

00:00:00:01 - 00:00:51:12

Graca

I was stubborn. Why am I being told that I can't make my own choices and that I can't spread my wings and fly to where I want to? So these are the things, Reeta, which we're being inflicted in on us, generally speaking, but on me, to make me feel this is a place where you have to struggle to affirm and assert yourself.

00:00:51:14 - 00:01:26:05

Reeta

Hello and welcome to Transcending Boundaries. I'm Reeta Roy. Our guest today was born in rural Mozambique in 1945. Weeks before her birth, her father, a farmer and a lay minister, passed away. Yet in his final days, he asked that his unborn child be educated. Her mother carried that vow with courage and devotion, shaping a destiny far greater than anyone could have ever imagined.

00:01:26:07 - 00:01:58:04

Reeta

That promise carried her from mission schools, where she excelled, to classrooms where she was the only black student among 40 white pupils. An experience that awakened her political consciousness. In Portugal, she found her voice in the anti-colonial student movements. She returned to Africa to join FRELIMO, training as a guerrilla fighter and dedicating her life to Mozambique's liberation.

00:01:58:06 - 00:02:31:24

Reeta

At just 29, she became the minister of Education, leading one of Africa's most ambitious post-independence education drives. She raised school enrollment from 40% to over 90%, proving that learning could be the backbone of nation-building. She has shared her life with two giants of history, President Samora Machel and President Nelson Mandela. Yet she has always stood as a towering figure in her own right.

00:02:32:01 - 00:02:57:14

Reeta

A humanitarian, global advocate, human rights activist and founding member of the Foundation for Community Development, The Graca Machel Trust and the Elders. It is my profound honour to welcome Dr Graca Machel. Graca Welcome. Welcome to Transcending Boundaries, and thank you so much for making time to be here to share your story.

00:02:57:15 - 00:03:04:11

Graça

Is such a pleasure. And for you I would be anyway. Thank you so much.

00:03:04:11 - 00:03:28:2

Reeta

You are much too nice. Maybe the best place to start is in the beginning. When you were just a baby. I understand you were born in rural Mozambique, in a little village called Inca Dini. And sadly, your dad passed away a few weeks before you were born. But he made your mom promise that you would be educated.

00:03:29:01 - 00:03:44:18

Reeta

And she did an amazing job to keep that promise. Would you talk a little bit about her? And what you remember of her and the lessons she instilled in you.

00:03:44:20 - 00:03:52:19

Graça

You know, my mother was, a person of, not many words.

00:03:53:16 - 00:04:15:15

Graça

She was very quiet, a very strong presence. For a child, what was important for me, was that my mother was always present. And, we were a family with not much.

00:04:16:17 - 00:04:51:15

Graça

But she got things done. We were six of us and the two of the eldest were out of the home at the time. So were four of us. And I don't remember us having a sense of wanting. Everything was there, in small way but in a perfect way. And I remember we, we used to talk with, the one who I followed. We were very close.

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Graça

My sibling, we would really realize that mom gets things done and, much later when I grew up, I could read that and give it the meaning. The other thing, which of those days is she was very quiet, but she had a way of expressing love. I remember when my mother is very happy I will see the smile.

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Graça

But also there was a just as she always did this and my face. When she is upset, you will see it in her eyes. And it was very rare for her to shout to me because of her nature, to shout, but she would look at you with the very severe look and you know, I messed up.

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Graça

So I learned from my mother that sense of presence for us. I never felt was an orphan, by the way. No, I didn't know what to which it meant to be orphan, because I was very much loved, taken care of, getting everything I needed. Only much later I will explain when I got the concious of oh, I'm an orphan, but I didn't have it until much later.

00:06:32:16 - 00:07:12:10

Graça

My mother was, someone who would tell you things at the right moment for reasons. It was only at the age of 13. She told me that my grandmother, the person I knew is my grandmother, was not, in fact, my, grandmother of blood, but she was the youngest woman of my grandfather because my grandfather had many women.

00:07:12:12 - 00:07:46:19

Graça

And then this one, the youngest, who didn't have a boy and my father had lost his mother much early. So my grandfather said; Take this one. You nurture him because when you get old, this is the one who's going to take care of you. Which really happened. So my mother developed this. We had a very good relationship with this grandmother of mine only when I was 18.

00:07:46:21 - 00:08:14:13

Graça

She tells me that; But, you know, you real grandmother passed away when your father was very, very young. And that's when she showed me where my grandmother was. And this is this this much later. I had she didn't want to disturb. I had what I needed. I had loved this grandmother of mine. She was perfect to me. So there was no need to reveal stories.

00:08:14:13 - 00:08:46:05

Graça

Unless that's that she felt when the time was right. So tell me this is where your grandmother lies. So lessons of life is like what many people say; You are born in a poor family. I was not I was

not born in a poor family. No, I had really abundance in the real sense of being loved, being nurtured.

00:08:46:05 - 00:09:19:12

Graça

But most important, from the very early age, I was allowed to be myself. I had to read this much later to understand the importance of I'm a girl, but I'm allowed to be myself. And this has instilled in me the deep respect which I have for any individual. But particularly to give girls yes, the right place they deserve.

00:09:19:14 - 00:09:21:13

Graça

It came from my mother.

00:09:21:15 - 00:09:44:20

Reeta

Wow. What a tribute to your mom. What a tribute. And you obviously a very, very smart young girl. And you went on to school. I understand Mission School, but you found yourself in high school in Maputo. And you have written or spoken about the fact was also a bit of a lonely time being in that school.

00:09:44:22 - 00:09:51:00

Reeta

You were the only black girl in a school that, you know, in a classroom of girls.

00:09:51:00 - 00:09:52:03

Graça

In this room.

00:09:52:08 - 00:10:00:15

Reeta

40 girls. But something awakened at that time. Can you share more about that.

00:10:00:17 - 00:10:39:04

Graça

Yes. When, we girls in this school were very few of us. And naturally during the breaks we would come together and we were aware that we are in minority here. But what really touched me, it

is one of the teachers who decided, you know, at the beginning you have to introduce yourself and the teacher says who you are and he writes down the names of all of us.

00:10:39:06 - 00:11:20:15

Graça

He made it clear that he would not understand my family name. Graca was easy because it's Portuguese. Okay. But my family name is Simbine. And when I tried to tell him I'm Graca Simbine, he made a face in said sing, sing sing. How do you write this. And he made me go to the blackboard to write it, because he could not write a name of a black family.

00:11:20:17 - 00:11:49:21

Graça

All the other teachers were able to understand it. They wrote it without really questioning. But he made me feel this. So I go and I write on the blackboard. But then when I come back, perhaps because it was conscious of what was happening, I could hear my own steps. When you go ko ko ko, you are walking, going back to my seat.

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Graça

The second thing was he made it so that I didn't have a name. I was a number. So from the beginning, during the whole year he would call me number 15. All the other girls had names that I was number 15. And of course a child feels and look around and say I'm out of place. I'm a stranger here.

00:12:27:23 - 00:12:55:07

Graça

And then of course, I started because. But how is it that I will be really in this classroom, the only black girl they have that makes him feel he has the right to put me on my place? And then looking around the whole school, as I'm saying at the beginning, I had even made it a point. But I realized that we are really very few of us.

00:12:56:19 - 00:13:36:19

Graça

And then there was also another thing. We get out of school and when we go home we would take different paths. All the other children were white all the way of Indian origin. They go one direction and we as black children we go then to the township. And it was very clear, separate

ways. So that was the beginning of me understanding you, we are millions of the Mozambican here and all these other people, they just hundreds or thousands and were perhaps

00:13:36:19 - 00:14:03:12

Graça

There could be a million. I do not know. But it the way we were being clearly, you know, made to feel that we are stepping into a space which we do not belong. And but at the same time, you have a very strong sense of belonging because your home, i'm Mozambican and we are millions of us who are Mozambican.

00:14:03:18 - 00:14:32:03

Graça

So how is it that a smaller group will treated us this way? But it was not deep enough. But I felt it. And they know that I really had a very tense relationship with that teacher of mine. But fortunately, he was changed to another class much later. But it stuck, it's stuck.

00:14:34:02 - 00:14:43:21

Graça

Then much later, much later when I have the opportunity to get a scholarship.

00:14:45:06 - 00:15:17:11

Graça

And I'm preparing to, to go to Portugal. One of the things which you needed is to have clean health you know card. So I going to have to do all the exams to make sure that and then this doctor, a female doctor looks at me and she says. But why do you want to go? It's very far from your family.

00:15:17:13 - 00:15:44:07

Graça

You will feel lonely there. Why don't you stay here? And do any kind of a course? You become a secretary. You become a nurse if you like. Why do you want to go to Portugal? I remember looking at it said, you know, doctor, I came to do the exams for me to prove that I'm healthy.

00:15:45:05 - 00:16:16:20

Graça

I didn't come to ask you for, career orientation. I have made up my mind. I was stubborn. And this thing of being stubborn had started exactly a bit earlier. But it's not part of this conversation. But I remember very well. So you are growing in your classroom. You are told this just because I need a health.

00:16:16:22 - 00:16:43:02

Graça

No, I'm told you shouldn't go. You should be a secretary. You should be a nurse. Why am I being told that I can't make my own choices and that can spread my wings and fly to where I want to? So these are things, Reeta, which we're being, you know, inflicted.

00:16:44:08 - 00:17:00:19

Graça

On us generally speaking. But on me to make me feel. This is a place where you have to struggle to affirm and to assert yourself.

00:17:00:21 - 00:17:19:12

Reeta

And that trip to Portugal going to study. And you want to just to focus in on languages. And you are quite a linguist as I understand. How did that continue to evolve the stubbornness. But really it was a consciousness that was rising.

00:17:19:14 - 00:17:56:21

Graça

Fortunately, in Portugal, I met, students coming from other colonies at the time, from Angola, from Guinea, in Cape Verde. And, instinctively we became this sort of family and the boundaries of I'm Mozambican and you are Angolan. You are Cape Verdian didn't make any sense. So we really develop a sense of, sisterhood and brotherhood.

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Graça

Which then led us to have conversations. One thing is what I felt was it was inflicted on me. Another one is now all of us we talk about experiences. How did we come to this place? Again, we are a minority. But what does it mean that now we are this family? But coming from the different origins which we had, it is really where the consciousness came, to be honest.

00:18:30:04 - 00:18:34:11

Graça

One thing it was, it was still there. But with the group.

00:18:35:04 - 00:19:03:06

Graça

It became much, much more clear. We used to organize parties or young people like parties to organize parties. Then we would put music very loud so that we could talk about what we wanted to talk about. Our experiences and what we should do. So I happened to have met at the time, the best friend of my life.

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Graça

Really. She was from Angola. And we clicked in a very special way. And, and so with Amelia, Amelia is her name, We used to read and exchange books which would, open even much more. You know, our understanding of how this colonial system works. And we developed, really a habit of, selecting issues we should be discussing together as two friends, but also for this party meetings, which we is meant to organize.

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Graça

So we started to be much more.

00:19:51:00 - 00:20:20:00

Graça

Awake and take much more responsibility, and to know what kind of information is of importance for the leadership. Yeah. In Tanzania. I did take you. I did take you. I mean, a long way just for you to know that from the secondary school when I was discriminated for the Portugal Way. I opened up. And I have friends from all the colonies.

00:20:20:06 - 00:21:00:09

Graça

I even make one of my best friends in life. How do I then connect with Tanzania? For years we used to send information which the way asking us through a Mozambican, a white Mozambican who could travel easily from Lisbon to France to take information to someone in France and from France to connect with the Algiers, which were the closest office of FRELIMO closest to Europe.



00:21:00:11 - 00:21:31:07

Graça

Okay. So this young man, because he is white, he could travel easily and guess what? He was, in a, what did they call it, a high military studies. Wow. Because he was white. They thought, well, he is a mozambican who is going to go back to Mozambique to be a governor, to be someone. Little did they know that in his heart was the steering the struggle.

00:21:31:09 - 00:21:57:21

Graça

And we would work with him as black as we are. But he. He was one of us. It's just still those days. Who do you talk to? Who do you get the information you pass it on. It has to be carefully done. In a way. You really. You. You wouldn't risk yourselves to be, to be arrested and so forth.

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Graça

So that's the thing of how did i end up? I mean, how did they organize my living in Portugal. Because I had this connection.

00:22:09:00 - 00:22:41:20

Reeta

Now, one of the things which people will never associate with you is that you truly were this freedom fighter. If people think about advocacy, speaking, you know, on podiums and talking about freedom, but you really were in the struggle and you learn to use weaponry. Yes. And, put together an assault rifle. But just that time of incredible activity and in the midst of it, how did you feel about that?

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Reeta

You knew you weren't going to go back to that system, but did you know or did you sense that this too will come to pass and that there would be an independent country? There would be, a government that really stood for it.

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Graça

This is a long story behind it. But the decision to join the struggle, I mean, directly the armed struggle was, a decision of no matter what happens, but I have to be part of that generation of Mozambicans who have broken completely with this Portuguese system. And they are ready to do whatever it requires for the liberation of the country.

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Graça

And that's why I had to prepare my mother that I'm not so sure, because I didn't know what could happen. And when you joined Reeta, you are prepared. I mean, you can die. Some of our colleagues died during this struggle, so we didn't even know how long it would take until Mozambique is free. It is to say this is a cause and I'm prepared to give the best of myself for it, even if at the end it's required to give my life for it.

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Graça

So that was the thing. Now you are asking about the training. It was a must for all of us because you are going to fight for the freedom of your country, but you have to protect yourself. You are fighting against the enemy, but you have to keep yourself alive and you are not going to keep yourself alive if you do not know how to fire the weapon.

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Graça

Exactly, the weapon. And also if you happen to, to be ambushed, you have to fight really if you have to. So the it was a mess. The first thing you do when you get into the camp is to well, they would give you the introduction to explain everything, but then we are given uniform and you start training.

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Graça

You have in front of you men and women because we were girls. So we also had some instructors this do it called who a female. And you start training matching and then when you have done the first fight, that's when you are given. I mean, the rifle itself to show how to manage it. And then you have trained you have to know how to use the rifle, how to use the pistol as well.

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Graça

The small one. How to use a grenade.

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Reeta

Oh my God.

00:25:32:04 - 00:25:56:07

Graça

Yeah. All those things you have to know because you don't know it depend on the situation where you are. You can be able to do something which is required. So we did, I did learn all those things. So this is part of what I did. But I wanted to tell you a story. When I was training, one of the girls, the young lady who was my instructor, she was very tough. Her name

00:25:56:07 - 00:26:16:02

Graça

It was Paulina. And, she was really very good in training. She didn't allow us, I mean, to be lazy. Or will you say you are tired, whatever. She was very, very tough. But then I discover I'm speaking to her. I discovered that she can't read and write.

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Reeta

Oh.

00:26:16:24 - 00:26:46:01

Graça

She was perfect. I mean, in training. But you see, she she she couldn't read and write. So I went to the, leadership of the camp, and they said, listen, I discovered that my own instructor cannot read and write in possibly, there are other amongst them who are illiterate as well. I would like really to do something in the evening, despite being tired.

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Graça

But I would like to teach. I mean a group, not many a group of them, how to read and write. I was allowed to do this and the reason I'm telling you this, it's two, It's twofold. One is the relationship between the two of us during the day. She's my boss. She gives me instructions to do everything I'm supposed to do.

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Graça

But in the evening she is my student and she sit down and I'm the teacher. And so I learned also in that process of, depending on where you are, you have to learn to do different things, respecting her as my instructor. But when I'm a teacher, she respects me her teacher.

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Graça

00:27:37:07 - 00:28:03:09

Graça

We developed a very, very interesting relationship even after independence, because we, we, we happened to our path did cross even after that. But then I want to tell you something else. My mother couldn't read and write. She was illiterate. She did all the things I told you. And Paulina reminded me of my mother.

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Graça

Wow. And I say, okay, I didn't have a chance to sit down and teach my mother to read and write. I'm going to teach these girls because she is introducing me to a new world, but, because I happened to be someone who reads and writes. In fact, I was being prepared to be a teacher. Okay, now I have to use I mean, the knowledge I have to transmit to her.

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Graça

And the I always felt like, I wish I could have had the opportunity to teach my mother to read and write, but I taught Paulina and the infact there were another three, because they identified other and the other and the three. So they were four of them.

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Reeta

But, you know, you taught more than four for young people. You taught well over a million, 1.5 million since you became minister of education. And you did an incredible thing to move just the enrollment of girls and boys and the literacy rates. Yeah, from 40% to 90% of enrollment in school. So you did an enormous service to the country, but also what you just said about learning about who they are.

00:29:22:15 - 00:29:38:03

Reeta

It's not just about reading ABCs. It's about learning who they are, about their history and their country and that sense of self-worth that came with that must have given you so much satisfaction to be able to do that.

00:29:38:05 - 00:30:19:20

Graça

You know this with the, the years when one; during the struggle. Second, when I became minister, these are the years which made me, which which transformed me. And more than, satisfaction from what I was doing at the time the, the and the years, through which one I had to discover myself. And what I am able to, to make as a contribution.

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Graça

But more importantly, that's when I learned about people, people, human beings, because, Not like I was treated is a thing. And a number. I learned to discover in human beings what lies within them and behind them. This, this passion which today people say, I am an advocate for girls and women. It was not like I had to sit down and choose what is the cause I want to embrace in life?

00:31:06:21 - 00:31:12:13

Graça

No, these, courses which chose me.

00:31:13:18 - 00:31:53:20

Graça

Because of the responsibilities which I had and then me identifying what, when are the strengths but also what are the obstacles and the constraints which these girls are facing. How then we can organize to unleash the potential they have, but in supporting them to overcome the constraints and the obstacles, the culturally and even socially as social norms. I mean, to discover their place.

00:31:53:22 - 00:31:54:09

Reeta

Yes.

00:31:54:12 - 00:31:58:20

Graça

In society. Yeah. That's what activism is all about.

00:31:58:23 - 00:32:25:20

Reeta

But you brought that same energy. And all through the UN when you authored that report about children in armed conflict and, and I wonder about that time. That report has changed many, many things. Yeah, in terms across the world. And to really recognize the plight young people shouldn't be in and, and the need to want to look after them, to also honor them and to provide them a path to education.

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Reeta

What moved you to do that? And was that something also about your own experience? Obviously, as an older adult, you know, all the older kid, let's say, and What does it.

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Graça

That was a struggle area for me i tell you. That was a step which was a really scary because I never thought of being at the global stage, you know, I was very happy with the being in Mozambique and then tried to do things in the Mozambican context. Then there was, in Southern Africa, an initiative which was called Children in the Front Line.

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Graça

So the children from South Africa, and be from Angola, Namibia, all those countries. And then this, a filmmaker, a woman filmmaker who interviewed us, those who were supporting these children, in the frontline that interview, I tried to describe what I feel about a child who has been forced to witness atrocities, including some time to see his or her colleagues being killed, the teachers, family members.

00:33:50:16 - 00:34:21:15

Graça

It's a I tried to describe this, to say, you know, the horror for me is how can on earth a child be forced to confront these realities? And we in Mozambique, and we in Mozambique, we tried then to minimize the impact of this conflict on children. And I described what we were doing. Guess what? That brings me to Steven Lewis.

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Graça

I wonder because this film on children in the frontline, for any reason, it landed in the hands of Unicef. And Steven Lewis is deputy Unicef, the Secretary-General. I mean, the General Assembly

made the resolution that they should find somebody to lead what they called a study to allow the UN to understand better the impact of conflict on children.

00:34:56:10 - 00:35:22:20

Graça

Steven saw this video, he had never made me before he saw this video and he sees how I describe my horror on how children are being treated. But also I describe what we're trying to do in Mozambique. So he's decided this is the person we need to lead this. And he makes a proposal to number one, of Unicef.

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Graça

So they look for me and they find me, I'm in Mozambique and they say, oh, the Secretary-General is going to, appoint to so-and-so. And days after I'm having lunch, then rings my phone, I go there and it was Boutros-Ghali who was the Secretary-General. And so I say hello. He has a very funny voice. Yeah. And this is the Secretary-General of the U.N.

00:35:52:19 - 00:36:23:00

Graça

I said sorry, it's a this is Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General of the UN. I want to speak to Mrs. Machel. I said, yes, I'm Mrs. Machel, but I don't think you are speaking to the right the person. Are you Mrs. Machel? Yes, yes it's you. Then he explained what he was looking for. I said to him, Secretary-General no, no, no, I don't think, I don't think really I'm the right person to do those things.

00:36:23:02 - 00:36:34:22

Graça

No, but I had a proposal and I think some people will speak to you. So think about it. That's how it starts. Stephen Lou is very persuasive.

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Reeta

Oh.

00:36:36:05 - 00:36:55:22

Graça

But I said no to him. Okay. I continue to say I said no to Boutros-Ghali, not Stephen Lewis. And Stephen Lewis then decided to send someone to meet me in person. Now that's how I ended up being convinced to take up this study again. I didn't choose this.

00:36:55:24 - 00:36:56:09

Graça

It came.

00:36:56:09 - 00:37:20:13

Graça

It just came across me and that I tried to do my best with support of Stephen Lewis, whom I'm going to be seeing this afternoon. Then we crafted, I mean, the best way of really, because I had told him, I don't want to write a report on the basis of something written. I have to be face-to-face with children.

00:37:20:16 - 00:37:54:07

Graça

Yeah, I have to be face-to-face with parents, teachers and so we organized the whole exercise during two years visiting countries, organizing regional consultations, also asking civil society organizations to research for us. We commissioned about 22 different research papers for us to prepare their report. So this thing taught me once again, you never do things alone.

00:37:54:09 - 00:38:12:17

Graça

Yes. Never do things alone. This study carries my name because I was heading the team, but it was a very large exercise and it was many people who contributed to it. And we owed this to children.

00:38:12:19 - 00:38:13:06

Graça

Okay.

00:38:13:08 - 00:38:37:23

Reeta

I'm going to go back in time. Just back to that struggle. Where in the midst of all this struggle here you are a guerrilla fighter. You're training, you're doing all kinds of things and you meet Samora Machel. What was that meeting like? And of course, you fall in love, you get married, and you have a life together.



00:38:38:00 - 00:38:49:12

Reeta

I just wonder if there's a special lesson about what it means in them. All this craziness that is going on in the world around you. And there's a moment to be a human being.

00:38:49:14 - 00:39:03:01

Graça

Yeah. You see, like, like any other and a like any other human being. There's this thing which is called love.

00:39:04:05 - 00:39:46:04

Graça

It happens in one moment. It starts with one moment where you are talking to a human being. And this human being, for any reason, looks at you, and you look at him in a very special way. It just came as a communication, as strong communication of our minds first with Samora. And, he realized that he, in his position, he could organize a moment for us to talk, really to discuss issues.

00:39:46:06 - 00:40:23:21

Graça

But in those discussions, then the bond just started, and started as i'm saying. just from one look. Just looking and feel, there's electricity here, a different kind of energy which is coming from this look. So I did even try to repress it. I said no, I don't want to get involved in this kind of at presence to this gentleman. He was already the president of FREMILO.

00:40:23:22 - 00:40:59:04

Graça

Right. And it was number one to lead the struggle. I'm a simple soldier. So for goodness sake, how do I now? I mean, close the gap. I mean, to be close to him. I did, honestly, I tried to repress it. I said it's one of those things, I'm not going to. But then it grew, particularly when I was forced by the responsibilities, I went to Mozambique earlier than him in because we had to go to establish the governmental transition and all that.

00:40:59:10 - 00:41:25:15

Graça

So I'm far from him, and he is also far from me. That's when we realized that, no, it was so much stronger than just, you know. Yes. Yeah. It was really something much more stronger in terms of, our connection. And also because I am the kind of a person I don't fall in love with somebody I don't admire.

00:41:25:17 - 00:41:35:22

Reeta

Did you learn something about yourself? Just, in this process, you know, to have it to what it means to have and what it means to invest in a relationship?

00:41:35:24 - 00:41:49:20

Graça

Yes. When I entered into this relationship because I am myself. And he is himself.

00:41:49:22 - 00:42:09:09

Graça

Despite the fact that he was, a little bit older than me. And he also had a vast experience of being a leader, I made sure that in this relationship, we are going to be equal. He will be the person he is outside. But at home

00:42:10:20 - 00:42:19:17

Graça

We are equal. And he made it also easy, I must say, because Samora was really deeply a family person.

00:42:20:13 - 00:42:53:02

Graça

He was the one I mean, to teach me because I was minister, he was president, and I would come sometimes, under pressure with issues which I needed to resolve the following day. And I was attempted to bring work back home. And he said: Graca, this is our home. This is the place where you and I, we have to forget about the world, and it's about us, about our children.

00:42:53:04 - 00:43:25:04

Graça

If each one of us brings work home will never be a family, but Samora was good in making sure that our family time is really sacred. And it is clearly to say, as parents, we have a responsibility

to raise children. But as a human being, we also need about one time to bond, to share and who we could have interesting debates.

00:43:25:06 - 00:43:44:18

Graça

But as a persons, as human beings, and I have to say, I have been very, very lucky. It was a very, very fulfilling relationship, despite the fact that the world it had all those very big and huge responsibilities. Yeah.

00:43:44:22 - 00:44:04:11

Reeta

I think it's such a powerful message for people of every generation to know that whatever is happening around us, whatever roles we have in public life, our relationships with family, with spouses, with partners, that's our time. And it is about being real and authentic.

00:44:04:11 - 00:44:05:05

Graça

It is true.

00:44:05:07 - 00:44:07:12

Reeta

And being and being who we are.

00:44:07:14 - 00:44:34:07

Graça

And it is. It is something we have to nurture, to nurture. Nurture in English. Yeah. To nurture. Because you it's easy for you to say, oh, there's so many other things. I'm so tired. No, you are tired with your work. You're not tired of your relationship? Yes. And I have to tell you something which also would, would, would really melt me.

00:44:34:08 - 00:45:02:03

Graça

You know, Samora sometimes would leave the office and make sure that in the state House we had the big, big garden. Before he gets into the house, he'll step out of his car, go in the garden and find the best flower he could. He himself will cut these flowers, particularly roses, i love the roses. And then come into the house and say hello, mom.

00:45:02:03 - 00:45:06:20

Graça

He would call me. Hello, mom. I brought this for you.

00:45:06:22 - 00:45:08:07

Reeta

Oh.

00:45:08:09 - 00:45:15:13

Graça

Wow, I mean, charming. It just does the world for me. Just the fact that before coming into the house.

00:45:15:13 - 00:45:16:01

Reeta

That he would.

00:45:16:05 - 00:45:35:20

Graça

He just think. No, I have to select myself the best of the roses I'm going to find in the garden and bring it to my wife. No. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And this was very important that I did have those things. I can smile when I think of it.

00:45:35:22 - 00:46:03:23

Reeta

Wonderful. What a very, very special thing. I want to talk just a little bit about, Madiba. You know, the world knows him as Madiba or Nelson Mandela, who led an incredible and incredible struggle as well, most of it from prison. And then the transformation that had to occur when he became president. That, too, was another incredible time.

00:46:04:00 - 00:47:01:08

Reeta

And in so many ways, You keep that trust and keep that legacy alive as well. In terms of what that contribution, that amount of sacrifice for the world. In South Africa, the history of apartheid, the struggle has so much to teach us, especially today. Maybe in every generation, it will have a lot to teach us when you think about that struggle as well, which is parallel to what you what you lived through, what do you think are the most important lessons people today should know about in terms of how we treat each other and how we see each other, not just what we look like or what color we are, but really how we see each other.

00:47:01:10 - 00:47:33:21

Graça

That alone it could be a theme for another podcast but let me just say very shortly one thing, which was, for me, it was every time I was really observing Madiba and saying: What a special human being. I think Madiba had learned from the time he was alone.

00:47:33:23 - 00:48:10:13

Graça

He was isolated in the in the during the prison time. He learned to value people. Wow. More than what do you do? I mean, one thing is to say I'm fighting for, people and no, no, but people, people the one you touch and you speak to and you interact with. He learned to value this. And for me, it was one of the most amazing lessons is how Madiba treated human beings.

00:48:10:15 - 00:48:43:09

Graça

Because if I say people, perhaps we can take it the political way. No, no, no human beings. And it a child. It is an older person. It's a young person. No matter who you are, no matter what is your age, no matter what is your status. But even knew how to have a special connection with the human beings.

00:48:43:11 - 00:49:13:18

Graça

And it was a it was not a lesson. It was more than that. It was for me to wonder how you are able, how he was able, I mean, to find a special moment of connection with people. I'll tell you something which is very simple, which many people, didn't even realize. Madiba would never shake hands with you without looking into your eyes.

00:49:13:20 - 00:49:35:07

Graça

And you will say, how did he do this? Yes. I also asked, how did you do this? You would find a people, I mean, a group of people piling, I mean not piling you. How do you say crowd like lining. Yeah, yeah. And the crowd, when he greets he doesn't do is like people who do this and they are looking to the other side.

00:49:35:10 - 00:49:58:14

Graça

Never. If you see a film now, you can you can try to he will look at you, say hello, and then if it's in a line in which you have a few seconds, you will say, I'm honored to meet you. I saw people crying because the in adoration to say, this is a special moment for me to meet Nelson Mandela.

00:49:58:16 - 00:50:24:17

Graça

And then he comes. He says: I'm so pleased to meet you. I'm honored to meet you. Looking into your eyes and these two people by surprise, a surprise. And not only emotionally attached, I tell you, I saw people crying. And when you sit with him and you will say, how are you? And when he says, how are you?

00:50:24:21 - 00:50:32:17

Graça

He is not asking when he's looking at the mirror or no, no, he is looking at you and say, how are you?

00:50:32:19 - 00:50:58:12

Reeta

Well, you know, I know we're going to come up to the end of our podcast. You have done so much this life, the work of the trust that you have set up, the advocacy. Obviously, we have spoken about for young people, children, the importance of being grounded. Grounded in the people you love, who love you with respect.

00:50:58:14 - 00:51:34:18

Reeta

And you look to the future. Now, here, I want to talk about Africa. Yeah. The, this work of the continent on the move, also transforming. And I know you were very recently speaking at the African School of Government, Governance. And you said time has come, time has come for, you know, African leaders really to rise in a way that, creates opportunities for more people across the continent.

00:51:34:20 - 00:51:53:23

Reeta

What do you want everyone to know about in terms of, what more should we be thinking about? What more organizations like, the one I am part of should be thinking about, what all of us should be thinking about when we look to the future and what is possible.

00:51:54:24 - 00:51:56:07

Graça

That's a tough question.

00:51:57:03 - 00:51:57:12

Graça

It is.

00:51:57:13 - 00:51:59:07

Reeta

I think you can handle it. Well.

00:51:59:09 - 00:52:02:20

Graça

It is tough question.

00:52:02:22 - 00:53:08:03

Graça

You know. You, running an organization which, made a conscious decision to focus on young people. Yes. You support many other causes, but young people is your, your focus and, not only to say, oh, no, let's, give education and all those things. It is education as well. But I think, you made the, a very, very strategic decision of, enacting in young people the power, which resides in them very to give you the expression, expression in the way they make choices, but choices for service.

00:53:08:05 - 00:53:10:08

Graça

Yes.

00:53:10:10 - 00:53:39:10

Graça

Choices for service. But if you were good and I wanted to pay tribute to you on this in knowing that it's not about providing tools to people, they are important. But more than tools, it's exactly to, I don't know because the English is not my language, but it's that thing of making sure that every young person.

00:53:39:12 - 00:54:09:12

Graça

Acknowledge, recognize and unleash the power which exists inside each one of them. And then to say, yeah, you have really unlimited, you know, power, but that power has to be channeled for service to others. In our, principle at GMT.

00:54:09:15 - 00:54:10:04

Graça

00:54:10:06 - 00:54:15:19

Graça

We say the future is African. The future is Female.

00:54:15:21 - 00:54:35:10

Reeta

And it will be. And it's an unbroken chain. Is that an unbroken chain. Yeah. Graca It is such an honour, such a treat to speak with you. And thank you so much for sharing. And maybe, in a way, we have to thank that teacher who called you number 15.

00:54:35:10 - 00:54:37:23

Graça

Number 15

00:54:38:00 - 00:54:48:02

Reeta

It is that, because you are exactly where you need to be, and you always have been. Thank you, thank you.

00:54:48:03 - 00:55:11:10

Graça

Thank you, thank you Reeta. And thank you so much for having me. Thank you so, so, so much that our paths have crossed. I think really, we, together, I mean, giving the best we can. And for me, the important thing, it's not what we do is to do it the best.

00:55:11:16 - 00:55:47:19

Reeta



With care. Yeah. Thank you. Amen to that. Thank you, thank you, thank you. From a small village in Mozambique where her mother honored a promise made before she was even born. To the frontlines of a liberation struggle that reshaped a nation's destiny. From the quiet strength of a teacher to the fierce resolve of a freedom fighter. From first lady to global advocate, human rights activists, policy shaper and relentless defender of women and children's rights.

00:55:47:21 - 00:56:33:24

Reeta

From the depths of a devastating loss to a love that redefined what it means to begin again. From Mozambique and South Africa to the world stage. Grassa Michelle's journey is one of courage, purpose and boundless compassion. Her life stands as a testament to the power of education, justice and visionary leadership. Graca Machel's forthcoming memoir and wider legacy preservation initiatives of the Graca Machel Trust are not only about honoring her incredible life story, but about ensuring her voice and vision continue to inspire justice, empathy and leadership for generations to come.