

## **Brief Biography of David Zarembka**

Since 1998, David Zarembka has been the Coordinator of the African Great Lakes Initiative, a project of the Friends Peace Teams. Zarembka has decades of experience in Africa and he currently lives in Lumakanda in Western Kenya.

After his junior year in college, Zarembka went to western Tanzania to teach Rwandan refugees. He then returned to Harvard College where he finished his Bachelor's degree in African History. After graduation he joined the Peace Corps and served in Tanzania and Kenya for two years after which he became the founding Headmaster of the Mua Hills Harambee Secondary School in Machakos District, Kenya. Today the school has over 450 students.

Zarembka married in Kenya and returned to the United States with his wife in 1971. He earned a Master's degree in International and Development Education from the University of Pittsburgh, fathered two children, and founded a number of organizations in Pittsburgh including an alternative high school, a wholesale food coop, a housing co-op, and a group home for girls. Later he moved to Yellow Springs, Ohio and then to the Washington, DC area. Zarembka began doing home improvement work which allowed him to do physical labor during the day and mental labor at other times. Self employment created a situation where he could pursue peace and social concerns activities and allowed him to begin the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of the Friends Peace Teams.

Zarembka was instrumental in introducing the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) to Rwanda (2001), Burundi, (2002), Kenya (2003), and Congo (2005) and also to help organize the development of the Healing and Rebuilding Our Community (HROC) program in Rwanda and Burundi and its expansion into Congo (North Kivu) and Kenya. Other programs, such as the Friends Women's Association, Kamenge Clinic in Bujumbura, Burundi, an orphans program and technical school in Bududa, Uganda, and a workcamp program in the region continue to benefit from his support and direction.

The editor of the African Great Lakes Initiative's publication, *PeaceWays*, Zarembka has written numerous articles for the *Friends Journal* and other Quaker publications.

Zarembka is married to Gladys Kamonya, a Kenyan. He has three children from his first marriage, Joy and Tommy Zarembka and Douglas Kebengwa who help him with the AGLI program. David and Gladys are members of Bethesda (MD) Monthly Meeting but now attend Lumakanda Friends Church.

David writes, "When I was eighteen and had to sign up for the military draft, I realized that peacemaking did not include military service as I would be unable to kill or prepare to kill another human being. I realized that this would put me in opposition to the conventional wisdom in the United States and that my lifetime would be spent working on other alternatives. The Friends Peace Testimony fit directly into my concerns so I have been involved in peacemaking with Friends ever since. I have always been concerned, not with individualism, but with community issues of conflict, war, genocide, and peace, reconciliation, and healing. I prefer, not the heights of governments and leadership, but the common, grassroots concerns of ordinary people and communities."