
Aliya Caler

Lifting the Shackles: Women Building Peace in an Unreconciled South Africa

Project Goals

- ◆ Assess the role of women in the South African transformation to a democracy
- ◆ Understand the limitations as well as the successes that empowerment projects can have
- ◆ Explore how South Africa's gender machinery works at the various levels of government and how these processes affect women's lives in civil society

Personal Goals

- ◆ Think about what shifts in power have taken place in South Africa, who has been affected by those shifts, and in what ways
- ◆ Grapple with the meaning of reconciliation
- ◆ Work with my own pain in an effort to create more peace within myself and, thus, within the world

Activities

- ◆ Conducted an evaluation of the Women and Peacebuilding Program in order to determine its effectiveness and capabilities for growth
- ◆ Interviewed female leaders and peacebuilders from the townships of Nyanga, Phillipi, and Crossroads
- ◆ Participated in three project workshops involving women and peacebuilding: "Conflict Resolution," "Women Building Peace," and "Refugees and Xenophobia"

Key Dilemmas

- ◆ What does reconciliation mean for women living in a culture of gender-based violence, in a country that practices neo-liberal economic policies and has drastic inequalities in wealth?
- ◆ Post-apartheid South Africa made a peaceful transition to democracy and yet the majority of South African citizens still do not have their basic human needs met. One must ask the question: What does "peaceful" mean and for whom?
- ◆ I grapple with my own privilege which my skin color, social class, and citizenship provide me on a daily basis.



A painting of a woman done by Caleb, a local South African artist.

Important Learnings

- ◆ Living peace is a huge responsibility because it means recognizing our interconnectedness on a continual basis.
- ◆ Fear of failure results in highly destructive behavior for self. The belief in one's self makes a world of a difference.
- ◆ Emotional poverty can be more devastating than basic needs poverty.
- ◆ We must gender our thoughts on reconciliation, development, and conflict resolution and realize that these concepts and processes could mean very different things for women than they do for men.



Although UMAC is located in Observatory in Cape Town proper, the majority of its work takes place in the Cape Flats in various townships surrounding the city.



Above: Aliya with Women and Peacebuilding participants and coordinators at a seminar on Refugees and Xenophobia at KTC hall. Left: Aliya conducting an interview with former Women and Peacebuilding community intern, Sindiswa, at New Crossroads youth center in Nyanga township.