

Obituaries

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ANNE GOODMAN EDUCATOR AND ACTIVIST, 62

Building, and living in, a culture of peace

Goodman's work took her around the world, where she taught people to work collaboratively to end conflict

NOREEN SHANAHAN

It was 1950 and apartheid had been a national policy for two years when Anne Goodman was born into a privileged, white South African family.

Nelson Mandela had recently risen to prominence in the African National Congress. By the time she was wearing her middle school uniform, in 1962, he was arrested and began serving 27 years in prison.

Although Dr. Goodman was powerfully affected by these turbulent times in her homeland, it took a walk in a park half a world away to inspire her to commit herself to becoming a human rights activist and community peacebuilder.

While strolling along a riverbank near her Toronto home on an October morning in 1999, she encountered a disoriented and distraught man. He had just heard on the radio that the skeletal remains of his 15-year-old daughter, missing for four months, had been discovered somewhere along the path.

"I could not leave him to make that walk alone," she said in a Toronto Star article, "... so I accompanied him back to that fateful spot. As we walked, he told me his story."

They soon encountered several police officers, police dogs and a flurry of reporters who quickly descended on her companion. Describing this event, Dr. Goodman said, "It was as if I felt the pain of all the world's suffering." This experience prompted her to dedicate her life to building an international culture of peace, fostering dialogue and working toward social justice.

Dr. Goodman was president and co-founder of InterChange: International Institute for Community-Based Peacebuilding, which collaborates on educational and research projects with like-minded activists around the world. She taught at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), in the department of adult education and community development; she directed a graduate certificate in community healing and peacebuilding; and she was co-director of the university's Transformative Learning Centre, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

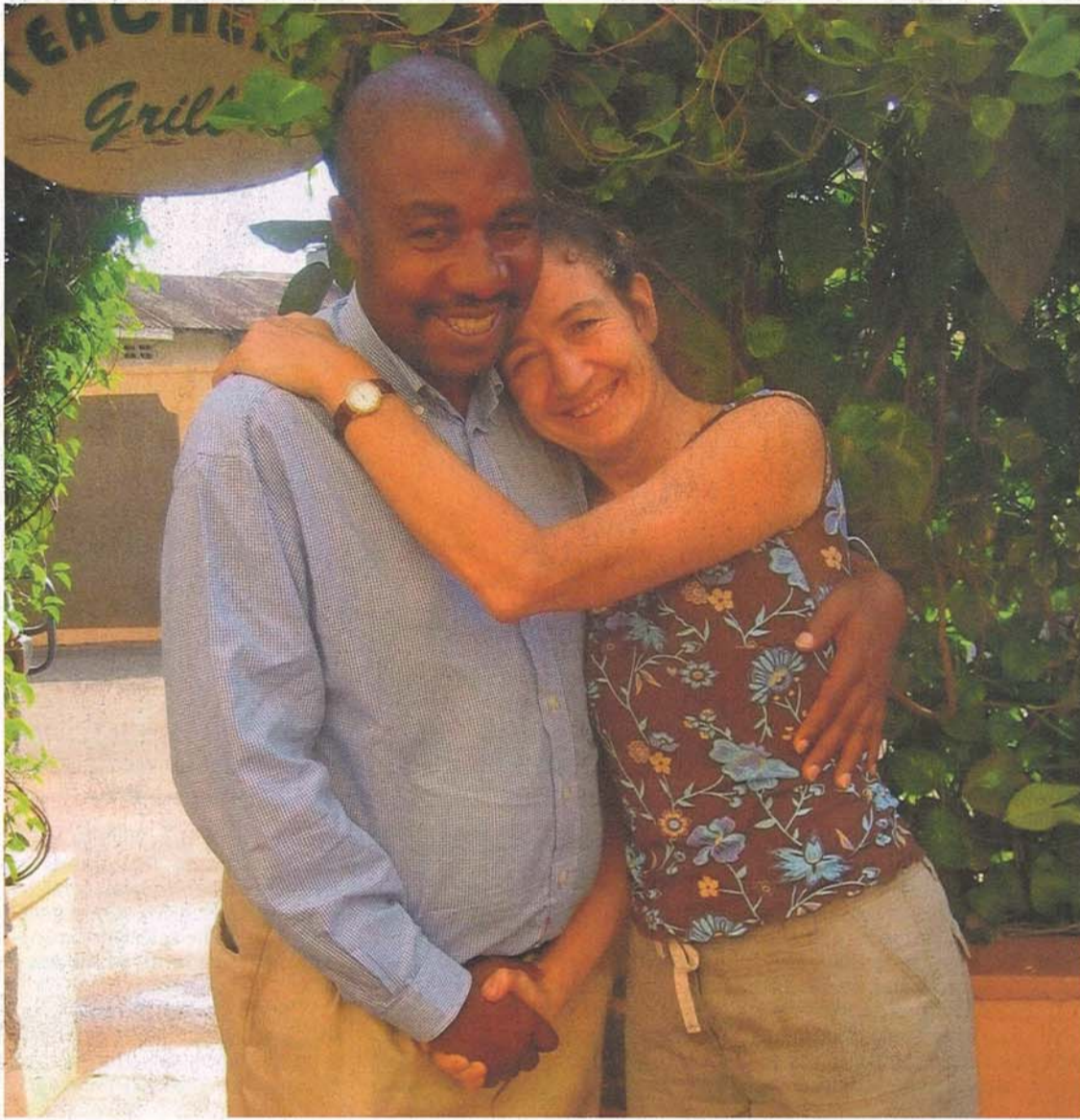
Dr. Goodman died in Toronto on Aug. 1 of cancer. She was 62. She leaves her husband, her mother, her brother, three daughters and a grandson.

Her work took her to Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Slovakia, Israel, Croatia and other countries where she taught people to toss assumptions on their head, work collaboratively and replace conflict with peace.

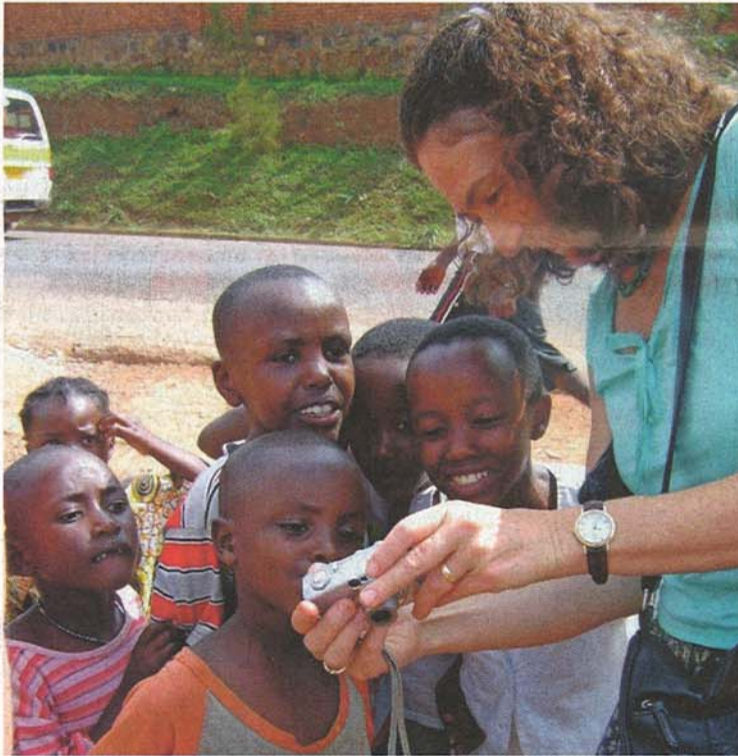
Transformative learning, she argued, involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in thought, feelings and actions.

Jean-Paul Restoule, co-director of the Transformative Learning Centre, said one of the key facets of Dr. Goodman's approach was linking academic theory with hands-on practice, and in so doing benefiting communities in conflict around the world. "That's really what Anne was about: She'd say, 'Okay, this theory is really exciting, but how do we use it?'" Dr. Restoule said.

Some of her students ended up working as international journalists, aboriginal healers



Dr. Goodman collaborated with like-minded activists around the world. PHOTOS BY CAROLYN WEBB



Anne Goodman shows her camera to children in Rwanda after attending a peace building symposium with InterChange.

and storytellers and inner-city youth workers. One former student counsels inmates at Rikers Island, a large correctional facility in New York.

Key to Dr. Goodman's philosophy and approach was integrating practices borrowed from other cultures, particularly native Canadian and African. She held monthly healing circles for her students at OISE, often led by visiting scholars or community leaders who incorporated their own nuances.

"(Dr. Goodman) was always looking for those ancient wisdoms," said Dr. Restoule, "honouring and respecting them in such a way that they weren't

seen as primitive ... but as something that has great, long-term practice and wisdom to it."

Born Nov. 29, 1950 in Johannesburg, Anne was the eldest daughter in a traditional Jewish family. She spent her childhood playing by the pool with her two brothers, completing trunkloads of jigsaw puzzles and collecting silkworms from the mulberry tree with her mother.

Her father, Sidney Goodman, worked at the Omega watch company in Johannesburg. Her mother, Sonia, revelled in her little girl's charming temperament and auburn curls.

Always a symbiotic pair, mother and daughter recently discov-

ered that the mental place each woman envisioned while meditating was not only the same beach in Cape Town, but also the same rock.

Anne excelled at school and chose, at first, a career in occupational therapy; she graduated in 1972 from Johannesburg's University of the Witwatersrand, Nelson Mandela's alma mater.

But she soon changed track by marrying Michael Adelson that same year and moving to a smallholding outside the city, where the young couple grew strawberries for the European market.

Their daughter Vicki was born in 1976 and the family immigrated to Canada two years later. Two more daughters, Sandy and Susie, were born in swift order not long after they arrived.

Dr. Goodman stayed home to care for her children while her husband worked for a Dutch greenhouse grower in the southwestern Ontario town of Leamington. Always a gardener, her hands seemed to be either slogging in rich soil or clasping a small child's hand.

Before long the Adelson family moved to Toronto and she returned to school. In 1988, she received her master of education from York University, then a PhD in education from the University of Toronto in 1995.

Her marriage to Mr. Adelson ended in 1996. In 2003, she married Michael Wheeler, with whom she had worked for some time as a political ally.

Around the mid-nineties her activist spark was lit, further fanned by teaching in the Centre for Peace Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton.

Opening her eyes to international conflict, she saw an urgent need for community

healing and peace building.

In 2007, Dr. Goodman attended a peacebuilding symposium in Rwanda with InterChange. While there she visited the Gacaca courts, a jury of community members who listened to suspects of genocide in an attempt to promote peace and reconciliation.

"There were around 120,000 suspects after the genocide," said InterChange secretary Carolyn Webb. "... Community courts became a key way to address the issue, since the regular courts were flooded."

Dr. Goodman travelled to Kenya in 2010 to facilitate workshops with peace builders in that country after the constitutional referendum held in hopes of creating a more peaceful foundation before the next election. The catalyst for this workshop was the violence following the 2007 general election that left hundreds dead and thousands homeless.

"[In Kenya] she asked people to connect their own personal stories with the stories of the communities to help people look at it from more of a systemic place," Ms. Webb said.

Closer to home, Dr. Goodman co-founded Voice of Somali Women for Peace, Reconciliation and Political Rights, developed workshops called Peace Begins at Home for a Somali mother's group in Toronto and was a board member with Peacebuilders International.

Early in her career, she worked as a research assistant for physicist and activist Dr. Ursula Franklin and Canadian Voice of Women for Peace.

As a sideline career, Dr. Goodman was a humanist officiant affiliated with the Ontario Humanist Society and licensed by the Ontario government to solemnize weddings in the province. "Ceremonies are an important part of life and I believe that there should be choices beyond a traditional ceremony in a religious institution or a civil ceremony in a registrar's office," she wrote on her website.

In Dr. Goodman's determined quest for peace and what she would call the good life, she epitomized the 1960s feminist rallying cry: "The personal is political."

Clutching her bicycle helmet under her arm, she'd happily pause to chat with anyone who recognized the importance of having these tiny, perfect moments of collaboration.

Her legacy was the networks of people she built, said Sheila Stewart, a PhD candidate in OISE's adult education and community development program. "She was an in-person person, a face-to-face person, and so much of the university is about what is written down."

This well-practised approach resonates with the African philosophy of Ubuntu, something Dr. Goodman often quoted in her teaching. Roughly translated it means: "A person is a person through other persons."

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