

SARA RUDDICK

I want to thank you very much for welcoming me here and especially thank Mary Mohr who has given up time and lots of patience to take me around here. But I must say that once I arrived at the Minneapolis Airport yesterday I became totally confused about how I ever was thought of to get to this place. I live most of my life these days, because my children are grown, behind the word processor or in front of students in a small college or reading books. I go to demonstrations and to protests, but those are planned and organized by other people. I hope I would have been on the march that Betty Williams and Mary Corrigan organized in Ulster and Belfast. I hope very much I'm on the marches that are marching the right place and the right way. So that's principally been what I've done in my life as far as action is concerned. It's very interesting to be travelling in a private plane with people from Washington who live across from Vice President Quayle and do this and that and the other thing and the only way I really know Washington is the places I've stood outside or been arrested or run from the police. But those demonstrations also I did not plan, and I depend upon people who plan them. Now I wanted to speak, or was asked to speak, about women and about mothers and that is what I'm going to do. Anyone who listened, who happened to be here last night, or who listened to Betty Williams this morning knows that when women like us talk about peace and women and peace, we do not think that peace

is only a women's issue or that men cannot make peace. No one hearing Arias this morning would think that, and both Betty Williams and I -- I on the spur of the moment, not even knowing I'd be asked to speak -- turn for comfort, for inspiration, to Martin Luther King who is, I think, one of the very great Americans that we can be proud of. What I think we are saying, those of us who talk about women and peace, is that women have lived in different bodies, different histories. We have taken on the preponderance of a certain kind of work which I call mothering, but which men can certainly do and which women can fail to do. Because of our histories, because of the ways we have lived, we may have distinctive contributions to make to peacemaking. That doesn't mean better. It means distinctive. Women are not peaceful. Mothers are not peaceful. Mothers in every battle on both sides of the battle line support wars. It's a hoke I think we're talking about that women and mothers, and these are not the same, that together we might come to respect the lives and the lessons, what Virginia Woolf called the lives and lessons of our mothers' houses, and put them to work politically. I wanted to read you, and this is from my book but it's mostly not my words I'm going to read you. I wanted to read you something from Jane Adams who the Ambassador to Norway read last night, and if I have trouble finding my place we'll just have to ... this is part of the academic thing that makes Betty Williams very impatient and I understand that! We're always looking for words. I wish

I could just get up and talk without words in front of me but that's one of the liabilities of the profession and I changed late! This is Jane Adams. I'm also going to use some words of a white South African, Olive Shriner, in the course of this. "The belief that a woman is against war simply and only because she is a woman and not a man does not of course hold. In every country there are many, many women who believe that war is inevitable and righteous, and that the highest possible service is being performed by their sons who go into the army." (This was written in World War I.) Olive Shriner joins her in thought and says something similar: "It is not because of woman's cowardess, incapacity, nor above all because of her general superior virtue that she will end war when her voice is finally and fully heard." And then Adams again: "The women do have a sort of pang about it. That curious revolt comes out again and again, even in the women who are most patriotic. Even those women, when they are taken off their guard, give a certain protest, a certain plaint, against the whole situation which very few men I think are able to formulate." Both Adams and Shriner traced woman's curious revolt against war to their experience as mothers. Adams compared a mother, and this is a direct quote, to "an artist who is in the artillery corps let us say, and is commanded to fire upon a wonderful thing." And you can think of what Baghdad had managed to build over centuries. "Is commanded to fire upon a wonderful thing." Say St. Mark's at Venice or the

??? at Florence or any other great architectural and beautiful thing. I am sure that he would have just a little more compunction than the man who had never given himself to creating beauty and did not know the cost of it. Shriner spoke, and this is a quote, "So many months of weariness and pain while bones and muscles were shaped within, so many hours of anguish and struggle that breath might be, so many baby mouths drawing life at woman's breast, all this that men might lie with glazed eyeballs and swollen bodies and fixed blue unclosed mouths and great limbs tossed." Neither Adams nor Shriner believed that women became generally wise from being mothers. Shriner did however attribute to women a quite specific knowledge. No woman who is a woman says of a human body "It is nothing." On this one point and on this one point alone the knowledge of woman simply as a woman is superior to that of man. She knows the history of human flesh. She knows its cost, he does not. Now as I said, I am not -- and anyone who quotes Martin Luther King is not suggesting that only women know the cost of human flesh -- but it's certainly true that many, many, many men do not. And it's a cost we must learn. But I want now to quote an American feminist, also a peace activist. I saw her arrested outside the military base at Seneca Falls with a beautiful, rapturous look on her face. She does now have Alzheimer's. Dorothy Dinnerstine?? is her name. She wrote The Mermaid and the Menitor. And she casts certain skepticism which I think is very important to be cast on

women's peacemaking roles. She says, speaking of women's peers, "Think of the saying 'Men must work and women must weep.' Woman's tears over what is lethal in man's work, this saying implies, are part of the world's eternal, unalterable way. Her tears serve not to deter man, but to help him go on. For she is doing his weeping for him, and he is doing what she weeps about for her." In other words, women's tears are expected. They are part of the military script. They are woven into its beginnings and woven into its ends, and they let the war go on. In an angrier moment in another place Dorothy Dinnerstine wrote about women and men: "The absurd self-importance of his striving has been matched by the abject servility of her mourning which has on the whole been expressed only with his consent and within boundaries set by him and which has on the whole worked to support the stability of the realm he rules." A phrase that I use a lot in my book is "women's resistance." And I have in mind there making the tears of women political. Making them collective. Making them an expression of courage. I am both overwhelmed, as she is overwhelmed by Martin Luther King, and deeply honored to be following Betty Williams as a speaker here. And last night when I was thinking of what I was going to say and before I heard her speak, I was going to talk about her courage, which I associate with the courage of many other women in the world, in turning to somebody who had been designated enemy and saying we will talk. In working with her and many other women to build a

collective movement -- and I'd never met Betty Williams except just briefly, but I have been in Ireland, and I can imagine the risks you have to take about are you are a traitor, are you ridiculous, are you foolish; the hours on the telephone, the hours writing notes and things, the nightmares and the ability somehow to keep hoping that that effort requires. This is political, a politicization of women's tears. But today listening to her, I would also like to say something else. I hadn't planned to read Dorothy Dinnerstine where she talks about the abject servility of women, making their protests within the boundaries that are set for us. What I especially want to commend today is the ability of some women, and it's not mine, to come before a group of people in power and to speak with the voice of the powerless, to speak without mincing words, to speak with humor, to speak for what is right, to speak in the language that somehow is being excluded all the time, not only by men but by men and women and not only by people in government but also certainly, as she says, people in the academic world. It's wonderful to hear somebody say, "This makes me puke." These are the words we want to hear. Now I want to just very briefly mention one other part of my thinking of this, and I think of women's peace movement thinking altogether, and that is about nonviolent action as being a way of acting. I don't like the word passive resistance. I'm talking about acting. When you have made the commitment not to damage, hate, humiliate, or injure.

And I have argued in my book, arguing is the word that philosophers are trained to use, that mothers although we often hate and often hit and often humiliate, are governed by ideals which judge our success in terms of our capacity not to injure, not to dominate, not to humiliate. That is although we may be violent, we are governed by ideals of nonviolence. And it is our struggle to live up to those ideals, those many of us who are governed by them, as much as our successes that I think could bring a particular illumination to the collective worldwide process of peacemaking that we are now engaged in. Nonviolent action as I see it, and I learned this from King and Ghandi, involves of course the renunciation of violence that I've just spoken of. Mothers renounce violence often in the midst of harrassed and powerless, literally sometimes hungry and homeless, lives. And although they are powerless in regard to the world, they are powerful in regard to vulnerable children. The vulnerable often provoke aggression. I've never heard of a child that wasn't sometime deeply unhappy, deeply troubled, and deeply provocative. And in that situation, mothers don't hit. Sometimes they do, but often they don't. And they measure success by not hitting. That's the renunciation of violence. There's the principle of reconciliation which doesn't mean that, as Ambassador ??? said, that you divide everything down the middle and somehow give up your values. But it does mean at the end of the day people have to live

together. And they have to live together and wake up the next morning better able to live together. The test is not winning. The hope is not surrender. The hope is a continuation of people being together, often in conflict, often disappointed, often angry, but still maintaining connection with each other. And finally, as is clear from both Ghandi and King, both of whom died violently, nonviolence requires courageous resistance in the public world. Also in a much less courageous way because I don't want to heroize mothers, that would be totally beside the point, there is a kind of resistance to injustice required in the maternal nonviolence. A resistance to injustice. An older sibling, an abusive parent, is not equal to a country invading another or a country bombing another. But if an older sibling goes into a room and tears up the younger sibling's goods out of a fit of jealousy, a mother can't just walk away and say, "That's okay. I'm too tired." That's in her own shelter, in her own home. She resists injustices there. She resists the bully. But she never gives up on the bully either, because after all it's her child. You can resist bullies without becoming a bully in return. It is possible. And mothers in neighborhoods across the country move out together, and things you don't hear of, whose names never get mentioned to the Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee. They move out together and they fight. They fight for food, they fight for doctors, they fight for school crossings. They join hands and fight

against racism. Together they try to ask for the things that will allow their children to live in a world in which they can be both happy and good. Good because their happiness doesn't come at the expense of another person's. Happy because goodness, justice, understanding does make people happy. Now this is what I would call peacekeeping. Renunciation, reconciliation, resistance. And the task of peacekeeping really is not just to stop the fighting -- and first of all, fights never stop in the homes I know about. It's not just to stop the fighting. It's to make a peace worth keeping. To make a peace where nobody is humiliated, nobody leaves without self-respect because he or she could only get her self-respect, his self-respect, by resorting to violence. Now when I talk about mothers or women in the way I do, people always ask me as they ask Betty Williams and in fact it came up in President Arias' speech too -- isn't this unrealistic? I would now like to just read, just talk a couple things about realism and nonviolent action. I call maternal nonviolence a truth in the making because I believe mothers are governed by the ideals that we're constantly trying to articulate and we are only now beginning even to respect ourselves enough to even be asked to be talking in a place like this, to begin to hear each other, to realize that we've been doing this for a long, long time. But in particular I mention in a talk about realists, to make the story short, that war is inevitable. That wherever they look they see violence and I say indeed they are not

deluded. Violence is everywhere to be seen, a public documented realistic nightmare. But mothers know another history. Passion is often destructive, but it is the material for a discipline of love and for a maternal thinking that is love's reason. A mother learns firsthand as agent and spectator in the position of the stronger and of the weaker, that the cost of dominating is paid in the fear and hatred of the dominated and anyone who sympathizes with them. Mothers have many dominating moments and therefore experience in their own person what it means to lose the trust of the dominated and to watch those they dominate lose pleasure in themselves. Most mothers also know what it is to be dominated. They watch as their children stumble in their efforts to learn to love, suffering the pain and loss that comes from dominating or the humiliation that comes from being dominated. But pain is not the only history a mother tells. Even siblings and rivals as children learn to take strength from each other's strength rather than primarily from their weakness, and the radical inequality of mother/child relations does not preclude a mutuality and respect for another's lively being. Without being atypically unselfish, a mother may measure her power in terms of her ability to nurture a child whom she cannot dominate, a child lively with her own desires and projects. It would be sentimental foolishness to claim for all mother/child relations such mutuality. It would be equally sentimental cynicism to deny that many mothers and

children create together an ongoing changing approximation of mutuality. I think this striving for mutuality rather than domination is the central heart of maternal nonviolence. But there is a very important component to it, and that is the capacity to live within certainty, to live with imperfection, to live the second best. That requires patience and it requires a long view. In the Gulf for example, history did not begin on August 2nd. We're learning more all the time the ways the Iran-Iraq War was funded, the ways that both combatants were supplied, the way Henry Kissinger said publicly, and I think these are his exact words speaking of the United States, "What would be best for us if they both lose but they must lose slowly," meaning by that that it would be good for us if both countries became powerless, relatively powerless. Now only one is. But let's suppose history did begin on August 2nd. Let's suppose there was an invasion and a crossing of a boundary. I'm not concerned now that Kuwait is an illiberal state in many respects that's true, nor am I concerned but for the fact that the boundary was imposed imperially, drawn in the sand like all those other lines people are drawing in the sand. And it's been a subject of dispute. It was a subject of dispute in the 30's, it was a subject of dispute in the 60's, it's been a subject of dispute many times. There's ongoing negotiations about the oil wells. There was a lot of bitterness in very particular things between Iraq and Kuwait. But I'm not saying that it was right to invade

Kuwait. I keep getting distracted by the wrong questions. I don't think that borders should be crossed by military force. I don't believe in military force. I don't believe that countries should build nuclear or chemical weapons. I've been for disarmament for a very long time and actively against chemical weapons ever since defoliants were used in Viet Nam. These are questions that distract me from what I'm trying to say. We had to begin on August 3rd to work out something in which as many people could live safely and as many people could get up the next day trying again to build a better world in that part of the region and here as we could. And we could have started on August 3rd to do that and we could have started on August 2nd to do it even more strongly. Everything I have read and heard about the war, everything I have learned about the Middle East, has only convinced me more that this war was totally avoidable. Again, this does not mean that I don't wish for the people of Iraq a much more democratic government than they now have. I do. I was very much for the sanctions that were passed by the Senate and vetoed by the Bush administration long before we did this whole big ganging up sanction effort. I'm for sanctions. I'm for sanctions that are negative and I'm for sanctions that are rewarding. If you do this in your country, we will see you get that, only this time not a scud missile but something a little more useful to the people living there. Martin Luther King said in the letter to the Birmingham jail, I sit between two groups of

people. On the one hand there is the side of the people who won't do anything. Let's call them appeasers. On the other side are the people who think all the way they can do anything is to do it with a gun. The hardest place to sit is between those two groups of people and insist that there's another way of fighting. Now finally what is most often said to me when I talk about mothers and/or women is that mothers' maternal passion is very particular, very parochial. A mother is committed to her children and then to her people's children. And I don't doubt that for a minute. This maternal parochialism, maternal partiality, takes its most ugly form in outright racism. But it exists in the best of mothers and the most peacemaking of mothers. As Betty Williams said, she thinks her children are wonderful, especially wonderful. I have shed many tears over the loss of the future and the future fears of people, not just women and children, under bombardment. I don't want anyone under bombardment, in Tel Aviv or in Baghdad. But I have shed more tears in these last months and felt more hopeless in these last months because of the bombardment my country is perpetrating. Because although Betty Williams can say I'm a citizen of the world and on the other hand I'm a citizen of Ireland, I have to say I'm a citizen of America. I've been a citizen of America for many, many years old enough to leave it. And I've taken its rewards and I've been blessed by this country and I think there are many, many blessings in this country. And when

children. We are asking for justice for all. All of us are equal. If we find one disappeared one, I will rejoice as much as if they had found mine." Now this is, the beginning is shared suffering. This was one Madre joining with another Madre. But then the suffering identification extends to collective concern for all people of the nation's state of which they are a part, this new kind of patriotism. "We are the women and mothers of this land, of the workers, of the professionals, of the students, and of future generations." Then finally this very real personal violation of one's own child in the protest, out of it becomes something still larger. "In the beginning we only wanted to rescue our children. But as time past we acquired a different comprehension. We understood better what is going on in the world. We know that when babies do not have enough to eat, that too is a violation of human rights." And finally a Chilean woman speaking of ???, a mine in which many of these children were tortured and murdered and the bones came out later. She said, "We should commit ourselves to make ??? a blessed spot. May it be a revered spot so that never again will a hostile hand be raised against any other person that lives on earth." I'm pointing to a miracle here really, that women who had experienced a very particular outrageous assault upon their own lives came to express compassion for all children suffering violence anywhere. And this I think is possible. Never perfect. We may have to settle always for imperfections, but it is a

kind of realism that mothers have been trained to hope for
and to try to achieve.

