



Women Leading Change in Transitioning Societies

June 5, 2012

Speaker Biographies *(listed in alphabetical order)*

Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Linda Jamison
Acting Executive Vice President
U.S. Institute of Peace

Linda Jamison has more than 20 years of professional experience building organizations, leading teams, providing research and analysis, developing programs and people, advising decision makers, and mentoring and training aspiring leaders. Her substantive expertise is in leadership and U.S. policy, international communication, U.S.-U.N. relations, executive-legislative relations and the politics of U.S. foreign policy. Jamison recently served in the White House as special assistant to President Obama, and led the team responsible for hiring and recruiting hundreds of political appointees for the national security agencies of the U.S. government. Her portfolio included the Departments of Defense, State, Veteran's Affairs, Homeland Security, and the Agency for International Development, Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Peace Corps, as well as the directorate of National Intelligence and the CIA. She was also responsible for facilitating the appointment of political ambassadors and various nominees to U.S. government boards and commissions who serve at the pleasure of the president. Before joining the Obama administration, Jamison was the founding Dean of the Abshire-Inamori Leadership Academy at the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, DC. During the seven years that she led the Academy, Jamison was responsible for helping to train and coach several hundred participants in the art and practice of leadership. She also held the title of senior fellow in Multilateral Studies, having earlier published a primer on U.N. peacekeeping. Earlier in her career, Jamison was at CSIS as director of government relations in the 1990s. She has also held positions at the U.N. and nonprofit organizations. Jamison is a published author and public speaker, as well as a contributor to media content. She is a native of Denver, Colorado and graduated with a B.A. from the University of Denver. She received her Master's degree from American University.

Alyse Nelson
President & CEO
Vital Voices Global Partnership

Alyse Nelson is president and chief executive officer of Vital Voices Global Partnership. A cofounder of Vital Voices, Alyse has worked for the organization for 15 years, serving as vice president and senior director of programs before assuming her current role in 2009. Alyse has worked with women leaders to develop training programs and international forums in over 140 countries and has interviewed more than 200 international leaders, including Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and former presidents Mary Robinson and Bill Clinton, as well as Nobel Peace Prize laureates Aung San Suu Kyi, Wangari Maathai, and Muhammad Yunus. Under her leadership, Vital Voices has tripled in size and expanded its global reach to serve a network of over 12,000 women leaders in 144 countries. Previously, Alyse served as deputy director of the Vital Voices Global Democracy Initiative at the U.S. Department of State. Her position aided former First Lady Hillary Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's commitment to promote the advancement of women as a U.S. foreign policy objective. Alyse helped design and implement Vital Voices initiatives throughout the world. From July 1996 to July 2000, Alyse worked with the President's Interagency Council on Women at the White House and U.S. Department of State. She attended the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995. She serves on Secretary Clinton's Advisory Committee on Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society and is a Board member of Running Start. Alyse has been featured in international and national media, including the *Washington Post*, *Financial Times*, the *Miami Herald*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today* and Reuters, and has appeared on BBC, PBS, CNN, NPR, FOX News, and CNBC. She completed her graduate degree work at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. In 2006, Alyse was named one of "Ten Women to Watch" by *Washingtonian Magazine*. She has been honored by her alma mater, Emerson College, with the distinguished speaker award, and in 2011 she was featured in *Newsweek* as one of "150 Women Shaking the World."

Lars Petter Henie
Minister Counselor, Economic Affairs
Royal Norwegian Embassy

Lars Petter Henie is the Minister Counselor of Economic Affairs at the Norwegian Embassy in Washington. He came to Washington in 2010 from his position as Assistant Secretary General of the UN Section in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During his diplomatic career he has also served as the Deputy Head of Mission at the Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala and an advisor to the former Norwegian Minister for International Development. He has been posted as a diplomat in Washington DC before, as well as in Copenhagen, Denmark. Lars Petter Henie has worked as Political Adviser (Foreign Policy and Defense) to the Norwegian Labour Party and as Director for Public Relations with Norwegian People's Aid. His academic background is in Political Science from the University of Oslo, Norway, and from the University of Madrid, Spain.

Panel I: Women Leading Economic, Political and Social Transitions

Samar Minallah Khan Fern Holland Award

In some parts of Pakistan, young girls are given away as compensation to settle disputes or to pay for crimes committed by men in their family or tribe. In this system of feudal justice, the family receiving the girl has the option to make her a child bride, to enslave her for the rest of her life. Swara, as this practice is known, had been practiced openly and legally in parts of Pakistan for generations—until one woman, Samar Minallah Khan, used a camera to catalyze change. In 2003, Samar, a Pakistani Pashtun filmmaker and Cambridge-trained anthropologist, created a documentary on swara. Her idea was to use culture to change the culture: to raise awareness of the horrific custom and mobilize policymakers to abolish it. Thanks in part to Samar's campaign, swara was made illegal in Pakistan in 2004. Dozens of girls were rescued once families had legal recourse against the practice. But Samar did not stop there—she made sure that the law was properly implemented. She took the cause to Pakistanis of all backgrounds, even convincing truck and rickshaw drivers to paint anti-swara slogans on their vehicles. For Samar, the seeds of leadership were planted early on. Growing up in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, she was close to her father, who believed in education and encouraged Samar to pursue her dreams. Although he passed away when Samar was 13, his ideals left a lasting impact: Samar feels a personal connection and responsibility to the people who are the focus of her films. "I went so often to the village and spent time with the villagers; this, to me, was a normal childhood," Samar explains. "When I was older I realized the differences between us and that made me uncomfortable. But I believe that I've crossed that bridge via my films because their content impacts the lives of girls I grew up with. They didn't have the same freedoms and opportunities I was given." And through her media initiative, Ethnomedia, she has produced documentaries on human trafficking, dowry and acid crimes, child domestic labor, and, most recently, forced marriage. Samar sees her documentaries as a way to give voice to those who are seldom heard. Her films are made in regional languages and screened locally, so that people can see themselves through her stories; she says that whatever film she makes, the people somehow feel it belongs to them. She uses her lens to focus attention on unsung heroes within rural communities; for example, Samar notes that many Pakistani fathers take enormous risks to stand up for their daughters, and she showcases their efforts as role models for broader change. As a result of her courageous commitment to use film to change mindsets, in certain situations threats ensued. But Samar, who is married and the mother of two children, remains undeterred. "I believe I serve as a role model for my children," she says. "Speaking the truth is now a habit, and there are more rewards than there are impediments."

Rosana Schaack Human Rights Award

As Liberia recovers from nearly a decade and a half of conflict, the plight of the country's boy soldiers has received global attention. Too often neglected, however, are the challenges of rehabilitating the country's thousands of girl soldiers, who also were forced onto the front lines as fighters, sex slaves, or militants' "wives." Rosana Schaack recalls meeting one girl soldier who

had been taken from her village when she was 7 1/2 years old, and made a servant for a general and his wife. At 9, the girl had been given her first weapon and later trained to become the general's bodyguard. As Rosana describes, "She fought in our war for 13 of the 14 years...from seven and a half to almost 22." By the time the war was over, the young woman had a four-year old son of her own. Rosana knew that this young woman, and others like her, needed specialized therapy, compassion, and care if she was to succeed in rebuilding her life—and if Liberia was to reclaim its future. Rosana felt a personal responsibility to act. In her words, "I'm not a big talker. I'd rather do." Like many Liberians, Rosana is no stranger to the pain of war herself. She was separated from her adopted American family in 1990 when Liberia's conflicts forced expatriates to leave the country; as she explains, "I had always had a shelter a well-provided-for life, but when the war came, all of that was stripped away and we found ourselves lacking everything." A trained nurse, Rosana provided care and support to vulnerable families and communities. Working with an American doctor, she began to document the war experiences of Liberian women and girls. When fighting broke out again in Monrovia in 1996, Rosana fled to the Ivory Coast, where she continued to document the stories of violence, abuse, and trauma experienced by women and girls she met in the displacement camps. As war finally drew to an end in 2003, Rosana founded a nonprofit organization, Touching Humanity in Need of Kindness (THINK, Inc.), to aid her country's healing process. She focused THINK's efforts in particular on the overlooked population of former girl soldiers and "war wives," offering comprehensive services such as shelter, medical care, counseling, academic classes, vocational learning, and life-skills training. THINK's Rehabilitation Homes accommodate 25 girls in addition to 10 of their under-five children for a nine-month cycle of care. In Rosana's words, "We're trying to help them to redirect their lives, to empower them, build their self-esteem, teaching them how to read and write. Knowledge is power for a female." THINK has since expanded to support survivors of rape and domestic violence and to assist young women still displaced by the war. Rosana's efforts remain centered on healing, and driven by her unyielding hope. "I like to help people find their inner strength," she says. My purpose in life is not just to live and die, but to leave something behind. To encourage others to find their inner strength to make others' lives better."

Adimaimalaga Tafuna'i Economic Empowerment Award

To outsiders, Samoa's lush forests and beautiful vistas represent tropical paradise. But for many Samoans, the remoteness of their Pacific nation results in a poverty of opportunity. Consequently, many young Samoans work abroad and send part of their income home to their families. These remittances, while valuable, can perpetuate a cycle in which generation after generation of Samoans feel compelled to leave the island for opportunity elsewhere. Visionary entrepreneur Adimaimalaga (Adi) Tafuna'i is convinced this dynamic can and should change. Globally minded, yet deeply rooted in her community, she has dedicated her life to service, working to build sustainable economic opportunities for Samoan women and families, in a way that is good for people, good for prosperity, and good for the planet. In 1991, Adi and a group of her friends established an organization called Women in Business Development Inc (WIBDI) to encourage Samoan women in business. But after a spate of natural disasters proved devastating to rural communities, Adi and her colleagues shifted their focus to village-based economic

development. Adi was determined to enable women to earn an income where they live, so that they could better educate, feed, and care for their families, and break the vicious cycle of poverty. Whereas outside experts had proposed microfinance, Adi's vision was larger: She wanted to leverage local resources to connect Samoan women to global markets. "Finding niche markets like coconut oil and noni juice is the only way the Islands will achieve in the world market," she says. "It's about helping rural people, encouraging them to use the natural products around them. It's getting them their own cash, helping them to earn a living from what they have access to." Thanks to Adi's efforts, The Body Shop became a key partner in bringing Samoan products to the world. Today, beauty items sold in nearly 50 countries are made with coconut oil produced by hundreds of Samoan families. And as the market for Samoan exports such as coconut oil, noni juice, bananas, woven mats, and tapa cloth grows, Adi is working to bring other Pacific countries in as suppliers, expanding regional economic growth. Adi's efforts have won the praise of the country's prime minister, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi. "No group or individual has contributed more to the village economy—particularly to the empowerment of women," he says, "than the Women in Business group and Adi's role in that organization." "We don't go into a village and say we're going to change everything for every one of you," Adi explains. "We change one family, and they become a role model, and then another family joins and another family joins, and that's lovely to see."

Kathleen Kuehnast
Director, Center for Gender and Peacebuilding
U.S. Institute of Peace

Kathleen Kuehnast is director of the Gender and Peacebuilding Center at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). She is co-editor of the volume, *Women and War: Power and Protection in the 21st Century* (2011), which focuses on the gap between international commitments like UN Resolution 1325 and the harsh realities facing women in war, as well as the critical role women play in peacebuilding efforts. As a socio-cultural anthropologist, her work examines the impact of political and economic transitions on societal gender roles, including how social networks and social capital intersect with local practices of conflict resolution. For fifteen years of her career, she worked in the international development field, primarily with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, where her research included such topics as conflict drivers in Central Asia; community driven development in post-conflict reconstruction; migration impacts on gender roles; qualitative studies of poverty in transitional countries; and systematized guidance notes on social analysis for economists. Kuehnast is a recipient of the Mellon Foreign Fellowship at the Library of Congress (2000) and the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies Fellowship (1999) at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. She lived several years in Kyrgyzstan, where she researched and wrote extensively on the impact of post-Soviet transition on Muslim women of Central Asia. Among her related works is the co-edited volume, *Post-Soviet Women Encountering Transition: Nation Building, Economic Survival, and Civic Activism* (2004). Kuehnast holds a Ph.D. in socio-cultural anthropology from the University of Minnesota. Her master's degree in education is from the University of St. Thomas.

Panel II: Women Leading Change in the Emerging Arab World

Shatha Al-Harazi

Global Trailblazer Award

Shatha Al-Harazi is a social media activist and a political and human rights journalist who worked at the Yemen Times, the country's first English-language independent newspaper. A member of the International Press Institute, which defends the freedom of speech, Shatha's freelance work has appeared in the Global Post, the Guardian, and major German newspapers. During the Arab Spring, Shatha reported from the front lines for a number of international news sources. Pointed and fearless in her critiques, when she was invited, along with other Yemeni activists, for a face-to-face meeting with President Saleh last February, she says, "I told him he should resign." Afterward, she received death threats. It's no surprise that Shatha has become an intrepid reporter. As a university student, after publishing an article about professors sexually harassing students, she was forced to change her major from journalism to public relations. Still, in 2009, she graduated as the top student with honors. A teacher in the Faculty of Mass Communication at the University of Sana'a, she is recognized in Yemen—and throughout the region—as a bold advocate for the truth.

Salwa Bugaighis

Global Trailblazer Award

Human rights lawyer Salwa Bugaighis has long been known throughout Libya for her work defending political prisoners during the Qaddafi regime. She played a prominent role throughout Libya's rebellion, including as an organizer of the February 17, 2011 demonstrations in Benghazi that marked the beginning of the dictatorship's end. Salwa has remained an active force in the country's ongoing political transition. An original member of Libya's National Transitional Council, she resigned her position after three and a half months to protest the lack of women in the new government. As she says, "They knew that women were very effective and very strong in this revolution, but they think that now, the role is for the man." Outside of government, she has become a one-woman force for political reform, supporting female candidates and lobbying the government to heed their views. "My main concern is the role of the women in the future," she says. "We want equal opportunity in all sectors. We want to ensure that our rights in the constitution will be there."

Marianne Nagui Hanna Ibrahim

Global Trailblazer Award

A champion of women's rights, social peace, and interfaith dialogue, Marianne Nagui Hanna Ibrahim is the co-founder and executive manager of Egypt's Al-Gisir Center for Development and Dialogue, an organization that works with young men and women to end discrimination based on gender or religion in Egyptian society. A member of Al Sawt Al Hurr (the Arab Network for Media Support), she is also a leader of Vital Voices' Policy Advocates team in

Egypt, part of a State Department-funded program that works to develop, disseminate, and advocate for a women's rights platform to be integrated into the new Egyptian government. The group toured the country to gather women's perspectives, which they hope to have included in the new constitution. As Marianne says, "Being on the Square, day and night, broke so many red lines for Egyptian women. This is the lasting impact: That if you want to do something, you actually can. You can break, as a woman in the Middle East, all the red lines and the traditions for a greater cause."

Amira Yahyaoui
Global Trailblazer Award

In Tunisia, 27-year-old blogger Amira Yahyaoui has been a tireless advocate for freedom of expression for over a decade. She comes from a family of human rights activists; when she was 16, her father, a judge, was forced from his job for speaking out against then-President Ben Ali. While still a teenager, Amira was tailed by secret police and beaten for her activism; ultimately, she sought refuge in Paris and was banned from her homeland for four years. Following her country's revolution, Amira became an independent youth candidate in Tunisia's first free election. "Before, I was an activist against," she says. "How can I now build? We have to engage ourselves as youth, and then engage the work." Amira created an NGO, Al Bawsala, which is monitoring the constitutional assembly and advocating for human rights, and the Tunisian Parliament Monitor to protect the free expression of the Tunisian people. As she says, "We have this huge responsibility to show to the world, and to the Arab world, that we can succeed. Even if we are focusing in Tunisia, we are doing it for the entire region."
