

"Only old people write their memoirs"

By [Amy Frykholm](#)

November 16, 2011

I talked to Leymah Gbowee

about the writing of her memoir of the Liberian Women's Mass Action for Peace,

Mighty Be Our Powers. Read my [feature](#)

[article on Gbowee](#) in the current issue of the Century.

How did writing the book come about?

After the film [[Pray the Devil Back to Hell](#)], Abby Disney said to me, "You need to write a book." I said, "I am too young. Only old people write their memoirs." She said, "Well I think you should." So Abby decided to send Carol Mithers to me.

When I was six months pregnant, in 2009, Carol and I started writing. We did it at our own pace. I came to New York, and we worked. Carol came to Liberia and to Ghana, and we worked.

Carol and I developed a really good friendship. She was like a therapist. I haven't seen someone who is working with you and can just put up with all of your troubles. I was pregnant, and I suffered from sciatica. I was on pain killers. She would walk with me. Afterwards, we went back to writing a book again. We did it that way. We developed that kind of relationship.

The writing project was like conversations. She would ask, "Does this sound right?" She got inside my head. I told her that if I go into politics, she should come back to Liberia to be my speechwriter. We laugh about it.

The memoir is full of so much personal detail. How did your family feel about it coming out?

My niece said she cried the whole time (she read the book). She said, "Because you took care of us, I didn't know all of the things that you were going through."

The subtitle of the book is "How Sisterhood, Prayer and Sex Changed a Nation at War." What's the relationship between prayer and peace-building?

When you teach peace-building, you are teaching an acknowledgement of the highest spiritual being, regardless of what you call it. So if you read King, if you read Gandhi, if you read Mandela or Bishop Tutu, the work that they do is a spiritual journey. Dr. King's academic credentials had little to do with what he did.

Gandhi's profile as a lawyer had little to do with what he did. But if you analyze their work, you see that a journey with a higher power made a lot of difference.

When you take this journey with a higher power, when you have communication, we call it prayer.