

### Activity: Learning from Women Peacebuilders of the Past

(adapted from Lesson 3.3 of the [Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators, High School Edition](#), edited by Alison Milofsky. Washington, DC: Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace, 2011.)

**Rationale:** While it is easy to view the peacebuilders of our history as exceptional people far different from ourselves, it is important that we humanize and personalize these role models for young people. During Women’s History Month, we celebrate the women peacebuilders of our past. This activity asks students to interview their elders about women peacebuilders who were significant to them when they were growing up, providing students with personal connections to historic figures and helping them explore the characteristics and experiences that made these women effective peacebuilders. This will enable students to recognize similar qualities in themselves and to consider how they can take peacebuilding action on current issues important to them.

#### Objectives:

1. To identify women peacebuilders of the past, and the characteristics and actions that made them effective peacebuilders.
2. To think critically about what it means to be a peacebuilder and about taking action on current issues.

**Time:** 40 minutes over two days

#### Procedures:

*Learning from the past (10 minutes)*

1. Explain that students will interview their parents, grandparents, or elders that evening, asking them about a woman peacebuilder who was significant to them while they were growing up and who, through their actions, sought to make the world a better and more peaceful place. Explain that while peacebuilding takes everyone, you are focusing on women peacebuilders in honor of Women’s History Month. Divide students into pairs and have them work together to generate three to five interview questions. They should write these down.
2. Ask a few students to share their questions.

**Extension:** Watch video interviews of young USIP staff talking about women peacebuilders who are significant to them, found in the multimedia section of the Global Peacebuilding Center’s website (<http://www.buildingpeace.org/train-resources/multimedia>)

*The Next Day: From the past to the present (30 minutes)*

1. Ask students for their general reactions to their interview experiences the day before.
2. Divide students into groups of three or four and have them share the information from their interviews. If students taped their interviews, they may play the interviews for each other.
3. Lead a whole class conversation using some or all of the following questions:
  - What did you learn about women peacebuilders of the past? Did anything surprise you?

- What were the issues of your parents'/grandparents'/elders' time? How did the peacebuilders respond to these issues?
  - What strategies did the peacebuilders use? Who helped them?
  - What challenges did they face? How did they overcome these challenges?
  - What characteristics did they have that made them effective peacebuilders? Which of these qualities do you see in yourself?
4. Transition to present day and ask students to focus on the world today. Ask the following questions:
- What do you consider the major issues of today? Local, national, or international?
  - What are the international issues that you are passionate about or that need transformation?
  - Who is taking action on these issues already?
  - What role can you play in making a difference in these issues?

**Extension:** Watch the testimonial of Betty Bigombe, who, for more than two decades, was involved in efforts to resolve the long-running conflict between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army. Use the accompanying lesson plan to guide a conversation about Bigombe's story.