

## 2014 Global Citizen Award Winner



Every Thursday for six and-a-half years, rain, snow or shine, 35° below or above, **FLORENCE STRATTON** has been standing in downtown Regina from noon to 12:30 with the Making Peace Vigil. They have handed out more than 340 different fact-sheets which have been researched, created or facilitated by Florence on topics ranging from climate change and world food issues, to Aboriginal justice, military conflicts, and poverty abolition.

Her past life has been preparing Florence for this Peace Vigil commitment. In 1968, at the age of 27, Florence went to Sierra Leone with CUSO. “My intention was to stay for two years but I was having such a good time I stayed for nineteen,” Florence says, “during which time my Sierra Leonean friends helped me to mend some of my ignorance, and to start protesting against the privilege and arrogance of power.”

From 1992 to 1994, Florence lived in New York with the Catholic Worker community, living and working in solidarity with the poor. Florence says that the Catholic Worker is a “place where the scholars become workers and the workers become scholars”. She still makes regular visits to stay with the Catholic Worker community and to connect with immigrant (former refugee) friends from Sierra Leone, some of whom are still suffering the trauma of that war in their homeland.

### Where do you find your inspiration?

*The idea of a peaceful and just world is very inspiring. So, too, are the grace, resolve, and courage of so many of those most affected by violence and injustice, whatever form they take: war, poverty, exploitation, racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism. My list of mentors and models is very long and keeps growing. Here's a short list:*

*My Grandmother: during the Great Depression she went down to Victoria Park regularly to invite unemployed men to her house for a meal; my Sierra Leonean friend, Maria Tucker: she regularly invited the scorned and excluded of the Njala community to her house for food; the folks at the Catholic Worker: they do their best to live in solidarity with those dispossessed by the capitalist system; Catherine Verrall: she taught me that all the issues we care about are interconnected; a number of contemporary thinkers, including Jacques Derrida, Edward Said, and Noam Chomsky; Occupy Wall Street and Idle No More; individuals, such as Brigette DePape, Chelsea Manning, and Edward Snowden, who put their future on hold when they said “no” to power; Making Peace Vigil folks who, no matter the weather, turn up on the Scarth Street Mall every Thursday.*

### What advice would you give to today's high-school graduates?

*Create your own lives. Don't let other people's ideas of how you should live deter you.*

*Question power. Defy injustice.*

*Find/found a community of like-minded people.*

*Start building another better world.*

*Support others in their struggles.*

*Have fun. As Emma Goldman put it: “If there won't be dancing at the revolution, I'm not coming.”*