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SYNERGISTIC EMERGENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Global Conversations

September/October 2005

Conversations with the Field - Africa

Below is an email dialogue with one of PNE's partners, Sarah Hartzell:

Audrey:

It seems we are in the flow of African time, which generally means being at least an hour late to everything...they waited for us though and came out to greet us with typical Kenyan warmth. We sat together for circle and heard their stories of courage and peacemaking as response to things like child rape, conflict among co-wives, care to those dying of AIDS with only a bit of medicine to ease the pain. The most touching for me was the woman who told of how her husband died when her youngest child was 1 year old. He is now five and despite numerous other deaths in the family, is convinced that his father is alive and somewhere hiding from him. Every day he asks his mother where his father is.... Her question to the circle was how to deal with the constant questions which pain her as well. There are many widows here... and it's a difficult process since they do not inherit any property from their husbands and often are "chased" from the husband's side of the family as well. Each one gave their testimony of peacemaking about how they intervene for peace in the situations in their daily lives...some at great risk for violence, and social disgrace.

The next day we were on tour...four local organizations who have joined the Circles of Ten/Peace by Peace network of peace circles who will eventually be connected via internet to sister circles in the United States... The first was a group of women living with HIV/AIDS, the second a group that does small agro business, the third was "Happy Mothers", mostly widows with children, and the fourth was the Green belt women, who work co-operatively to nurture seedlings and plant trees. Each of these gatherings included 50-100 grassroots rural women...all of them greeted us with singing and dancing...there was no choice but to dance with them and sing...to celebrate life in the midst of the adversity, fear, hunger and disease.

The next day was the peace march.... the big one that we came for... We think over 2,000 were involved, most of them women...

*I want to thank you, Audrey, and the staff at PNE, for sponsoring my trip. Also, thank you for having me take the Landmark Forum. It allowed me to **listen** and deeply relate to the people of Africa.*

*Peace blessings to all of you...,
Sarah*

Dear Sarah:

Welcome back to the land of affluence and abundance. What must it have been like to see the contrast between Africa and the U.S.?

When the veil of materialism fell, I'm sure you could see the human spirit in its most raw form there in Kenya. I can't imagine what it was like for you to look into the eyes of the women and the children. The stories you shared regarding the reverence in which you and your team was received and the openness by which the African people shared their lives had to have permanently transformed all of you.

I know your mission there was not to "fix" or "solve" the problems; rather you went there to share the possibility and opportunity for peace and empowerment of the women. We both know that when this is made available to people, since humans are productive by nature, they will solve their own problems, creating in the end a self-dignity that can't be attained any other way.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to peace in your lifetime. Thank you for loving Africa. Thank you for being a partner of Paradigm Nouveau.

With great love and respect,

Audrey

Sarah Hartzell is Founder and President of the Board of *Circles of Ten: Women for World Peace* (www.peacecircles.net). Its mission is to make visible the worldwide culture of peace by gathering in circles to identify what peace means to us and to translate that vision into acts of courageous peacemaking in our personal lives, our communities and our world.



Audrey James and Sarah Hartzell, August 2005