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Ep. 44: The 2023 UMBC Africana Studies Conference

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DI Dr. Ian Anson 0:04

Hello and welcome to Retrieving the Social Sciences, a production of the Center for Social Science Scholarship. I'm your host, Ian Anson, Associate Professor of Political Science here at UMBC. On today's show, as always, we'll be hearing from UMBC faculty, students, visiting speakers. and community partners about the social science research they've been performing in recent times. Qualitative, quantitative, applied, empirical, normative. On Retrieving the Social Sciences we bring the best of UMBC's social science community to you.

DI Dr. Ian Anson 0:40

You don't have to take my word for it, but after eight years at UMBC, I've come to realize that it's a pretty special place. We're innovative, we produce high impact research, and our model of inclusive excellence is one that universities around the world are currently trying to adopt. So when we put together a conference, you know it's going to be a big deal.

DI Dr. Ian Anson 1:11

That's exactly what happened in May at UMBC when the Africana Studies Department hosted its biennial international conference. This year's theme was

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on African history and culture and gender studies among other subjects, and serves on the governing bodies of the UMBC Language, Literacy, and Culture PhD program, the Gender, Women's, + Sexuality Studies Department, and the Global Studies program. Dr. Chuku's expertise in these fields allowed her to facilitate a conference that dealt with a variety of critical topics. The conference benefited from presentations by several notable scholars and students of African politics and culture, as well as a celebration of African food, music, and culture that I was very sad to miss. But I was able to make it to a small part of this two-day conference just in time to hear Dr. Chuku's opening remarks and to hear one of the two keynote addresses. The rebroadcast we're about to hear a feature is the work of Dr. Aili Mari Tripp, Vilas Research Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Dr. Tripp's research is focused on gender and women in politics, women's movements in Africa, transnational feminism, African politics, with particular reference to Uganda and Tanzania, autocracies in Africa, and on the informal economy and Africa. Her presentation is entitled "Women and Peacebuilding in Africa: New Challenges and Possibilities." I was fascinated to learn about this subject, especially because it is so far from my own knowledge base, and maybe shamefully so given the Dr. Tripp and I are both political scientists, nevertheless, working in quite different parts of a broad and diverse discipline. And so let's listen in first to some of Dr. Chuku's remarks, and then we'll hear Dr. Tripp's address.

DI **Dr. Ian Anson** 3:17

I am here on May 17, 2023, to listen to some really incredible presentations by Dr. Gloria Chuku, who is the chair of our Africana Studies program, is leading this event, and it promises to be a really incredible opportunity to learn from a variety of different researchers, stakeholders, and UMBC students, as well about this really important topic. And so this is billed as an international conference highlighting the complex and diverse experiences of African women in pre-war, wartime, and postwar societies. I'm really excited to jump into this conference and to learn about what's happening, and especially the role of women in the peace building process. So let's take a listen. We're about to hear from our keynote speaker, and then we're gonna get a chance to talk to some of these awesome enterprising students here at UMBC.

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Can you all get seated? Yes, where we are, we're continuing please look at the program. We're starting the opening ceremony. I want to acknowledge the policy makers, the parliamentarians. I hope they will take a lot of message, powerful message from the conference back to Kenya at least help to influence policies in Kenya and also in South Sudan. Those leaders, political leaders, have to go home and help in the reconstruction. At this time, I'm inviting Dr. Tsao Stein to give his opening remarks and declare this conference open, acting unofficially.

DA

Dr. Aili Mari Tripp 5:15

Thank you very much for that very kind introduction. And thank you Professor Chuku for inviting me to this, this event, and also to Kathleen Browning for helping organize get me here. So, women in Africa have influenced domestic and global policies and practices around peacebuilding in important ways. In spite of valiant efforts to be included in peacebuilding, women are still included, excluded, rather from formal peace processes from the negotiating table from post conflict governance structures, and transitional justice processes. They are all too often relegated to the margins to informal grassroots activities, which I will also argue are important. But the failure to recognize women's many contributions to peacebuilding comes at a great cost to the pursuit of peace. And so my talk today asks what is at stake in the continued exclusion of women from peacebuilding. Most of the academic literature on women peace and security has problematize the gendered nature of the way in which war and security is understood in the area of peacebuilding. It has engaged in critiques of international norms and practices regarding international treaties and peacekeeping efforts. However, little attention has been paid to what women themselves are actually doing on the ground to build peace, and especially these informal strategies, and women's efforts to fight exclusion and peace building is all also another literature on peacebuilding that's more general and that similarly virtually ignored the role of women in peacebuilding. If you look at women's peacebuilding activities and their demands, even though as I hope to show these activities have been quite extensive, and serve as a tremendous resource potentially for national peacebuilding efforts. Even the large literature on local level, indigenous and informal peacebuilding strategies largely still ignores the role of women. So if you look, we spend it we start with some

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returning to conflict by strengthening national capacity for conflict management, and laying the foundation for a durable process of peace and development. Its included support for conflict prevention through the protection of civilians, use of diplomacy negotiations and community strategies, external interventions supported by the UN, or regional peacekeepers, DDR programs, that's disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs, and security sector reforms. And finally, there's been a peace building includes transitional justice mechanisms that focus on inclusive dialogue, reconciliation and truth processes, as well as the strengthening of the rule of law. And while these are important measures, they're also very state centric. These strategies have focused almost exclusively on formal state building and technocratic solutions, the professionalization of personnel, standardization of operating procedures, and holding the best practices but focused on the state. These types of strategies are often valorized, at the expense of grassroots activities carried out by women, and so much of the focus still remains on these formal and national processes. And I've again, I'm not saying that they shouldn't, but just that it, the focus is only on those kinds of activities. And so what I'll talk about today is how Africa has been actually a leader in many areas in the whole field of women peace and security. But I'll also talk about the cost of the continued exclusions of women from other key areas. I'll talk about how war is gender, but also how peacebuilding is gendered the importance of women's informal peacebuilding. And I'll give some examples from around Africa, and what some of the characteristics of this mobilization are. And then I'll find the I might make a few comments about some of the International approaches to peace building and so Some of the dilemmas that they've posed. So, African women have been global leaders in influencing policy around peace building, and the most important of which has been the involvement in the passage of the UN Security Council Resolution. 1325. women's organizations met in Windhoek, Namibia in 2000, and they drafted a document that then became the basis for this resolution. Namibia was at the time on the Security Council, the UN Security Council, and the resolution requires women to be included in all peace making and peacebuilding activities and recognizes their importance in peace negotiations, humanitarian activities, peacekeeping operations, and post conflict peacebuilding governance. When Namibia brought the resolution to the floor, there was a lot of pushback. Ambassador Selma, Ashley Paola Mousavi,

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UN Security Council at the time, quote, following the introduction at the theme women peace and security. What followed then was a minute of silence, followed by a mix of laughter, plain astonishment, accompanied by sophisticated ridicule. The feeling was that the topic of women peace and security had no place in the UN Security Council, but should be discussed by the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly. However, due to our insistence and push from civil society organizations and other member states in our camp, the Security Council eventually deliberated on the topic and the UN Security Council resolution 1325 was adopted and the rest is history. So she persevered. Many of the changes in thinking about gender based violence globally also can come out of African experiences with a conflict. As Joella Lee pointed out this morning, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, their judgment against former one DS mayor, John Paul, aka So in 1988, for his role in the Rwandan genocide of 1984 1994. Sorry, helped to fundamentally transform existing norms regarding gender violence, not only within Africa, but globally. For the first time, rape and sexual violence were explicitly recognized as an act of genocide and a crime against humanity. Two of the three judges in this case I should point out were from Africa. Judge lighty come up from Senegal and NAVA Palais from South Africa, who is a well known women's rights activist in South Africa. peacebuilding norms and practices have also been shaped by other African women leaders and I can't mention all of them obviously, but just a point just as to point out a few out from Salem, Lambeau and Guca, the former executive director of UN Women from 2013 to 21. Under her leadership of UN Women, they worked to increase women's participation in peacekeeping operations. Prema Patton is a Mauritian British barrister, women's rights activist and UN official who currently serves as the UN Special Representative on sexual violence in conflict. Zeinab, Bombora has been relentless in her advocacy for around conflict resolution and reconciliation and human rights in the UN system. And she was most recently also Special Representative of the Secretary General on sexual violence in conflict and had begun her career, most famously in the UN Mission in Liberia, where she was in charge of the management of the largest civilian component of the mission. I'm sure many most of you know Leymah Gbowee and former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, volley was Liberian peace activist that was responsible was responsible for leading a women's nonviolent peace movement, the women of Liberia mass action for

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And after that, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected the first was the first elected woman president in Africa and served from 2006 to 2018. We Sirleaf and Tawakkol Karman from Yemen were awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize for their nonviolent struggle for the safety of women and women's rights to participate in peacebuilding work. And like I said, I can go on but just to give you a sense of you know, there's there's all these there are all these prominent women who have played these major roles in the on the global scene. In terms of you know, now we're 23 years out away from the passage of UN Security Council resolution 1325. And there's widespread recognition that although some gains have been made, there's still a long way to go to fully implement this resolution. This has been this has particular bearing in Africa because some of the deadliest conference complex can be found on the continent in the Sahara in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia and northern Nigeria. Nevertheless, as a result of 1325. Africa is a leader when it comes to women's rights provisions when in peace agreements, references to women's rights tripled, after the year 2000, after the resolution was passed it up to 34%. And it more than doubled in all comprehensive peace agreements up to 78%. And this then helps set the stage for later incorporation of women's rights in constitutions and legislation as well as women's presence in key governmental, legislative and transitional institutions. Women's rights have been included in more peace agreements in Africa than anywhere else in the world proportionately. So there are 30% in Africa compared to 16% in the rest of the world. If you look at the kinds of agreement, the kinds of women's rights provisions that are being included in these Peace Accords, it gives you a sense of what the priorities are for women in Africa, just overall in general. So after you after the general kind of institutional concerns that have to do with implementing women's rights, the majority of the substantive women's rights provisions relate to political participation one. The second area that's most important has to do with development and the need for women to acquire the means to support their households, as a result of disruptions of conflict. And the third area of importance relates to violence against women. Another common concern that was heightened by conflict. One of the major demands of women in most post conflict contexts has been for rolling governance, like I just pointed out in the Peace Accords, the countries with the highest levels of representation for women in Parliament's the countries that have the most women in cabinets and the local government or post

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Joella Lee Rwanda, which experienced major genocide and conflict in 1994, you find that women hold 61% of the legislative seats, which as we said, was the highest rate in the world. It's also no accident that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected after years of conflict in Liberia and became head of state, while Catherine Samba Ponza, was elected Interim President of the Central African Republic, in the middle of a bloody civil war. For that Ethiopia gained a woman president in 2018, after years of instability and conflict. And all of them have been strong advocates of women's rights. If you look at the countries in Africa that have the highest rate of women, or with 50%, women in the in the cabinet, they're all post conflict countries, Ethiopia and Rwanda, we've mentioned before. And so if you look over all the countries that have that are post conflict countries have double the rates of representation for women in the parliament, compared with non post conflict countries, and you can see here in this in this chart, or in this figure, the, you know, the differences between the blue line or the or those countries that have come out of major conflict, the red line is countries that have had no conflict. The green line is those that have had limited conflict. And the purple line is those that have ongoing conflicts. So you can see that, you know, there's a big difference with those that have come out of major conflict when it comes to women's representation. And these developments are tied to social transformations that took place during the war. The decline of conflict, especially after the mid 1990s, that's when it kind of took off and and after 2000. Even more so new institutions were established in which women could assert their interests. The peacekeeping negotiations sometimes allowed women to assert their demands. women's organizations influenced constitution making processes and we're able to include more women friendly provisions. Then countries that revise their constitutions but had not gone through conflict. Women's rights activists also saw that electoral rules were amended in ways that supported their goals. And so no one has done so then, you know, the question is what accounts for these check trends. Part of it has to do with changes in political elites that occurred after a conflict. It also has to do with disruptions in gender relations and norms. During conflict. Also, women's movements and women's organizations took advantage of changing opportunity structures during conflict. So they were able to take advantage of the peace agreements or constitutions or electoral reforms. And then in the background, you have changes in international norms. So the UN became much

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into these processes. And uninfluenced, some of the changes that took place both at the governmental level but also, you know, women's movements. It just grabbed some water here. There are still many challenges. So in terms of women, women's representation and peace, peace negotiations, the numbers are still very low at even after 1325. And in fact, there's been very, very little change in women's engagement in this area, women still make up only 14% of the negotiators 6% of the mediators 6% of the signatories in major peace processes. Only three women have served as chief mediators in international at the international level. And when women are brought in onto delegations, it's often as a result of advocacy on the part of UN Women. Sometimes women play a role behind the scenes, as Betty Bigman embedded both during and before the Juba peace talks in 2006, with the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda, but she did so at her own expense. So women don't have a significant formal roles and peace talks. They've also had difficulty getting consultative access to negotiations, which would give them some kind of formal mechanism to influence the proceedings. When it comes to military personnel on the ground, women make up only 5% of them, and 11% of the millet of the police personnel. And I think that the point here is that not things just haven't changed a whole lot in these areas. Yet, we know from research that if you include civil society actors and women's organizations, the risk of peace failing is reduced by 64%. And this is regardless of if it's the democracy or hybrid regime or authoritarian machines. It's the the end result is quite dramatic. And another this was this was from a study by Deseret Nielsen. Another study by Kraus Carlson brand Ford found that peace agreements that had women who were signatories were much more likely to have durable peace and a higher rate of implementation of the peace agreement. So you know, it makes a difference if we are at the table. So now let's turn a little bit to the literature on John peacebuilding. There's been considerable work on the gendering of war. But not so much on the gendering of peacebuilding. Building on the work of Judith Butler, Laura Shepherd argues that changing dynamic understandings of gender are reproduced and reified and reconstituted through violence and insecurity. Gender is a power relationship, and therefore it's implicated in violence, which is gendered gender as a way of ordering society. And so violence itself recreates gender relations in a dynamic way. Gender myths help maintain that hierarchy in order in society, culture and history also influence

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masculinity and war. And they point out that men are often regarded as fighters. And when they are seen as peacemakers it's often as protectors of the vulnerable women. And this is aptly evident in UN documents studies of UN documents. However, in many contexts, women also are fighters in Sierra Leone and Liberia. I mean, the numbers vary, but they're up to perhaps 20% of the fighters were women, and yet, in the same conflicts, and women were peacemakers also, but but they were not just peacemakers. There were also women who were fighters. At this by the same token men were also peacemakers. They were all So victims so these some of these kind of tropes that we have about about war and who does what during war are not necessarily don't necessarily bear out when you look at the facts on the ground. But just this war is gendered. peacebuilding is also gendered and peacebuilding also recreates gender in its own ways. And it's also reflects a certain set of power relations. That's also shaped by by intersectionality by class by ethnicity, race and other differences. And as in conflict, women and men are constrained by socialization and social expectations of their roles in peacebuilding. Women are marginalised from certain aspects of peacebuilding, when the formal avenues are close to them, and then they are forced into pursuing primarily informal means. But then there are also times when women can play a larger public role than men, because they are less likely to be targeted. And this then also shaped was is shaped by gendered perceptions, that women are less dangerous. Also, when I think back to I did some research in Liberia right after the war there and many of the men told me that they had to go into hiding and stay in their homes during the war, because they would otherwise be targeted by militia who are then captured them to fight. Or they would, you know, be or be they would be suspected as being the enemy and would be killed. And so they had to stay in the homes but that was the women that could go out and demonstrate and participate in the in the Peace marches. So essentialist understandings of gender often shape what types of peacebuilding activities are open to men and women and this then, so for example, we see a preponderance of men, males in peacekeeping forces and peace talks. Women relegated to the informal peacebuilding activities into the margins of peacebuilding males are seen as quote protectors of vulnerable women and quote, and then they can't there are consequences to these, for example, males and females are treated differently in post conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. So in

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and reintegration programs didn't always adequately respond to the needs of women fighters after the war, especially those that were involved in cooking or carrying things. They were not involved in combat roles always. But they were nevertheless involved with the militia. And yet they didn't get the same packages and support after the war that the other that the fighters did. So so these are just some of the some of the concerns that one has, that one finds. Another critique that's out there that comes from the feminist security literature is that there's a kind of an essentialist length that's drawn between women and peace or peace building, that somehow women are naturally have some natural affinity to peace making. And I think that one wants to move away from some of these kind of simplistic assumptions that these innate qualities are, what are the key to peace, sometimes politicians will play on them. But and but, and the critique of these tropes is not new. But the persistence of these frames continues to capture the popular imagination. And you see this again, and in documents in the UN and so on. And they don't fully account for women's roles in promoting and participating in war or the men's roles in promoting peace. And so I think that perhaps the dilemma is really that women are involved in that, I guess. Yeah, the problem. The problem with all this is that women are in fact involved in peacebuilding, but not because of these innate, you know, nurturing and peace loving capacities, but more because of divisions of labour in the household and socialization that put them in charge of care work. And this then gives them a different sensibility about what needs to be done, and helps women find common ground. So it's not this kind of essentialist understanding of women's nature that leads to women's involvement and peacebuilding, but rather, the fact that the division of labor in the household pushes them into certain kinds of activities, and and realizations and concerns. So to get to some of the examples that I might just highlight, I can't get into all of them. But just to give you a sense of what's going on in terms of these informal strategies that women are involved in from Uganda to Liberia and Somalia, women activists Press for role for women representatives in peace talks in constitution making processes and newly constituted political arrangements. Because it's in the news we talk that we can talk about what's happening in Sudan. Women have we're in the forefront have been in the forefront of the revolution that overthrew Sudan's dictator Omar Al Bashir, in 2019. They did make some small gains in getting involved in the transitional

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real problem. And until the military coup that reclaimed power in 2021, by those in the military. They, throughout those negotiations, they sidelined women's participation. The Internationally facilitated negotiations remained more or less exclusively between armed groups and women, internally displaced persons civil society, were not part of who and those people who are not part of the armed rebel movement were almost entirely excluded. These negotiations were so focused on getting concessions and splitting power between armed groups to reach a signed peace agreement that despite paying lip service to the need for inclusivity and sustainable peace, the international actors lost sight of this longer term goal. Also within Sudan among the non Islamist political parties and unions, justify the exclusion of women by referring to Sudan's conservative culture, as well as women's lack of political experience and silly arguments about women's so called Emotional biological nature. Again, you know, the essentialist arguments. So women were pushed to the sidelines, while the generals who are now fighting between themselves in a civil war asserted themselves. men with guns dominated the transition process and a military coup resulted counter coup after revolution. But women have continued to mobilize online offline in initiating their own campaigns. There have been a whole group of young feminists who have emerged in this process. And in under, in groups like the non movement, Majdanek feminist gathering in generif, feminist former Kosala and so on many groups that are raising awareness around sexual violence and offering support to victims. But this, this, this lack of inclusion of civil society and and women led commentators like this former official in the transitional civilian administration to point out that diplomats were actually fostering a political process that increase the polarization and lust for power between armed factions to the extent that it exploded. You cannot bring democracy by exclusion. We saw this too many times in Africa. It's about including including demands of the normal people in the streets. The same point has been made by like the police, we heard from Manuel Komaki, but it's been safe point has been made by activists like Filson Abdi, who was former Minister of Women and children and youth in Ethiopia, who now hence the foreign Peace Institute, highlighting the problem of excluding women. And she's argued that this the tigray war, which is the world's most hidden conflict, receiving very little international attention, the number of civilian deaths has been estimated at 600,000, which exceeds the Ukraine war in lethality. Millions

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was involved in some earlier peacebuilding activities between the Oromo and Somali communities in 2018, when there were clashes between these communities. And the one lesson she drew from that was that the fact that women were involved in those talks really led to was a striking example of women's potential and the capacity of women to play a really positive role in negotiations and so she's saying that women have to be part don't you know do what Sudan did women have to be part of the the negotiations that are going on in in Tigray. So what have women done? women's organizations have been involved in a wide variety of strategies to influence talks to advance a women's rights agenda and peace negotiations, sometimes with mixed results. They sought observer status for women when they failed to become negotiators. But of course, if you're not, if you're just an observer role, it means you have limited influence. They've involved in parallel peace conferences rallies, other events to draw attention to women's debt demands during peace processes. They've worked behind the scenes through informal initiatives, and sought to influence negotiations from the outside. We saw this in the in the Okpara negotiations in 2003, for around Liberia, and the ways in which the women refugees that were on the outside of the talks were influencing and, and collaborating with some of the women who were inside the talks. There have been informal and localized strategies involving rallies and boycotts, promoting Small Arms confiscation, conducting reconciliation ceremonies, negotiating with small groups of rebels, to disarm, negotiating with rebels to release abducted children and soldiers, which we saw in the case of Somalia, Uganda, northern Nigeria and elsewhere. We've seen activist women activist pressing to hold peace talks and a rabid conclusion to peace talks. When they were lagging as in as in the Liberian case in 2003. Sometimes they demanded the holding of elections, sometimes they've in the Mozambican case earlier in 1994. They they pushed to keep the militia from being involved in the election process. Sometimes they ask for the delay of elections until soldiers were fully demobilized. So depends on the context. But anyway, that the point is that women have been very, very active in a wide range of activities. That at the informal level, in South Sudan, you have groups like the South Sudan women's coalition of a group of 50 organizations that have been pushing to bridge many of the differences within the country. And one of the interesting things about some of this mobilization is that they often take bridging of these differences as the starting point rather than at the as an

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different differences. In there are, there are still ongoing conflicts between agriculturalists and pastoralists over grazing land in South Sudan. And they've been going on for a long time. But as a result, women activists organized for example, a board Reconciliation and Healing dialogue in 2014, which was the first peace conference since 2013, supported by local churches and UNDP and UN Mission in South Sudan. In bore town, the Jiang led Women's Association org organized a women's friendly space for women across ethnic lines, to organize activities to talk about their concerns regarding peace, conflict, economic opportunity and ways to peacefully coexist. They focus they came across these different religious, ethnic political identities to focus on common gender based demands. And yeah, and so the, the South Sudan women's Coalition for peace, this coalition of 50 organizations also brings together people, a variety of women from all different walks of life are artisans, environmentalists, lawyers, media, women, and so on. And the breadth of these groups is really quite remarkable. I think I'm running out of time here. So maybe I'll skip a few examples. But anyway, they're they're all. They're all very, very interesting. Again, in Mali, another another organization of 76 women's organizations from different ethnic groups and communities, established this faster pay to help women talk about, you know, come together talk about peace and social cohesion. And there are common demands around local ceasefire demands around women's representation in government. And so it resulted actually in a lot of in a number of women being elected to local councils. I think many of us know that the Chibok case in northern Nigeria, in Midori, where local women's organizations have negotiated with state security and vigilante groups to let their kidnapped children return get returned by Boko Haram. They provided information about the activities of Boko Haram in collaboration with state security and vigilante groups. They've made efforts to bring repenting Boko Haram representatives and the government together to the negotiating table. They formed groups that advocated for peace in the local communities organized rallies for peace, built community support for pregnant women and children whose husbands and fathers were members of Boko Haram and organized to provide foster care for orion accompany children whose parents were either killed or missing. So, you know, again, and I think the remarkable feature about these, especially these Boko Haram activities was that they in many cases, there were coalition's, for example, in

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society organizations that carried out this kind of interfaith activity with women and faith peacebuilding network was another movement of over 10,000 Christian and Muslim women that was started in 2011. That organized again, marches and protests and so on. To deal with the abductions and the situation with Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, to be sure there are tensions between in this mobilization, but it's really been an enduring feature of, of mobilization. And we've seen this in so many contexts, I can't get into the Liberia example. But again, that was another case where you saw a bridging of ethnic and, and religious differences that really resulted in in these coalition's that brought an end to the war there. Perhaps it's because the category of women intersects with almost all other differences, that it's perhaps that's why it's easier to for women to build these kinds of alliances, across varied identities. Women's women represent different groups and different interests from single headed households, IDP internally displaced people, disabled women, and so on. And this wide variety of interests and concerns are brought together, brought together brought to bear. And in these strategies, women share common gendered experiences during conflict that have to do with sexual violence, displacement from land, the difficulty in being represented in peace negotiations, gaining political representation after conflict, you know, all of these then result in common grievances, regardless of what ethnicity you are, regardless of your class, regardless of your religion. I mean, these common grievances cut across, cut across all of society, and then have helped build alliances across major social social divisions. Also, political power doesn't map onto gender in the same way that it maps on to class or ethnicity or caste and, or clan, and religion. And so gender, it in fact, is what perhaps the only identity that consistently cuts through all of society. And I may be wrong about that. But that's that's my understanding of why I keep asking, why is it that it's women that are able to build these bridges, and so consistently from pretty much every case that I've looked at, I see these kinds of alliances. I mean, they're not unproblematic, but they're there. And so my question is, you know, why is it that women can do this? And I think it has to do with the the nature of the gender identity that allows for that. If you look, for example, at the just the the constitutions that came out of these post conflict countries, you can see that overall, there are far more provisions that have to do with that were adopted around women's rights in post conflict countries than countries that hadn't

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importance of, you know, there's not that much difference when it comes to just general equality clauses or anti discrimination clauses. But when it comes to representation, that's three times more provisions for quotas or some kind of representation in Parliament, in these post conflict countries. When it comes to violence against women, you can see the difference there. When it comes to land, which becomes, you know, a source of insecurity, again, you see that a big difference between the post conflict and the non post conflict countries. So this is the common cause that I'm talking about that women are able to forge in these post conflict post conflict countries. The other kind of feature that one sees is that women are also building bridges around what we might call quotidian concerns, in other words, daily concerns. And again, part of this has to do with the division of labor and the way that women are socialized that often leaves women with the responsibility of caring for the children and the sick and the elderly. I mean, they just don't have any choice and in war, they have to deal with it somehow. And so then they have the responsibility to maintain that household economy and get water to the family and get water to the kids and to the elderly and the sick, they have to maintain security, they have to find firewood, and, and other necessities. And so they're very focused on these, these very, you know, basic concerns. And again, this brings them together. And this brings them together across differences. And I can point to many examples of how women have collaborated across differences in order to meet these daily needs. So let's, I'm going to just because we're getting running out of time here, so I'm just going to jump perhaps to the end. Oh, oh. Oh, okay. Well, in that case, let me tell you, no. Okay. Well, I mean, I don't know whether there have been a lot of I don't, I don't want to go into great detail on this. But just to, to point out that there have been you know, we've we've jumped from different strategy to strategy internationally. In the US, for example, you know, we've gone from stabilization and counterterrorism strategies to preventing and countering violent extremism. And now, you know, un and US white, the Biden administration is focusing more on these kind of humanitarian concerns. They've moved away a little bit from the shifting gradually from the counterterrorism to that the Trump advocated to now more humanitarian and less focus on military solutions. And you can see that in the recent, un, you know, areas of peacekeeping that they want to focus on. And they're clearly number two with a peace and security, they've moved, they've bumped that up,

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they want to talk, they're talking about the role of civil society, inclusion, local population, and get them into peace, keeping and so on. So this, you know, shifting the emphasis and, you know, less and less interest in drones and that kind of thing and more on, you know, how to get buy in from the local communities. But the problem still for me, is that you know, where the women and all of this even, even at even the UN, where they put women peace and security, they're still talking about it primarily at the national level. And only, I mean, which is, again, I'm not saying you shouldn't do that, but just that it can't only be that it has to also be at the community level. And so somehow bringing women into the focus has to be part of the discussion, you know, women and women at the table at all levels, national, local. If the if this news, if the strategy on inclusion is going to work that women have to be brought to the table, and and those people who are actually building peace, not the ones who want to talk about peace, but the ones who are doing it, they have to be consulted. And so, you know, we were 23 years out of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 being adopted, and this resolution underscored the importance of the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and call for their equal participation and peacebuilding. But the progress has been underwhelming since that time. And so just as conflict is gendered so as peacebuilding women still are excluded from formal processes, they're pushed to the sidelines, relegated to informal local level strategies. Not only are they grossly underrepresented as peacekeepers in peace negotiations and other aspects of peacebuilding, but the peace building activities they engage in, are often ignored. So when they do get involved, you know, they're they they're not taken seriously. And so women's peace building initiatives, both formal and informal, national and local need to be accounted for, and incorporated into a broader definition of peacebuilding. Their inclusion is important because it's a step towards gender equality, including women's organizations and activists help helps ensure a more lasting peace and helps break the cycle of violence. Women are coming together across class, ethnic, religious and political differences to build coalitions around common grievance that have to do with violence and sexual violence, access to land and political power. They have insisted that the conditions that have given rise to conflict must be directly addressed, such as corruption and impunity. As we heard this morning in the cases of South Sudan and Ethiopia and Ethiopia. women activists can make

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themselves only as victims. Local women activists often come together around these daily concerns that have to do with accessing food, water and shelter, who better to have at the table than those who know the local dynamics? Who better to bring to formal reconciliation processes than those who already have succeeded in building bridges and know how to do it. Thank you.



Dr. Ian Anson 50:23

That's all for today's episode. I hope you learned as much as I did about the vital role of women in peace building after conflict. And next time UMBC hosts a conference, you should register. I guarantee that a few days in a context like this one will spark plenty of opportunities to keep questioning.

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