

Canadian Voice of Women for Peace

Ursula Franklin Award for Distinction

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Thank you!

I am deeply honoured to have been invited by the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace to receive the Ursula Franklin Award for Distinction. Ursula Franklin is a shining exemplar of all the values that I hold dear.

It was a pleasure to listen to you, Monica, speaking about your mother, Ursula – a woman who epitomizes the highest attributes of womankind.

Setsuko, I am so pleased to follow you as recipient of this Award. I hold you in high regard for your lifelong contribution to nuclear disarmament. You witnessed the devastation caused by the atomic bomb, the deaths, illnesses and suffering it caused and have spent your life warning of its horrific consequences.

To receive this Award at a Mother's Day Event is very important to me, because it was as a mother that I began my life's work. In the early 1980s, I was in Graduate School and my daughter was having nightmares about nuclear war. I decided, instantly, that it was my responsibility as a mother to protect her, to protect all children, and to do what I could to save humanity from the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear war.

So I established The Simons Foundation – a working and granting organization – with a focus on disarmament education - primarily nuclear disarmament - on human rights, international law, education for peace and global co-operation - with a specific mandate to work against the negative effects of technology, because I discovered that science and technological *citizenship* – that is *ethics-based science* - was not the subject of discussion or reflection in most Universities.

I was concerned about this *absence of thought* on the *negative effects* of science and technology; and concerned because many scientific and technological developments are exceedingly inhumane and work against life - instead of for life.

The first grant was for a Doctoral Scholarship for Women entering Physics because I believed that a woman would conduct life-enhancing research – be a Madame Curie seeking healthful cures from atomic research rather than an Edmund Teller, the so-called father of the immensely destructive hydrogen bomb.

Ursula Franklin – whom I did not meet until the mid-1990s – would have been the physicist ideal I had in mind.

Dr. Margaret Fulton – a mutual friend – decided I should meet Dr. Franklin because of the similarities of our influences – Lewis Mumford was the major one; because of our work for peace; and because of our common interest in women and technology which we believed would lead to a changed, and better world.

Dr. Franklin dedicated a whole morning of her time to me at Massey College, and presented me with a copy of her Massey Lectures, *The Real World of Technology*. If I had met her earlier in my life, she would have been my mentor. As it was, I found this small incredible woman awe-inspiring!

I am most appreciative to be receiving this Award from the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace – a women’s organization. I have never viewed myself as a feminist. And this invitation caused me to look back on my thirty-four years of activist and philanthropic work. And I realize that I have always believed that women have a different mindset, a different understanding as to what is important in life; that we women inhabit a different moral climate. And much of my activity has been based in this premise.

Besides the doctoral funds for a woman entering physics, I endowed a fund at École Polytechnique for women entering engineering following the 1989 mass murder of women engineering students, in order to encourage them to continue to study in this predominantly male profession. I also endowed a second fund for Women entering Engineering at the University of British Columbia. And in several Universities, I established Endowments for women entering technology and trade programmes.

As well, I made several endowments for single mothers who, I discovered, often live in the direst poverty and suffer from the most exhausting schedules in order to pursue their studies.

For the past six years I have been participating in the Munich Security Conferences. A year ago, I found it very disturbing that the five women Defence Ministers there represented countries, all of which had war-fighting policies and postures; and all possessed nuclear weapons or were allies under the NATO nuclear umbrella. It also disturbs me that the current head of the CIA - a woman - Gina Haspel, oversaw rendition and torture and even filmed torture.

This threatened my theory that women are peacemakers, that women’s natural frame of reference was the nurture and protection of humanity. I realized that in business and politics, for women of my generation to rise to the top of their profession, it was essential that they adopt the attitudes, the way of thinking, the outlook, of men. This does not exonerate them in my mind, though.

Several years ago, I was invited to participate in the Iceland-initiated Women’s Political Leaders Global Forums. I accepted the invitation with the rider that my interest was in educating the women in the critical issues facing humanity today.

My experience in these Forums in Reykjavik is that women leaders are primarily engaged in picking up the pieces, dealing with the aftermath of wars, of violence. They lead in *ameliorating* the conditions. They are *leaders in peace-making and healing*. Women, have *rarely* been in the halls of power *with the ability to make the decisions on whether or not to develop weapons, to use weapons, to go to war*. And to date, they are still not in positions to prevent these negative outcomes.

The new global imperative on improving gender balance will slowly change the current situation as women, with principles and practices, and concern for humanity, will at some point transform the political landscape in order to make a better world. And hopefully, we will have stateswomen/statesmen governing our countries. We are fortunate in Canada to have two such fine women in Parliament, who epitomize these values - Jody Wilson-Raybould and Dr. Jane Philpott. And I wish them every success in furthering an enlightened ethical future for Canada.

My own specific area of focus is nuclear disarmament. Women have been in the forefront of nuclear disarmament as activists rejecting weapons of mass destruction. The St Louis Baby Teeth Survey in the 1960s – in which Ursula Franklin participated – is a prime example and resulted in the achievement of the Partial Test Ban Treaty – the end of atmospheric, space and underwater detonations.

But women – for the most part - have been confined to the barricades. A Graduate Student recently undertook research into women’s role in disarmament. She learned from her research that women have not played a large part in disarmament negotiations, yet when they have participated in multilateral disarmament work, the negotiations have been more effective.

The challenge we women face is to continue to reject war and threats of war – to create the conditions conducive to diplomacy, dialogue, to further peace and global cooperation; and - particularly in my field – to foster a return to disarmament negotiations, in order to reduce, and eliminate, the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction.

Last week I was at the UN participating in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee meetings. It was quite depressing. The immediate future is bleak for nuclear disarmament.

We are in a crisis situation with - conceivably - the most dire consequences for humanity – in a situation “potentially more dangerous than at any point during the Cold War.”¹

¹ Wolfgang Ishinger, *Epochal breaks*, *The Security Times*, February 2019

We are confronted with the potential disintegration of the arms control regime; with unacceptable and growing nuclear risks; toxic relations between Russia and the United States; and the possibility of no treaties governing nuclear weapons.

We are faced with a new arms-racing, made more dangerous because of the increasingly blurred line between nuclear and conventional weapons; because of the ambiguity created by dual-use missiles, and because of emerging military weapon-related technologies and cyber-capabilities; all of which render the existence of nuclear weapons more threatening and further undermine strategic stability between the global military powers.

We are, also, having to deal with a “deteriorating international security environment,”² with attacks on multilateralism and on international institutions; the growth of authoritarianism; with a new strident nationalism, and the potential demise of democracy.

We were struggling at the NPT last week, - racking our brains - for ways to protect and strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to further the nuclear disarmament agenda.

Nobody appeared to have any possible solutions – it seemed we were governed by hope rather than action!

The discussion focused on reducing the risk rather than any progress towards disarmament. I too – ardent abolitionist though I am – gave a presentation on No-First-Use of nuclear weapons.

Yet it is essential that we find avenues to further nuclear disarmament in order to remove the risk for humanity of accidental, mistaken or deliberate launch of nuclear weapons which could lead to a nuclear war.

So we continue our quest. We must step up and work hard - for a safe, secure, more humane, just and peaceful world.

In closing, again I thank you! It is deeply moving for me to be honoured by women and in the name of Ursula Franklin at whose feet I would have gladly sat when we met many years ago.

Thank you!

² Randy Rydell, quoting Guterres, *The Guterres Disarmament Agenda, Arms Control Today, Vol. 49, p20*