourself on that path. One of the most powerful self-care practices is protecting your time. We need to reclaim our power, learn to set boundaries, and turn away people, places, and things that don't serve us by learning to say no. You have to say no to anything that's not serving you, or risk feeling like you're drowning in it all. By doing so, you go deeper into your feelings unpacking the things that don't serve you so that you may grow and heal. The deeper you go into these practices, the more clarity, self-love and sense of peace you obtain.

## HOW SELF CARE IS PRACTICED COLLECTIVELY

Anyone involved in any type of profession or work can be vulnerable to job-related burnout, however research shows that human rights activists, whose work is filled with unique challenges, can be especially vulnerable to it because we are frequently exposed to violence and injustice and carry individual and collective trauma. That's why self and collective care for impact are so important for anyone that is involved in this kind of work.

Collective care means to care about others' welfare particularly their emotional health as a communal responsibility of the group rather than the lone task of an individual <sup>6</sup>; it means recognizing our needs, limits and finding our community that wants to see

all its members flourish and function at optimum potential. Collective care ensures that frustrations, disappointments and trauma have an outlet and are expressed in a healthy way.

Jessica Horn in *Resist by Flourishing*<sup>7</sup> emphasizes the need to encourage wellbeing as a collective strategy for preserving the movement itself, where the wellbeing of one becomes the responsibility of all and shares nuggets of good practices from movement builders on collective care including creating and enhancing safe spaces like the Uganda Feminist Forum that includes a space to create sisterhood and talk freely about their experiences and trauma and build solidarity.

It is imperative to note that today's context of self care has been hijacked by capitalism which has reduced the idea of caring for yourself to a performance where you indulge in an act that is accessible to people through their class, monetary and other privileges. From unpaid carework to professional housekeeping, women and people of color are disproportionately responsible for the care that keeps this society functioning, yet have disproportionately little say in what that care fosters. Likewise, a tremendous amount of care goes

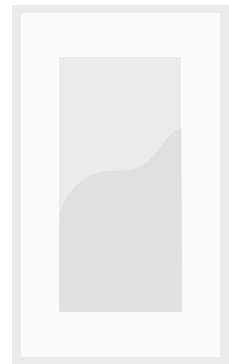
## DIFFERENT POLITICS OF SELF-CARE IN VARIED CONTEXTS



The love that you channel to yourself heals the wounds you've accumulated every day of your life.



Self-care is linked to pleasure, and for marginalised people such as queer people, women, those from oppressed racial groups - whose bodies, lives and pleasure have been denied to them, the act of reclaiming and doing what gives them pleasure is deeply political. Sadie Trombetta<sup>8</sup> writes about these acts reminding us that for many people putting our needs first is not about taking a break because we can, **"It was a courageous act that started with acknowledging that they had needs, that their needs were important, and that those needs deserved to be met, no matter what their oppressors said. Self-care was a way to step away from toxic environments, to admit the hurt, and to find the time and space needed to heal"**



into oiling the machinery that maintains hierarchy: families help police relax after work, sex workers help businessmen let off steam, secretaries take on the invisible labor that preserves executives' marriages; many of the privileged get to congratulate each other on their excellent self-care practices without recognizing how much of their sustenance they derive from others<sup>9</sup>. Therefore when we conceive of self-care as an individual responsibility, we are less likely to see the political dimensions of care.

For some of us, it could mean recognizing how we benefit from imbalances in the current distribution of care, and shifting from forms of care that focus on ourselves alone to support structures that benefit all

participants. For others, it could mean taking better care of ourselves than we've been taught we have a right to. We want our expressions of care to nurture liberation, not domination, to bring people together according to a different logic and values rather than creating gated communities of care, let's pursue forms of care that are expansive, that interrupt our isolation and threaten our hierarchies.

Like any other kind of love, self-love and self-care take diligence and patience because the path to self-



love isn't necessarily going to be a straight or easy one. You might not be easy to love at first, or ever, but you deserve your best shot at learning to love yourself. This is not easy because I've fallen in and out of love with myself but just remember that only you can figure that out and it is different for everyone. I'm still learning how, it is a journey. Reflect, so that you can understand yourself and why you make the decisions you do. Make it intentional so that you can

make better decisions for yourself going forward. To achieve Feminist Peace, we need to understand that as women caring for our sisters and others needs to be part of our daily actions and not perceived as a burden or luxury but an individual and collective need with responsibility shared by all.

As bell hooks writes in *All About Love: New Visions*, **"When we can see ourselves as we truly are and accept ourselves, we build the necessary foundation for self-love."** As you start or continue your self love and self-care journey, ask yourself this, **"Am I making decisions that help nurture my long-term growth as a person, rather than decisions that only bring me short-term joy? Do I allow myself to relax when I need to, but also push myself to keep growing?"**

In order to love myself, I must care for myself!



**Am I making decisions that help nurture my long-term growth as a person, rather than decisions that only bring me short-term joy? Do I allow myself to relax when I need to, but also push myself to keep growing?**



**Sharon Eryenyu**

6. <https://medium.com/@habonabdulle/collective-care-and-activism-ebe136ad7b20>
7. <https://preventgbvafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Self-and-Collective-Care.pdf>
8. <https://hellogiggles.com/lifestyle/health-fitness/understanding-radical-history-of-self-care/>
9. <https://crimethinc.com/2013/05/31/for-all-we-care-reconsidering-self-care>

# FEMINIST PEACE IS SUSTAINABLE PEACE



Wanyana Racheal





## Feminist peace gives us an array of tools to not only redesign the negotiation table, but to widen scope of peacebuilding and bring about structural transformation for a more gender responsive, inclusive and sustainable peace.

**“The world is leaving one epoch and entering another.”** – Mikhail Gorbachev.

At the 1989 Malta Summit, on board a ship anchored in a Maltese harbour, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and US President George W. H. Bush consigned the Cold War to history. Typical of many peace processes, the Malta Summit was held in an exclusive location, between two men representing the interests of millions of people who had directly or indirectly been impacted by the war. The patriarchal power dynamics that no doubt influenced who sat at the table, what was included on the agenda, and the substance of the conclusions reached became more overt in the days that followed the meeting. The two men were momentarily embroiled in a rather otiose competition to prove superiority of eloquence, as the ‘USA could not risk giving the appearance of being in second place behind the Soviet Union on the global stage’.<sup>10</sup>

This episode was in no way unique.

Not very long ago, Uganda had its own experience with patriarchal egotism spoiling prospects of peace talks. In the early 2000s, at the height of the Lord’s Resistance Army insurgency in Northern Uganda, Hon. Betty Bigombe volunteered to lead negotiations between the government of Uganda and the LRA rebels to put a stop to the protracted bloody civil war. In 18 months, during several face-to-face meetings with the rebel leaders, she started to register progress. Kony, the leader of the LRA started calling her “Mummy” Bigombe, and he eventually agreed to come out of the jungle for peace talks with President Museveni<sup>11</sup>.

Bigombe went to the president and told him they needed to establish the conditions for the peace talks. Instead, President Museveni went to a public rally and threatened Kony, telling him to come out immediately or face the wrath of government troops. Kony and his forces responded by massacring 300 people in a trading centre on the border with Sudan<sup>12</sup>.

Throughout history, patriarchal arrogance and power dynamics have always been at the heart of peace-making and peacebuilding, just as much as they have always been at the heart of war. In many instances, peace processes have been very akin to ‘boys’ clubs’ where misogynistic and denigrating undertones have laced peace talks and treaties, often to the detriment of women, minority groups, and ‘small’ and poorer countries. The results have always been gender blind, non-inclusive and unsustainable peace treaties, and conflict relapses.

The Malta Summit had suffered a much similar fate. While the summit came to be widely credited for marking the end of the Cold War, it has also been criticised as a ‘missed opportunity’ that avoided big policy changes and achieved ‘little of a concrete nature’.<sup>13</sup> The Summit’s triumph and ambitious vision of a lasting peace were also short-lived. As the Cold War ended, a new-fangled challenge emerged — transformation in the nature of conflict and violence. Could the outcomes of the summit have been different and more holistic had the peace table been longer, with a more diverse group of participants? Most likely.

There is emerging consensus that inclusive peace is a precondition that often determines whether the country is going to slide back into conflict or if it will make a clear departure from its conflict-ridden past<sup>14</sup>. When the negotiating table is more inclusive, peace lasts longer, as agreements reached are more likely to address multidimensional socio-political and economic issues that underlie conflicts in communities. For example, the participation of civil society groups, including women’s organizations, makes a peace agreement 64% less likely to fail<sup>15</sup>. And, when women are at the negotiating table, the resulting agreements are 35% more likely to last at least 15 years.<sup>16</sup>

While these statistics highlight the importance of applying a gender perspective in peace negotiations, and reiterate the imperative of bringing all voices to the bargaining table, women remain conspicuously

absent from peace tables. Between 1992 and 2018, women made up only 3% of mediators, 4% of signatories, and 13% of negotiators in major Peace Processes<sup>17</sup>. Continued failure to include women in peace processes has led to the creation of peace and reintegration programmes that ignore the needs of women<sup>18</sup>. Data from the University of Edinburgh and the Council on Foreign Relations shows that since 1990, only 5% of peace agreements reached referenced women or issues pertinent to them, such as sexual and gender-based violence in conflict.<sup>19</sup> These gaps are in part fuelled by an inadequate legal and policy infrastructure that does not acknowledge the diversity of women and their situations.

## WOMEN ARE REDEFINING PEACE AND REDESIGNING THE TABLE.

Tired of being left on the margins, and of peace arrangements that do not reflect their realities or needs, women are increasingly appealing to feminist principles to build alternative peacebuilding processes which recognise that sustainable peace requires coherence between social, economic, cultural and political and civil rights.

They are using available legal and policy tools, including the Beijing Platform for Action and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 to reorient and broaden the peace agenda; question structural inequalities which continue to deny peace to many through neo-colonialism, racism, patriarchy and capitalism; and to build thriving bottom-up initiatives that shape a more inclusive and sustainable peace. African women, in particular, have been very innovative in redefining the peace agenda and redesigning the negotiation table through alternative peace processes that centre gender equality, human rights and women's meaningful participation. In 2012, when Senegal was slipping into electoral violence, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), a women-led INGO mobilised other women's organisations to establish the Women's Platform for Peaceful Elections. The platform successfully contributed to averting violence during and after elections, despite the pre-electoral turbulence. Results from the elections were also extensively accepted as valid and legitimate, leading to a democratic transition of power to President Macky Sall<sup>20</sup>.

The success of the Platform was credited to its inclusiveness and responsiveness to the specific



**When the negotiating table is more inclusive, peace lasts longer, as agreements reached are more likely to address multidimensional socio-political and economic issues that underlie conflicts in communities.**



needs of the Senegalese people. Instead of assuming that Senegalese women and youth were homogeneous groups, the Platform mobilised and consulted with different groups of women, both in urban and in rural areas, developing a contextual gender analysis of their priorities and concerns<sup>21</sup>. The platform also utilised context-sensitive knowledge of women's organisations to identify the risk for youth engagement in electoral violence and, as a result, to approach and mobilize them through peer-to-peer peace advocacy<sup>22</sup>. In addition, the Platform maintained close dialogue with more than 50 women's organizations and youth organizations, highlighting the representativeness of its agenda, and its strategic reach in awareness raising and mobilization<sup>23</sup>.

In Liberia, women's organizations created the Women's Situation Room (WSR) to forestall imminent electoral violence in 2011. The WSR conducted bottom-up consultations, training, advocacy and monitoring aimed at preventing electoral violence and promoting peaceful and fair elections through women and young people's direct participation and engagement. The mechanism complemented and strengthened traditional electoral monitoring by combining women's roles as peace brokers and

their capillary reach on the ground for information gathering and awareness raising with early warning and rapid reaction mechanisms.

The WSR was highly effective in Liberia, and has since been replicated in Senegal (2012), Sierra Leone (2012), Kenya (2013), Zimbabwe (2013), Mali (2013), Guinea-Bissau (2014), and Nigeria (2015), and Uganda (2016, 2020), efficaciously mitigating election related violence in all countries.

The two mechanisms above are a true embodiment of what feminist peace is about, which is to:

**1. Strengthen agency, amplify voice, and build multi-stakeholder collaborations to mitigate the need to resort to violence to feel heard.** Unlike traditional exclusionary peace processes which impose top-down policies and solutions, feminist peace challenges us to consider authentic participatory ways of building peace, allowing people to formulate solutions that cater to the broad needs of society. It also recognises strengthening of the capacity of women, minority groups and civil society to organise and play a key role in promoting transparency, accountability and peace in general.

**2. End conflict, rather than make conflict safer for women.** Feminist peace recognises that there are several dimensions related to feeling safe, such as freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom from indignity, and recognises the social, economic, and political grievances that are often the root causes of conflict and societal violence. It therefore prioritises challenging the status quo and addressing the root causes of conflicts and violence; dismantling repressive systems and ideals of patriarchy, militarisation and neoliberalism which facilitate conflict and militarised security, and supports the transformation of gendered power, promoting demilitarisation, and a feminist political economy rooted in principles of equality, autonomy and meaningful engagement of all in governance and decision making.

To say the least, Feminist Peace gives us an array of tools to not only redesign the negotiation table and invite more people into decision making processes, but to influence decisions, widen scope of peacebuilding, and bring about structural transformation for a more gender responsive, inclusive and lasting peace. Purely for the ideals it proffers, Feminist peace is sustainable peace.



**... Feminist Peace gives us an array of tools to not only redesign the negotiation table and invite more people into decision making processes, but to influence decisions, widen scope of peacebuilding, and bring about structural transformation for a more gender responsive, inclusive and lasting peace. Purely for the ideals it proffers, Feminist peace is sustainable peace.**

10. Keith Robbins; *Transforming the World: Global Political History Since World War II*, Macmillan Education UK
11. Betty Bigombe: *The woman who befriended a warlord*, BBC, Published 7 August 2019
12. Ibid, 2
13. National Security Archive (NSA), "Bush and Gorbachev at Malta Previously Secret Documents from Soviet and U.S. Files on the 1989 Meeting, 20 Years Later," December 3, 2009, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB298/index.htm>
14. *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence*, UN Women, 2012
15. <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/>
16. *Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies*, Marie O'Reilly October 2015
17. <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/>
18. Mackenzie, 2012; Coulter, 2006.
19. *Data from the University of Edinburgh and the Council on Foreign Relations*, 2018
20. Ettu Jamm 2012; Bineta Diop, interview, Feb. 5; Safietou Diop, interview, Dalla Sidibé, interview
21. *Promoting Democracy in Preventing Electoral Violence: The Women's Situation Room*, Paula Drumond
22. Ibid, 12
23. Ibid, 12

# ENHANCING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SUSTAINABLE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROCESSES



Tendaishe Tlou



Africa is at a critical moment; what it does and articulates in the public realm can have drastic effects for future generations. While peace processes have been unfolding and gathering momentum, it is also important to note that women's voices are not being heard as much as they should be. In an epoch wherein transitional justice processes are gathering momentum, this article seeks to examine how interventions can enhance the role of women in sustainable peacebuilding, citing examples from Africa. Peacebuilding interventions must be inclusive, sensitive and all-encompassing of all social groups, in particular women who have been equally affected but have been silenced.

Transitional justice is a crucial component of peacebuilding, yet it is a complex and very dynamic process which differs from country to country. Transitional justice is "...the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation. These may include either judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, with differing levels of international involvement (or none at all) and individual prosecutions, reparations, truth-seeking, institutional reform, vetting and dismissals, or a combination thereof (United Nations Secretary General, 2004).

Against this background, it is paramount that women who are already involved in peacebuilding activities amplify the voices of marginalised women. In my experience as a peacebuilding and transitional justice practitioner, I have realized that there are so many women who have scars from the violent conflicts Africa has experienced in the past, yet their cries for help are not heard. For example, during the community dialogues I have taken part in the past three years across various provinces in Zimbabwe, women are usually silent and fearful to speak-out. I call for a coordinated and deliberate approach in soliciting the experiences, views, concerns, needs and expectations of women affected by conflict in Africa.

We need to create robust, yet safe spaces for women to have courage and freedom to speak-out. Patriarchy has confined women to spectators rather than participants in important peacebuilding processes. Yet, women who have been sexually abused, politically and economically marginalized need to be involved in transitional justice processes so that they seek

**... it is paramount that women who are already involved in peacebuilding activities amplify the voices of marginalised women.**

justice without fear of retribution. Creation of safe spaces for dialogue will ensure sustainability in transitional justice processes, which will motivate more women to come-out and share their experiences. Everyone involved in transitional justice processes need to make deliberate efforts to involve and engage with marginalized women, particularly those located in rural areas who experienced the brunt of violent conflicts. No one should be left behind.

Under the pillar of truth-seeking and truth-telling, women can use their artistic talent to promote transitional justice in Africa. In countries such as Rwanda, South Africa and Sierra Leone which are making efforts to deal with their ugly pasts, women continue to find ways within the cultural realm to express their experiences. Art, which includes music, drawings, sculpture, theatre, literature, photography, and film, has been integral to the understanding of the issues faced in situations of transitional justice as well as other issues arising out of conflict and mass atrocity (Rush, Peter and Simic, 2014). Due to the abundance in artistic women in Africa, art should be used to capture the experiences and needs of women who were affected by conflict across the continent. The new and old generations can deduce lessons from the art for non-recurrence of gross human rights violations.

The importance of art is that it can also be stored in museums, exhibited and put-up on online archives as a way of passing history from one generation to the other. Art does not age and

a plethora of meanings can be deduced from it. In Colombia, the civil society was critical in ensuring that stories of survivors were part of the reconciliation process. Memory dolls, story-telling and drama were a critical component in the peacebuilding and transitional justice processes (Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation, 2020).

Under the pillar of memorialisation, it is critical that women play their role in as far as keeping the memory of the effects of conflict in Africa is concerned. In light of historic conflicts such as Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe, when men were being killed, the women who witnessed the genocide, sexually abused and physically assaulted. Women should lead communities in identifying the victims, retelling the experiences and also identifying the mass graves in which victims of organised violence lie. Women have an important role in the memorialisation, identifying mass graves, influencing proper burials and sharing experiences of women during violent conflicts which the younger generations do not know about.

Finally, women have a critical role to play in terms of counselling and trauma healing at community levels. Women have always taken care of their families and communities, which makes them a best-placed to take the lead in post-conflict psychological and

trauma healing. In countries such as Zimbabwe, Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, the trauma is real and widespread, and unless dealt with in the process, the lack of it will exacerbate distress and deepen conflict in communities (NTJWG, 2018). A 'do-no-harm', sensitive approach must be central to all transitional justice processes.

## CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, nowhere in history has it been the right time as it is now for women to take the lead in peacebuilding processes such as transitional justice. The role of women should be enhanced in sustainable transitional justice processes in Africa. If women's voices are undermined and marginalised, sustainable peace and reconciliation will not be achieved. As transitional justice processes gather momentum and gain traction in countries such as Uganda and Zimbabwe, women should be at the centre of these processes. No one should be left behind. Organisations involved in transitional justice processes should carry out studies and identify obstacles to women's participation and put in place structures which activate their participation.

---

Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (2020). Colombia Toolkit. GIJTR: USA.

Report of the Secretary-General on the Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-conflict Societies, S/2004/616.

Rush, Peter and Simic (2014). *The Arts of Transitional Justice: Culture, Activism, and Memory after Atrocity*. Springer Series in Transitional Justice. New York.

National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG) (2018). *The Code of Inclusion: Guiding Principles on Inclusive Public Consultation and Participation in Transitional Justice Processes in Zimbabwe*. Harare.



**We need to create robust, yet safe spaces for women to have courage and freedom to speak-out. Patriarchy has confined women to spectators rather than participants in important peacebuilding processes.**



—— **Tendaishe Tlou**



**Women's  
International  
Peace Centre**  
*Amplifying Women's Voice and Power*

ISBN 978-9970-29-060-4



9 789970 290604