

SABA

12<sup>th</sup> November, 2015

*If you could please start with your name  
and a little bit of background about  
yourself.*

Thank you for this opportunity. I like to have input in Peace. My name is Saba Abraham. I am from Eritrea. Eritrea is in North East Africa, a tiny country in the Horn of Africa. I have been a fighter, a freedom fighter, in my early, very very early or young age, around 14. This was 1974, I came to Australia in 93, end of 92. I have been around Kenya, Sudan, and about 1 year and 3 months in Egypt.

Most of my life is out of my country, out of my people. and that is because of the war and hate. What I have learned from my experience is that I'm proud to call myself a freedom fighter. But of course, as a freedom fighter, it makes sense if much isn't done by bullet to fight by peace, through peace. So, not being a fighter through peace has resulted in me to leave my country, to leave my family,. To leave all. that I really had and I should have,, I feel at the end of my life. And even though sometimes, considering what is in my country, my people, the conditions they live in, all of that, I see myself..Well, I'm lucky. I live in a peaceful country, a country that respects human rights, and the rights of woman, and the opportunity

to have your input for change. When I see that I consider myself lucky,. But when, of course, I sit back and see where I want us to be? When I was a fighter, what was my aim? What was the outcome I wanted to have from my fighting and dying? I lost two of my brothers and a lot of my colleagues at a really early age. When I all see this loss, I feel sad and guilty. But I think, 'What's happened has happened, it's a fact'. The very importance thing I see is the rest of my life, what I have learned from the past and what I need to do for the future to come. And that's why, now, I really feel in my life. Though I am a human being, I am only one person. There's a lot of things I can do in my capacity to change.

*How important is peace to you?*

Very important. More important than anything.. Without peace, money doesn't make a difference to anything. What do you think will make a difference without peace?

*And do you link peace to other values and conditions? Maybe freedom if you're a freedom fighter.*

Yes. But in a sense, what I have learned is that freedom, basically, to me, means peace. If you've got freedom, you've got peace. No one controls your life, you don't have fear. But because I don't get that freedom, do I have to kill somebody? That's the question we as human beings need the answer. Yes? To fight for your freedom you have to kill? Uh? To control you, he has to kill you? So the change has to come from a freedom fighter, not from the violence or from the oppressor. So all peoples that want peace, whether it be in the political, in the nation, in whatever way in your life, we have to challenge un-peacefulness by peaceful ways. That's what I mean.

*Has the significance of peace changed for you over time?*

Yes, it has, yes. For example, to be honest, I never say that I have to have money. I never say that because in my life I see all the blood before peace. Because the world's not at peace. I left my beloved Mum, I wanted to be around her. I couldn't get that, I couldn't be in the land I was born in and grown up in

because no peace. Not because I didn't have money or not having something to eat, but because the world's not at peace. And still they're not at peace there. So peace is basically everything in the life of a human being. Any human being. Any life.

*Is peace a tangible and real thing in your life?*

Yes, it is. It is.

*How do you live a peaceful life?*

Well for me the peaceful life is, first of all, don't see yourself above anybody. Be proud of your humanity. And then as human, you are equal to any human. You have to have that confidence. Not to say, "Well, I'm black or weak." As a human, you are human, so be proud of what you have as a human.

And secondly, if you have that confidence, you will be to me, I feel, connected. Because you are human like me whatever the change in our look, we have the same blood, red blood. If you don't have life, I don't have life. So you are mine, everybody's mine, and I feel peace because I don't fear you because you are trying to do whatever you want. For me, the only

matter is that you are a human being, like me. So that basically gives me a kind of happiness, connected humanity, gathering with someone or a lot of people.

*Is there a difference between personal peace and social peace?*

To me, I don't know it could be different from person to person, but for me the personal peace is when I do good things. When I do bad things I feel bad, hey? Whatever the cause.

*Even when you think you're doing it for the right reasons?*

When I think I do the right thing and I make a mistake, I don't have a problem. I learn from that. But sometimes you revenge - you do a bad thing to me and I do a bad thing to you. That's a bad way. I hate that. That's the only thing in my life that doesn't give me peace, personal peace.

Social peace, of course, is your environment, what is around. And social peace, a lot of times, dictates your personal peace as well. If they ignore peace for the society, it's hard to get peace. I can say that because no one has peace in my country, all of my country.

Not necessarily the killings that start with me, or the imprisonments that start with me, or the personal oppression that comes to me, but if others in a society are oppressing, then of course you carry the conflict and you do feel fear. And then, well, you have to wait for your turn. So, a social peace is very important and has a lot of impact on personal peace.

*Is Australia a peaceful country?*

It is a peaceful country. Well, of course for me, peace is relative, unfortunately. If I have to compare Australia to a lot of countries, Africa and a lot of other places, at least from what I know Australia to me is a peaceful country. Are there some concerns that our leaders are not for peace? Yes, of course. To me always what I want to really highlight is that we are peaceful, we need to keep that peacefulness and then, of course, we have to grow. We have to eliminate those things that don't give us peace. They are small at this time but, if we are not aware, then we are not as a community working together to eliminate those issues that don't give us peace.

*So we have to always be working?*

For peace? Yes.

*Do you think that peace is best found  
alone or with other people?*

Well, it starts from you. First, as I said, as a human being you have to be happy without any other things, just you being a human, healthy and you live. And then, for me, that feeling of peacefulness is connected to what you do. So, for me they are connected. It doesn't mean that you can't get peace from others as well. For example, you are a stranger or you don't know anybody, but when you come to my house or I meet you somewhere then when we're connected, it makes a difference. Whether it is as a society or as a group, or as the dignity of human rights. And that's basically the simple thing of accepting. That's what I say as human, you accept whoever a human is as a part of you. So that's basically for me what makes a difference.

It's a matter of confidence in yourself that makes a difference. For me, to be honest, I don't know whether I'm a unique character or whether there's a lot like me. I always feel confident as a human. Wherever I go, I don't have that fear. For example, a lot of people in my experience, they have fear of difference. And they have, like before they go somewhere they think, "If I go to that, then I will be



that''', or something. So, I don't have much of this kinds of thinking, before I go to judge, 'Well, if I go to this, then I will be this''.

The only thing in my life when I feel that way was when I left. Well, of course, I never want to leave my country. Even when I was forced to go to Sudan I resisted accepting any resettlement because I wanted to continue my fight and go back to my country. But then I decided it's impossible to go back, that I have to see a future for my daughter, now. Not any more can I think of only me. When I accepted to come Australia, I have a bit of kind of well, I'm going to a white country. I didn't know it was a black country, actually. I don't have enough education so I thought I would struggled to support myself and also, because I'm black, maybe I will see a bit of discrimination. I had that kind of bad thoughts. I had a strategy for that as well., I can go to the farm and at least I can do the animals. I can do some farming and everything and I can get paid and give my daughter an education. But again, when I come to the airport a white middle-aged woman met me. The way she greeted me, I feel accepted. The reception that somebody can make, for a stranger. Then, that expectation was gone. Now, wherever I go

I don't feel anything. So, what I wanted to say is if you have that confidence as a human, accepting reality most of the time, it changes. What the problem I see is, we ask "Why is this happened - Why, why, why?". If always you don't answer for why - well, it's happened because of that - it's a reality. Now, move! That question, most of the time, that doesn't give peace.

*They can't let it go.*

Yes, unfortunately whether you like it or not like it, that's a fact. War, other things shouldn't happen, but it's happened.

*Do you remember choosing peace?*

Yes. Basically the way I grew up, my Mother and my Father, they are very generous, peaceful, accepting of others, not judgmental. I grew up with that value of peace and accepting others, not to have a feeling of down or up.

*And can you remember any experiences in your life of intense peacefulness?*

I do, the moment when I arrived in Australia. Especially, always, thanks to that person from immigration.

*The person at the airport. That moment  
that she greeted you?*

Yeah. That's great, that connection. Totally. I am coming for peace, that was for me one hundred percent. But that other fear that I don't have anybody here to create connection, to build a life, that it will be difficult for me, she killed that fear. Just then, I didn't feel any problem in Australia. Here I have peace, personal peace and societal peace, except for those small things. But my other worry is for peace is what's happening in the world. That's not peaceful. That's actually my big worry. And the other that makes me suffer, with all my peacefulness, personally is when I see disadvantage even here in Australia. Could be different reasons. Not war, but suffering or substances, drugs. And what could cause people to be like that? That comes always into my mind. What can we do to change that?

*I've been asking people if they think there's a connection between art and peace. Or maybe if there's something you do, in particular, that helps you feel peaceful.*

Visually, you know, when you live with a gun and a soldier it doesn't give you much peace. But when you live with a green garden, trees, animals of course it gives you peace and hope! If you see cultural things, cooking, people dancing, playing, whatever brings people together. That kind of art gives you peace.

*Well, that's it I think, unless there's something else you'd like to say?*

Well, I think we've tried to touch everything. But at the end, what I want to say as a peace project is, we need to think big. So people really do it. If they think they want peace for themselves, they have to think peace for others. If we don't see it in that way, then I think what peace we have is short lived. So, I want to send that message to everybody.

*Peace as bigger than war!*

And powerful.

*Thank you, Saba.*