



Alternative Gifts International

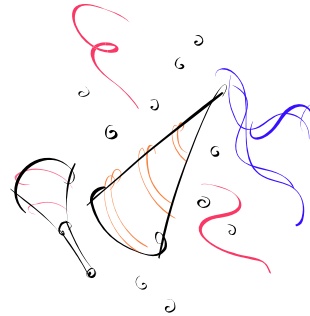
www.alternativegifts.org

January 2008 E-Bulletin

Happy New Year from AGI!

AGI would like to thank all of its donors for making 2007 more successful than ever.

As we look to the year ahead, we go forward with great hope that all things can be possible!



January 21 is Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

The late Coretta Scott King said, "The greatest birthday gift my husband could receive is if people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds celebrated the holiday by performing individual acts of kindness through service to others." **Observe MLK Day in a special way this year by sending the following gifts of peace & justice:**

- **Peacemakers at Work / West Bank (Palestine) & Colombia** - Strengthen the resolve and presence of peacemakers in countries entrenched in violence, so that the oppressed can sleep without fear. (Project 32)
- **Women for Peace / USA & Global** - Connect women via the internet, allowing them to cross barriers of distance, language, race, religion, and nationality. (Project 33)



Colombian women have no voice, except to beat stones together and cry "Enough!"

- **Young Peace Builders / USA & Global** - MLK Day is a holiday especially for young people, for it is the youth of all races and religions who hold the keys to the fulfillment of Dr. King's dream. Provide support needed to teach and mentor youth and young adults as peace makers in their neighborhoods and in the world. (Project 34)

Women's Circles Connecting for Peace

A group of college friends and colleagues in the U.S. formed a Sister Circle with women in Baghdad through the Peace X Peace Global Network. The friendships they formed have closed the gap that existed between the Circles, caused by geographical distance, different languages, religions, separate cultures, and political systems. **U.S. Circle member, Sharon Simone, shares her story below** (excerpt from www.peacexpeace.org):



Naba Hamid with a member of her Sister Circle, Sharon Simone.

Simone, honest about her opposition to the war, was eager to get past what she saw on TV. A connection to someone in Baghdad was an opportunity to learn from someone on the ground without interruptions from press conferences, embedded US journalists' reports, charged Al-Jazeera reports or 30-second sound bites.

For her part, Naba Hamid was equally as concerned about what she considers the inaccuracy of the media's war coverage. She wanted to get the word out about what was really happening in Baghdad and tell someone receptive in the U.S. that the coverage they saw on the nightly news was not a complete picture.

The connection - one seeking to know, the other seeking to tell - seemed a meeting of minds. What evolved is more than an exchange of information.

Simone admits it took a huge leap of faith to sit down at her computer and extend herself to a stranger: **"I was afraid Naba would hate me. I didn't know why a woman from Baghdad would want to speak with an American woman, with me."**

Getting a reply to her first emails with the subject line "Salaam from Baghdad" is a memory that "still makes the emotion rise up in me," says Simone. "When Naba did write back, her response was straight to the point, acknowledging my pain and finding common ground." "We're both human," Hamid says, "women, mothers, teachers, agony, she has hers and I have mine. There are commonalities."

For Simone, being in communication with someone, in a different country and in a situation she had no power over but deeply objected to, was empowering. "Naba's lack of security, the daily hurdles she faces to do simple things like bathe or do groceries, came about because of actions taken in my name. The communication made me feel I was reclaiming my citizenship. It's an antidote to the powerlessness and futility I'd felt."

For Hamid, the connection with her U.S. sisters, who are willing to listen and hear her speak, provides a rare moment of peace, in her heart if not in her physical environment. **"I wish the world could have this same feeling of peace," Hamid says, "so we all have time to think, to be peaceful."**

"Peace starts in the capacity to see humanity in the other one. So, overcome the 'otherness' and embrace the humanity in whoever is there." *—Isabel Allende, Advisory Council Member, Peace X Peace.*

[Give a gift today](#) to empower women as peacebuilders around the world.

Everybody Can Serve

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said,

“If you want to be important, **wonderful**;

if you want to be recognized, **wonderful**;

if you want to be great, **wonderful**;

BUT, recognize that he who is greatest among you
shall be your **servant**.

That’s the new definition of **GREATNESS**.

And this morning the thing that I like about it:

by giving that definition of **GREATNESS**,

it means that **everybody** can be **great**,

because everybody can **serve**."

(Excerpt from Dr. King’s “Drum Major Instinct” speech.)

Imagine what a difference it could make if every one of AGI’s donors gave just \$5 or \$10 in honor of MLK’s vision!

Give a gift today to empower people in crisis, protect our planet and build peace in our global village.

Looking Ahead

AGI will be participating in the Feinstein Challenge to End Hunger again this year. Look for details in next month’s e-bulletin.