

Tears of Joy

Joy Zarembka's time in Burundi was moving, saddening, frustrating, enchanting and frightening. Her 40-page journal covers the events which elicited these emotions, including meeting new Burundians friends, re-building the residence house, and conducting workshops. However, the excerpted journal entries below only detail her thoughts on the violence occurring during her time in Burundi.

Bujumbura, BURUNDI

July 21, 1999 8:45 pm

Burundi, a mere dot on the map of Africa, is a rather nondescript country known to the outside world for...well, nothing. Yet, so much has happened here. When I obtained my visa from the Burundian Embassy in Washington, DC, the Burundian Ambassador, Thomas Ndiabihana told me, "We tend to kill each other, but we are very kind to foreigners." I'm sure he meant that rather disturbing statement to somehow be reassuring.

"The Crisis" is the way Charles [Berahino], our translator, refers to the 1993 killings which left 200,000 Burundians dead. Today, Bette [Hoover] and Zainabu [Dance, two Kamenge team member and HIPP trainers] led a conflict resolution workshop with us — the 14 members of the Kamenge Project team — and no one was willing to talk specifically about the Hutu/Tutsi conflict. Not surprisingly, in a mixed Hutu/Tutsi group with a grip [slang: a lot] of strange foreigners, people are not too forthcoming. Zainabu and I fear that it may be difficult to interview people concerning the history of Burundi. The Burundians within the group did not use the "H" and "T" words until over 1 ½ hours into the workshop. Silence and privacy are important aspects of Burundian culture. As Charles stated today, "Christians fear speaking the truth." In other words, it is okay to love God and work for peace but once you start to get too deep into the conversation, the dialogue, for them, becomes about politics, not peace. Charles says, when speaking of the situation in Burundi, rather than saying, "The Hutus were oppressed" or "the Tutsis were oppressed," it is better to just say, "There was discrimination" and move forward as a nation.

Due to the precarious political situation, we registered at the US Embassy today as a precaution, something I would never think to do in another country. Often times, I tend to disassociate myself from the American government. As Bette said, "I'm usually on the other side." I feel similarly but the potentially volatile atmosphere of Burundi puts us in a rather compromised position. I never truly think of myself as American until I am abroad. As Adrian [Bishop, team member] says about being born in England, I have had the great fortune of being born in America and have been trying to recover ever since. I run from my American identity because of its implication, yet I benefit from those same privileges. These contradictions become strikingly apparent in life-threatening situations. Currently, I have the mixed feelings similar to the ones I experienced when I was in Kenya during the US Embassy bombings — if a crisis occurs, all of a sudden, I want the soldiers, that moments earlier I despised, to save my life. It is almost as if I'm saying, "The US military is the devil reincarnate, except when *I'm* in crisis and my life is on the line." Such hypocrisy, Joy.

The US Embassy told us that expatriates are not to travel outside of Bujumbura. Roads to the north are not to be used by anyone. We are not to walk alone. We are not to be out after dark. (I guess I won't have a report on the club scene of Bujumbura). There is an air of suspicion. They told us not to travel without an armed guard. The Consulars at the Embassy sounded alarmist but there has been another spat of killings in recent weeks. On the other hand, the Embassy is somewhat out of touch with reality. Due to perimeters set by the US government, Embassy personnel are unable to venture outside of Bujumbura to collect information. The woman who met with us kept on repeating how we were "beautifully placed" to inform them what is happening on the ground. Interestingly, Maria, the Consular Officer at the US Embassy, who is from Michigan, had heard of our project because her mother is a Quaker and she probably received an e-mail from Dad.

July 22, 1999 10: 37 pm

I repeatedly woke up last night thinking to myself that if anyone felt the urge to attack us, we would have no escape route. At times, I feel very claustrophobic. We live in a compound with little physical protection. We are staying in Bwiza, a neighborhood in the northern part of Bujumbura, in a residential compound for seminary students. It is basically an open-air courtyard surrounded by rooms. An unarmed guard sleeps in front of it at night. There is only one way in and out of the compound. There is only one way in and out of our rooms. We, to a certain extent, are helpless. Which makes me question some of my philosophies about peace and protection. In one of Dad's e-mails about the Kamenge Project, I found it odd and interesting that, when describing Kibimba, the site of the first Quaker mission, he mentioned that it was a very safe place because the army was stationed close by. Since when has the army become a comfort to a Quakerly mission? Sure, I want peace but would I be more at peace if the guard at the front gate was armed? (or even awake, for that matter). Can you work for peace and protect yourself simultaneously? Is self-defense still violence? It makes me think about a hypothetical rape dilemma. Although somewhat morbid, I have wondered what pacifists would do if they came into a room in the middle of the night and found someone was being brutally raped and beaten. Would this be a time for negotiation? Would they violently force the person to stop or attempt conflict resolution? Unadulterated pacifism does not work for me. Is there some sort of quiet dignity in dying peacefully? In cases of a random, extremely violent conflict, non-violence and pacifist rhetoric is silenced – mainly because the individual espousing it is dead. With all the destruction surrounding us, my day is made by seeing the simplistic beauty of a bright yellow flower growing out of the rubble of an abandoned car.

July 23, 1999 7:01 pm

The Burundian peace talks in Arusha, Tanzania have broken down. Unsettling news. Earlier, various factions had sporadically committed acts of violence to gain leverage in the peace negotiations. Now there are no negotiations. The threat of impending warfare looms large. The shock of the news is starting to wear off. The UN ceased allowing its personnel to venture outside of Bujumbura a couple of weeks ago. The only way ex-pats are advised to leave the country is by air.

It's interesting being in a situation where there are no clear cut good guys or bad guys. Currently, the Hutu rebels living in the mountains are coming down to pillage for food and goods, at times, killing various people who refuse to cooperate. The mainly Tutsi army often waits until they have dispersed, and then slaughter civilians for "helping" the rebels. We are currently working in Kamenge, an area which was heavily damaged when the army "ethnically-cleansed" this predominantly Hutu area of the Tutsi-heavy capital. Hundreds were killed here. Feeling claustrophobic again.

Yesterday, a robber ran by the work site at Kamenge and was captured by police and several citizens. Apparently, he was beaten and team members were told not to approach the situation because there was a chance that he was going to be shot on the spot. Like many situations in Burundi, choices become between incredibly bad or excruciatingly bad. He can either be killed by mob justice in the hands of citizens unwilling to tolerate stealing or he can be "saved" from his death by the police, only to be shot or throw in jail indefinitely, under unsavory potentially life-threatening circumstances.

12:30ish am

No more news on the war. For a while, there has been a midnight curfew imposed on Burundi yet everyone is out. A motorcycle continuously circles the area. Men are talking loudly. Some people are singing off in the distance. I've never feared for my life as I do now.

1:37 am

Blood curdling screams. Female voice. Dart out of bed. Only thought, "They're here to kill us." The screaming is incredibly close. I can't find my glasses which I had left near the head of my bed for just such occasions. I begin whispering/silently screaming "Get up, get, up" to Becky [Calcraft, team member]. I still can't find my glasses. Somehow, my shoes are on. I fumble with my flashlight. Screams give way to heavy conversation. Then silence. I've never thought about the sound of someone being slaughtered but if I had to, that would be it.

July 24, 1999 6:56 am

I was dreaming about soccer when the screaming started. Pleasant dreams mixed with nightmarish realities. After my heart stopped beating as fast as it was, I was unable to sleep. Even obtaining that first bout of sleep was a feat so after the incident, it was virtually impossible. Dogs began to howl all over the town once the talking died down. Every bump in the night became significant to me. During "the Crisis," many people took to sleeping outside of their homes because the night is most often when they were attacked. A part of me wants to sleep outside just so I don't feel so hopeless in the case of an emergency. I lay in bed thinking of ways to survive: climb under the bed and place a duffel bag in front of me; If I take to running, make sure I take a kanga [Swahili: wrap-around skirt] because at some point I might have to feign dead and should cover myself; Which way is the airport? A part of me feels like I'm just being paranoid. The other day, Bette reminded me that my safety issues are the same issues that Burundians must live with everyday.

8:05 am

Charles' version of last night: "A woman who roams at night looking for a husband was being taken the way a man is able to take a woman." In other words, a prostitute was being raped.

Zainabu's version of last night: Bette and Z [Zainabu] heard voices so they got up to check it out. The woman was standing outside of our gate talking with someone. The cooks from our compound were there too talking to her from inside the gate. At some point, the woman just started screaming. She was not being touched or raped.

6:42 pm

We went to a wedding and luckily it was not as lengthy as I expected. Because I didn't sleep much last night, today has been rough. The woman getting married was gorgeous and her maid-of-honor looked like someone straight out of "Gone With the Wind." At the reception, Bette spoke with a Burundian named Solomon and asked him more about the current situation in Burundi. He mentioned that you could stay here forever and still know nothing. People don't talk. Burundians don't even talk to each other about the situation. As Solomon said, "If we are hungry, we would never show that we are hungry. If we are dying of a disease, you would never know and if there was a war going on in this country, you could attend a wedding as if nothing is even happening. Look around at this wedding. Does this look like a country at war?" When gunfire was heard going off in the background at the wedding, nobody flinched. Everyone acted as if they didn't hear it. Perhaps it is so common that they *don't* hear it anymore. When questioned, Ray [Boucher, team member] was told it was a truck backfiring and Johnny [Johnson, another team member] was told it was a door slamming.

There is an incredible lack of communication about the war. Even this morning, as we attempted to discuss the screaming woman, others kind of laughed it off. Everything is cheery, sunny and bright, even among the international members. None of us slept. We were/are all scared out of our minds yet even now we are refusing to talk about the issues. I find it difficult to travel without access to information and news. Newspapers are completely in Kirundi or French as are most of the radio stations. At least when I was in the Nairobi bombing, I had CNN and daily papers to keep me afloat. Here, the little information we know is from the incredibly silent word-of-mouth and occasionally, radio reports.

Becky and I have been discussing the concept of "frozen watchfulness." She is a social worker and she was talking about how some children who have been abused tend to quiet and withdrawal yet present in a situation. They are reluctant to engage adults but watch very, very carefully with a lot of fear in their eyes. At times, she sees that fear in the eyes of Burundians. Zainabu [who is a videographer] and I have been asked by David [Niyonzima, General Secretary of Burundi Yearly Meeting] to collect information and create videos about the Peace School, so we are now expanding our research to include a video on the Kamenge Project and on the plight of Burundi. The interviews are difficult in the sense that people are more than willing to talk but less than willing to say anything. People use buzzwords like "peace" and "working together" but don't get to the heart of the matter. Of course, this just presents a tasty challenge for me. But then again, is it not a cultural imposition if I try to break the Burundian silence? I have been conducting interviews in Swahili as well so I need to brush up on my language skills. It is a sad

commentary that I find myself constantly asking Charles the Swahili words for "killings," "war," "violence" and "screams." We have been here five days and I don't know if anyone is Hutu or Tutsi. I can venture guesses by where people live but even their answers to questions don't point to their ethnic leanings.

I was told to re-pack my belongings today – during the evacuation process, each person is able to take one carry-on and one suitcase. I am now packed for such an occasion but, in all honesty, would be just as happy if I was able to depart. I mean, just point me in the direction of the airport when the time comes. If things get really bad, send Jesse Jackson :-)!

Despite my fears, I feel so alive when I'm traveling. It is the only time I feel my brain works. I like to travel not as a tourist but more as a student learning from every experience. Reading the pamphlet which we wrote before I knew I was coming here is somewhat eerie. That piece of paper has become my reality. It means something so much different now. I can't believe David Niyonzima and Dad came up with this Project. It strikes me as so random and beautiful all at the same time. If I survive, I will thank my Dad for a wonderful life experience. If I don't then it will be like the first and last line from that French movie, "HATE." I can't really remember the exact lines but the movie begins with a voice-over which tells the story of a man who accidentally falls out of a window of a tall building. He falls one floor and thinks to himself, "Hmm. So far, so good." He falls another floor and thinks the same thing. Basically, everything is fine. It is not until he lands that he has a problem. Hopefully, we will not "land" in Burundi. I've only been here 5 days and my experience has already changed my life.

July 25, 1999 9:50 pm

We finally had a group meeting last night. Adrian wanted to "keep it light" but I was interested in talking about the war situation surrounding us. Others were interested in giving thanks to one another and praising God for bringing us together. Many of the Burundians spoke of how they learned so much even in just a few days and are doing things that they have never done before. It's interesting how some of the older students are so used to being the cream of the crop that manual labor is seen as somewhat beneath them. We keep on teasingly encourage them to get their hands dirty a little bit. Anyway, eventually, I asked about the worst possible case scenario mainly because I just at least wanted to get the threat of violence on the table. It amazes me how little talk there is. But I am now coming to realize that if your own life is lived under a constant threat of violence, then there is no reason to talk about it. Anyway, Elie [Nahimana, Burundi site coordinator] attempted to reassure me by telling me that the police and chiefs in the area had a list of our names and he pointed in the general direction of where they were located in the case of an emergency. Becky talked about drinking water, days off and other practical aspects on life which eased my conscious and I was then able to participate more fully in the touchy-feely stuff. Alexia [Nibona, team member] talked about peace, love and unity and she concluded by saying, "When I see all of you, I see peace." I sometimes forget that just a couple of days ago, we were all a group of strangers and, to a certain extent, still are.

Violence here comes in waves, it's all about the degree of violence. In the last three weeks, there has been a wave, 40 people killed in one week. Currently, things are less stable than usual. Today, we were talking about how many people complained that everyone knew that the genocide in Rwanda was going to happen but did nothing. I now understand that concept more. You can't respond to nothingness. There is tension all the time. Sure, in hindsight, you can say that there were signs of possible escalation but until it actually happens, you can't respond or do anything to prevent it as an individual. Even the word "response" is a reactive one.

The army stops patrolling the streets at 5:00 upcountry and then the youth militia take over. David N. came back from Kigali today and he says that it is best of travel in the morning before noon. The south of the country and Bujumbura-Rurale are the most hard hit with violence. We are somewhat close to Bujumbura-Rurale but not in it. David says that 0-10 km circumference around the capital are the bad areas while inside and outside of that ring is okay.

Our danger is that we could be robbed or worse. The Pentecostal pastor's wife was murdered in an ambush recently. Bridget [Butt, from the Mennonite Central Committee] knows people who have been killed. She spoke of all this horror matter-a-factly. Not blasé or emotional, just factual. People kill just to kill. After robbing us, there is really no reason to kill or not kill. Perhaps it depends on their mood. Everything here just seems so random at times.

By the way, I talked to the cooks at Bwiza in Swahili about the screaming woman from the other night. They said that she was getting beat up by the guard next door. Yet another version of the same event.

There has been talk that there was shooting at Kamenge last night. The day after the peace talks ended, we went by the place where I saw the bright yellow flower.... it was gone.

July 27, 1999 7:06 am

David N. told us a bit about the seminar he went on concerning peace education. The teachers spoke about how educating the children wasn't enough because they also had to educate the community so that everyone is aware. He began telling us about our trips to Gitega. We will be flying on a plane that airlifts NGOs to various parts of the country. I HATE SMALL PLANES. Even before JFK, Jr.'s plane crashed a few days before we left, I hated small planes. Imagine the irony if we are killed in a plane crash after attempting to avoid death on the roads.

Yesterday, during evening prayer, Terence mentioned my concern about potentially bad things happening and said that if you trust in God and pray then even in death you will be with God. He wasn't just saying give into death but he did feel that praying does help. They are probably very used to the level of risk while we are not...yet. Some days, I feel invincible and some days, vulnerable. Here, you have to keep on living your life. You can't stop just because of fear. As David N. says about the situation in Burundi, "the abnormal becomes the normal."

July 31, 1999 7:29 am

David says that there is only one Tutsi in our group, I wonder who it is. That sort of takes away from the impression I got that we were a "mixed" group. Although I understand why, I am constantly amazed how this so-called ethnic division which people are slaughtered over, remains so unspoken. There is an increased military presence. Helicopters flying overhead. Trucks of soldiers. Cops patrolling close to the Church. Yet, overall, I am more at ease.

August 3, 1999 6:59 am

I am living in an African Kosovo. Stories are becoming more surreal. A woman today was telling me about her experience during the Crisis. She had gone to visit a friend and soldiers came to the school where she was working. The children were sitting on the front stoops and milling around, not the least bit afraid. The soldiers told them all to sit still but some of them ran, causing others to run. They hid in one of the school buildings. The soldiers eventually had them come out. They lined them up and shot them one by one. Hundreds of students killed. The story only survives because there was a Rwandese among them and the others were saying, "You can kill us but don't kill him because he's not from here." The woman stayed with her friend for a while before returning to the school. While she told this tale, she was smiling. As people tell of escaping death or of how rebels cut off people's noses and ears just because, people giggle. It's so difficult to cope with what is going on that it is hard to have so-called "normal" reactions in certain situations. Two women in our group were also pretty hysterical about how rebels sometimes, due to time, just tell people to take off all their clothes when they rob them. So it is not uncommon to see a whole carload or vanful of naked people, probably just happy to be alive. People in the next town are so used to it

that they just start throwing clothes so that they can cover themselves. I have seen quite a few women with scars from stitches across their necks or people who look like their ear had been cut off and then reattached. Quite a few men have round scars on the back on their heads. I'm not sure what that is from. The trauma these people are experiencing is beyond anything I can imagine.

There continues to be an increased military presence. They are bracing from something but we aren't quite sure what. David said that there were some shootings on Sunday morning so the military had feared that the people shooting would try to attack the city. We must go through about 2 or 3 roadblocks just to get to the beach. Because we have a pack of mzungus [Swahili: white people], we are often waved through quite easily. Apparently, once while Johnny was with Thomas, our trusty driver, they got searched and had to show ID. Military and policepeople with guns are everywhere. They make me nervous when they bounce along on the back of the bicycle taxis, their guns nonchalantly pointing at passing vehicles.

8:54 pm

The bloodstains have faded. Children now kick homemade soccer balls were market stalls once stood and massacred bodies once lay. The only thing in this world which is final is death. Everything else is reversible.

I spent my day digging ditches and shoveling dirt out of the Kamenge building. It feels so good to do physical labor. I know that I will sleep well tonight. As I was digging around the church close to the road, I began pulling up old, tattered articles: the heel of a black shoe here, an old bottle of nail polish there. I'm not sure if I thought it or saw it first – a human bone. It makes so much sense. I *am* standing on a killing field. I shouldn't be surprised. Yet I am. The high school boys I'm digging with determine that the bone is a thigh bone. They start cracking jokes about how the bones belong to their grandfather and other comments. I'm unable to tell how old the bones are. They throw the bones aside. I keep digging.

Today marks the halfway point of our time in Burundi.

August 5, 1999 8:43 pm

I got this message from Dad over e-mail from the Burundian Embassy in Washington:

August 3, 1999 16:41 GMT

Burundi: 1,500 armed insurgents crossed into Burundi from Tanzania last week. Fighting remains a serious problem in Burundi. Reuters reported that five soldiers and 10 rebels were killed in action just outside the capital, Bujumbura. Another 18 soldiers were wounded, five of them seriously. The clash occurred in Bujumbura Rurale. Reuters said gunfire and explosions outside Bujumbura are now heard daily as fighting occurs in the hills surrounding the city.

We aren't as fazed as we would have been had we received that news during the first couple of days here. Then, we might have been on the first plane out of this puppy [slang: place]. Now, we tend to go with the flow. Perhaps it is also good that we are in a Hutu-dominated area (both living and working) so if and when the rebels attack Bujumbura, they may skip over our neighborhood. Then again, maybe that doesn't matter. I guess we really just attempt to spend our time not thinking about it. Before, every little sound had us worried, now a child screaming in the distance does not cause us to bat an eye. We are no longer alarmed by gunfire or flashes through the sky. The abnormal *has* become the normal.

Gitega, BURUNDI

August 9, 1999 8:26 pm

After a couple of stops and starts, we finally made it to the airport to fly to Gitega. (Gitega is the second largest city in Burundi but it has quite a rural flavor). How bizarre it is to leave people sitting in Bujumbura only to see them hours later in Gitega. They drove, we flew. Citizenship has its privileges. There are so many things that bother me about this flight that ended on a dirt patch runway in Gitega. First of all, World Food Programme only flies NGO personnel. That is basically a euphemism for the fact that white people need to be protected from the grips of violence but black people must fend for themselves within the mini-civil war. It is as if to say, "some of us are too important to die, but some, on the other hand, can be sacrificed." There were 19 seats on the plane, only 8 were full. This flight is incredibly hard to book. When David N. calls with his Burundian accent, the Burundian secretary at WFP gives him a hard time. Bridget, with her Canadian accent, seems to have more success with them. She even told us about how badly they treat Burundians. David was talking about how in order for any proposal to be accepted in the US or UK, there has to be a white person's stamp of approval. Electricity works at Kibimba hospital because Susan Seitz, the American, convinced NGOs to help. Bette currently is trying to pull some strings for Kibimba school. Burundian voices, regardless of their positive intent, are not heard. David can write a brilliant proposal. If an American or Brit does not sign on, it doesn't happen. Tomorrow, Adrian is going with David to see the reforestation efforts so Adrian can offer his stamp of approval.

Anyway, back to the plane. We flew for free. We posed as MCC workers. What ever happened to Quakers holding Truth in the Light? So the ends justify the means. We bend and break rules because we can. We were on the plane while others were on a van merely because we are convincing liars. Skin color and passports allow us to fabricate stories influentially. White people are trusted, black people are not. Johnny, Zainabu and I are honorary white people in this situations because we are foreigners. In general, Johnny and I are too light to be considered local Burundians. Here, Z, at times, can "pass" as Burundian but in a situation where individuals might be harmed solely on the basis of appearance, sometimes it is not so good to blend. Anyway, back to my point...David is submitting legitimate proposals to improve his country and is getting turned down. We are submitting faulty documents, and flying first class.

All that being said, the flight was spectacular. Would I have rather been in a van, risking my life? Probably not. Still, the world isn't fair. From the sky, you could see every beautiful mountain between the west coast of Burundi and its central region. Ironically, it all looks so peaceful from above.

August 13, 1999 11:34 am

It has only been two days since I last wrote yet it seems like weeks. So much has happened here in Gitega. Or rather, so much has happened in my mind.

Kibimba is gorgeous! We are at the first Quaker mission founded in 1934 which is situated on top of a hillside with an amazing view. This is Burundi! I feel so much more comfortable here. Although I'm a city girl, I feel more connected to the rural area. We are staying at the Tamotel, one of the nicest hotels in Gitega which isn't saying much. It cost \$15 double and \$12 single which is the equivalent of a month's salary of a Burundian peace worker. Mind-boggling. Tamotel is mainly frequented by foreign NGO folks and wealthy Burundi [Kirundi: Burundians] of various occupations. Quite a few soldiers also come for drinks but they are sometimes hard to decipher from the soldiers hired to protect the grounds of Tamotel. Disturbingly, some members of our team have taken to spending their money to buy them drinks. This, to me, is problematic on so many levels. First, I am uncomfortable with the idea of individuals with very large and dangerous machine guns being fed copious alcohol. Secondly, it is only being done to butter them up so that their picture can be taken— a tactic which is shifty at best. Thirdly, as we sit at our table discussing the recent atrocities in Bujumbura where soldiers have come in and slaughtered 50-100 innocent people, I am not so happy with being chummy with their colleagues upcountry. On the other hand, my protest is somewhat hypocritical as I sit comfortably under their watchful eye.

There is currently a workcamp at Kibimba because Thadee [Nizirizana] from our team is attempting to open the school next month for the first time in years. He tells me it will be called "Arthur Chilson" after one of the first Kansan Quakers (who met his fate in 1947 after being mauled by a lion). There are 300+ students from around the country contributing to the clean-up and restoration of the compound. Thousands

of refugees had been living in the compound area. Over 20 buildings dot the compound and there is an incredible amount of work to be done. In just one or two days, they had already swept out most of the building. They have been using wire brushes to sand the soot off the outside of the building which resulted from thousands of people cooking on the porches outside the classrooms. The old Quaker cemetery was used as a grazing ground for the cows and goats. The buildings are mostly intact but everything that could have been stolen, has been. Empty shelves stand where the library once stood. Mathematic and scientific formulas remain chalked on the blackboards. The only room which has not been completely ransacked is a particular science laboratory which has a skeleton model standing inside it, completely intact. Unbroken test tubes lay scattered on the ground. Many Burundians refuse to enter this room because of its negative aura and even our "tour guides" weren't willing to enter with us. Space outlines where the shelves in the dormitory once lay. The ceilings were stolen and the water lines which once pumped into the dorms were destroyed during the crisis. A recently roofed row of outhouses has already been relieved of its roof. The stealing continues.

4:34 pm

We arrived in Gitega on Monday and spent Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday working with the workcamp. On Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon, we did conflict resolution training sessions. We were not quite sure how we were going to handle 300 students so we decided to split them into two days with only 150 each day. That means 50 students each for Becky, Ray and I. YIKES! We attempted to use people from the Burundian team and others who know a bit of English. I worked with Levy [a Burundian peace trainer with the Peace and Reconciliation Ministry Under the Cross, Mi-PAREC] so things went excellently although our first activity got off to a false start. Controlling the group was somewhat problematic because there are so many extra people, students and children milling around. It's wonderful that everyone wants to gain knowledge but difficult if you are trying to control an already unwieldy number of people. Becky's group stayed inside the church and Ray took his group to the field right outside the church. Ray had two soldiers in his group which made me slightly nervous.

We were supposed to teach/learn from 3-5:30 but the students didn't finish up singing to God until 4:00. Around 5:00, Levy started talking about wrapping up which I didn't understand. I walked over to Ray and he said, "They told me to wrap it up," referring to the soldiers, I thought. Levy had earlier told me the story about being held in jail for four days for a similar workshop so I decided to wrap my group up pronto, although they were just getting into some pretty powerful stuff about conflict. Even when we were just talking about why they came to the workcamp, people were invoking all these strong sentiments about the conflict and crisis. I later found out that Charles told us to stop the workshops, not the soldiers. So at 5:00, we returned to the church and, lo and behold, began singing AGAIN. Interestingly, when we sang earlier, the soldiers did not participate in Becky's rendition of "Praise to the Lord" which required everyone to get up and sit down at the appropriate points. However, after Ray's spectacular workshop performance, those men were up singing to the Lord like nobody's business! Ray said that they were really engaged in the discussion of his group, not just as observers, which is why I thought that they were there. They went from not singing to yelling, "Hallelujah!"

The second day of the workshops I was tres [French: very] relaxed. I definitely want to get involved with HIPP [Help Increase the Peace Program] when I return. My experience here has inspired me. Today, we had two soldiers in our group, eager to participate. They played a big role in the discussion and volunteered often. Afterwards, one called me by name and asked me more about "Friends." Ah, my first moment as a proselytizing missionary!!! He wanted to know if Catholics could join to which I gave a resounding, "Yes" although Fiston, one of the students from Kamenge, seemed to imply that Quakers in Burundi weren't as open as I was making them seem. Anyway, I pushed the peace testimony as a major facet of Quakerism because quite frankly that's what I really wanted him and his friends to comprehend. While we were in Bujumbura, David N. told us that the peace testimony dimension of Quakerism is less emphasized with Evangelical Friends. It makes me wonder if some of the Quakers participated in the violence. David explained that here, the emphasis is on the relationship "between me and God, not me and my neighbor." The testimony is vertical towards the heaven rather than horizontal towards others around you. They pray up, not respond sideways. But David N. and others are responding by teaching a new way of life through peace, another way of handling problems. On Wednesday, the soldiers brought other soldiers and the next day there were even more. During the second session, one of the students asked me my definition of peace

and I talked a lot about vertical/horizontal love/peace connection. I think the workshops were an astonishing success!

Levy had a terrible day on Wednesday. One of his workers was thrown in jail. Levy had to borrow the equivalent of \$US 50 to get him out (not bail him out, no trial, no chance of seeing the money again). On his way home from this fiasco, he saw a traffic accident and got out to assist. Two men on a bicycle were hit by a lorry [British English: truck] and instantly killed. They ended up being Levy's friends so he then had to go get their families so they could come claim the bodies. I saw the family members near the church when Levy relayed the news. They looked somber yet no one cried, being strong the Burundian way. Death is so accepted and expected here. It is shrugged off as just part of daily life which, of course, it really is.

Daily update on death: Johnny got word from Dad two days ago that his grandmother passed away. She was like 99 but still difficult news to take. Then, he went to work at the hospital and a 16 year old boy died of malaria before Johnny [who is a doctor] could see him. Malaria. Curable yet hundreds of people are dying from it each day. The silver lining of the day was that Johnny was able to save a 2 ½ year old who was also dying of malaria. In a freaky, unconfirmed twist, Levy's brother who is 16 was suffering from his first and very severe case of malaria and Levy was asked to take him to the hospital in the middle of the night. He didn't go at that time and he was suppose to go to Kibimba hospital the same day that the 16 year old boy with malaria died there. We had seen Levy's brother standing by the side of the road earlier that day. Levy is convinced that it wasn't his brother who died because Thomas would have told him. The rest of us are not that sure. Dread. [We later found out that the boy who died was not Levy's brother]

While a part of me is frightened in this situation, another part of me is fascinated by the risk, insecurity and danger. I'm still plagued with this sick, sadist feeling I had last year in the Nairobi bomb – I am so close, but not close enough.

August 16, 1999 7:38 am

Flying overhead, one can see that Kibimba Church is shaped as a cross. Sitting inside, one can feel the power of that cross. Sunday was an emotional and invigorating day. As we circled the church three times to purify the land, I felt as Muslims must when visiting Mecca. I was overwhelmed with emotion and love and brought to tears by the sacredness of the day. For almost six years, the word of God was silenced within Kibimba Church. On Sunday, once again, that voice can be heard. There was an attendance of about 1500 to 2000 people. Most of the men and students sat on the left on wooden benches while the women and children sat on the right side on mats on the floor. We, unfortunately, were forced to sit up on the stage in the second row. It's bizarre to be considered a big wig here. I hate being honored and having to sit on the stage but at least I am a female who is representing. That is the only way I can justify it in my head. Of the 42 Quaker pastors in Burundi, none are women. There were no other women on stage but me. Arches of flowers surrounded the each of the entrance ways. A sound system blared. A single candle burned in each window. Cedar branches and red poinsettias gave the Church a Christmas feel as well as captured a patriotic sense by replicating the colors of the Burundian flag.

Many people spoke during the 5 ½ hour ceremony. Gabriel Bacanamwo, the President of MI-PAREC, spoke about how here and elsewhere, there has been killing in churches, the burning of churches and the resulting closing of churches. He went on to say that there is something missing in the world and that is love. Traditional houses in Burundi were built by leaning two branches together. He later asked people to come up who have not yet been able to forgive. I watched a woman in the front row who was eventually brought to tears which, of course, brought me to tears. I spent my time wondering who she was missing. Does she blame herself for living while others died? Did she see them die? I'm crying now just thinking about the look on that woman's face.

8:54 am

No airplane from today [Monday] until Thursday so we cannot fly back to Bujumbura. Thus, we will brave the roads and the dreaded "death ring." It's 9:00 am. Hope to leave soon. Feel like I'm in the hands of

people who have survived so they must be doing something right. So how does it feel when you are potentially driving towards death? Remarkably much like any other journey on any other day...

Bujumbura, BURUNDI

August 16, 1999 6:17 pm

We were pretty silent passengers for the bulk of the ride. There were soldiers every 1000 yards most of the way back to Bujumbura. The hillsides were spectacular but with little terracing and exhausted soil. The poverty was more extreme than in other places. At some point, after the turn off where you have the option to go to Ngozi and Kigali, the soldiers disappeared. The stretch before Bujumbura was quite deserted compared to the rest of the ride. Pastor Justin, who was driving, acted as our tour guide, showing us all of the possible places people have been ambushed and/or killed in the crossfire. Justin rode VERY slowly at the beginning of the ride but once we entered the danger zone, he drove with great force. At some point, a man in plain clothes with an AK-47 came running up near a bridge. Seconds later, we crossed the bridge at a high speed and a few soldiers/cops were milling around. The drive in through Kamenge was humbling. I had never seen so much destruction. Building after building had been reduced to rubble. Eventually, as you approach the city, new buildings begin to emerge. Sad sight, though.

Becky tells me that up to 300 people were killed in the most recent attacks. Apparently, the opposition first came into the market in a southern suburb of Bujumbura, shot in the air, stole things and abducted some women, apparently because one of the rebels was getting married. The next day the soldiers came and people fled, thinking that the street would be safer. When everyone was huddled into a group, 2 grenades were thrown into the crowd and shots were fired killing anywhere from 200-300 people. I keep telling myself that those figures can't be right.

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA

August 20, 1999 9:34pm

During most of our time in Burundi, we heard gunfire off in the distance. By our final day, the gunfire was on our street. Then again, this is probably what it feels like to live any place riddled with gun violence. Nonetheless, the close proximity of the gunshots was a bit disconcerting.

Before leaving Burundi, I think I thought I would feel a great sense of relief once I boarded the plane. Yet all I feel is guilt. I feel guilty for all the people I am leaving behind. I get to go home. They are home.