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Mamphela Ramphela: Building Peace Through Action

As demonstrated by the work of Mamphela Ramphela, peace is not just recognizing problems and thinking about solutions, it is taking concrete actions to create a better future. Mamphela Ramphela is an educator, author, doctor, and activist, who dedicated her life to encouraging equality and justice wherever she saw it. In all aspects of her career, Ramphela was committed to improving healthcare, education, and human rights, specifically during the time of apartheid in South Africa. Her long lasting devotion to helping others demonstrates that peace is more than the absence of violence but also the presence of opportunity, fairness, and respect for all people no matter what. Ramphela's determination to bring about positive change to her community, country, and world is truly admirable. Ramphela's use of her education to work towards a more inclusive and peaceful society continues to inspire and shape young activists today.

Mamphela Ramphela was born in the Bochum District of South Africa in 1947 to parents who both worked in the education industry as primary school teachers, ingraining the importance of community and education from an early age. As a young child, at just three months old, she experienced a severe whooping cough and was only able to survive the illness because of her mother's and a local woman's knowledge of medicine. This incident left a lasting impression on Ramphela as it showed her the power of compassion and education, especially in women. She often witnessed racial injustices directly while growing up in apartheid South Africa, such as

seeing conflicts between local villagers and oppressive authorities. These experiences shaped her awareness of inequalities and promoted her advocacy for those discriminated against. Despite her challenges, Ramphele continued to excel in school, often standing out as a top student and one of the only girls in her class. She went on to the University of the North for higher education and after, continued her studies at the University of Natal. Ramphele's early life exposure to the importance of education and the difficulties of injustice laid the foundation for her lifelong dedication to helping others through education, healthcare, and social development.

Much of Mamphela Ramphele's life was committed to improving healthcare and education for communities in South Africa. In 1975, she started the Zanempilo Community Health Centre, one of the earliest primary healthcare programs working outside the government. The center not only provided medical care to locals but it also gave people the opportunity to learn more about their own health. Additionally, she set up the Isutheng Community Health Program, a space for women to learn how to provide simple health services and to run community gardens. Ramphele's work in creating beneficial health programs demonstrates her belief in the positive influence of education and healthcare in communities. She implemented these values in her own life as she continued her learning by earning several more degrees, including a PhD in Social Anthropology. Later, in 1991, Ramphele was given the opportunity to serve at the University of Cape Town as vice-chancellor. There, she worked to make education more accessible and to provide equal opportunities for all students.

The legacy that Mamphela's continuing work leaves is that action is necessary to bring about real change to society. She utilized her educational platform to work towards peace in her community by establishing more accessible healthcare and education programs as well as creating equal opportunities for everyone in her community. Ramphele, and her organizations,

strive to treat everyone with the respect and dignity they deserve and to not only help others but educate them too. Her efforts prove that working towards peace means taking action to solve real issues and actively pushing for change. Ramphele serves as a great example of how one person's work can grow into a significantly impactful movement that can help countless people. She encourages future generations to view peace as a goal that must be built on knowledge, compassion, and courage.

As a South African and a person who values the importance of health and education, I feel deeply inspired by Mamphela Ramphele. Her story has taught me that education is not only a means of personal success but also a way to create real change for my community. I especially admire how she educated people, especially women, about their own personal health and how to perform minor health services for others. This simple action of not just helping but teaching is a prominent value in all that Ramphele did and is one aspect of her life that has specifically inspired me. Like her, I believe that knowledge is a powerful tool that can improve the lives of and open doors for so many different people. Ramphele's dedication to peace through community, education, and compassion has resonated with me. She motivates me to pursue my studies with purpose and to use what I learn to make a difference.

Mamphela Ramphele's story highlights how peace is built by those who care enough to act. From her early exposure to education and medicine to her lifelong efforts to improve the lives of her community, she proved that real peace requires dedication and attention. I truly admire Ramphele's commitment to improving healthcare, education, and equality through actions not just words. She continues to inspire me, and many others, to make a difference in our own communities and actively work for the peace we want to see in the world.