

WOV Background

by Rama J. Vernon

The Women of Vision Gatherings began in the summer of 1992 in Washington, D.C. when Rama J. Vernon, the founder of the Women of Vision Network met with Miriam Nour from Lebanon. The objective of their discussions was how they might collaborate on projects for peace in the Middle East. Miriam, the director of a spiritual renewal retreat, had lived through and survived the wars in the Middle East and had given up hope for lasting peace in that region of the world. "All I want to do now is pray, meditate and find peace within here", she tapped her heart. "That is the gift I have to give, my own peace and the strength of my prayers for all those who suffer due to war.

As they sat together in silence, Mariam suddenly said. "Maybe there is something we can do" She looked hopeful for the first time. "Bring the women together". Perhaps women are the key, not only to peace in the Middle East but to Peace throughout the world" That night at the dinner table they began to chart a course of action. "Bring not more than 20 women together for a day We will break bread together, share our stories with one another and share our visions of peace." Would it be possible, they wondered for women from a distance to hold a personal and collective vision of Peace in the Middle East that could influence change in areas where the situation seemed insoluble. Could the women from a subtle level influence the minds and hearts of the leaders as well as the citizens of countries throughout ALL war torn countries of the world?

In two weeks, women representing countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt, Armenia, Israel, the Jewish and Arab American communities in the U.S. came together with a common goal for Peace. There were tears and laughter as they shared their stories and passions inspiring one another through the similarities of their experience. As the Israeli and Palestinian woman cried in each others arms, stereotypes that divided humanity from itself fell away, if even for a day.

The ripple affect spread throughout the country expanding far beyond the original intent of the Middle East. It was not long after that the wars broke out in Yugoslavia, Somalia, then the genocides of Rwanda. The women's visions, prayers for peace reached out to embrace the need for peace within all areas of the world and within oneself. Soon, Rama was traveling and facilitating meetings in living rooms in 25 cities throughout the U.S. Women said they came away with a sense of greater unity and feeling of empowerment in just being together and expressing their personal and collective Visions of a new humanity The popularity and moment of these groups were a catalyst for the Washington, D.C. Conference held at Georgetown University entitled "Women of Vision. Leadership for a New World". It brought together women such as Betty Friedan, Marianne Williamson, Barbara Marx Hubbard, Marilyn Ferguson, Riane Eisler, the Dahli Lama's Sister and many others who were luminaries in their field.

The conference format was designed around a Wheel of Societal Transformation that displays 12 spokes such as; Governance, Ecology, Economics and Business, Education, Human Rights, Health and Healing, Religion and Spirituality, Arts and Media. Over 500 women from the U.S., Canada, Europe, Asia and Africa and the Middle East and 20 Native American women gathered to celebrate and honor women and their transformational influence in the world. A community of creativity was formed to support twomen who were already implementing or seeding systems and directives for social change and to help women identify, clarify and fulfill their life's purpose. Focusing on local, national and global visions, the women began mapping positive action steps to turn vision into reality

The momentum of the conference launched the ongoing Network of Women of Vision. The Network supports regional conferences, Bi-Annual National Link-Up Day Events, Vision Circles, Newsletter, Membership Resource Directory and Project Data Base to facilitate relationship building and joint project collaboration The Network was formed so that Women of Vision could continue to communicate and seek to include more and more women dedicated to new and positive directions in their lives and their world.