

Peace Ways AGLI

Spring 2007 Volume II Issue I

*Violent Conflict / Youth Disenchantment / Domestic Violence
War / Genocide / Poverty*



Christianity
Non-violence
& the Challenge
Before Us

*Reconciliation / Healing / Forgiveness
Communication / Caring for Each Other / Love*

African Great Lakes Initiative
of the Friends Peace Teams



African Great Lakes Initiative Friends Peace Teams

The African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of the Friends Peace Teams strengthens, supports, and promotes peace activities at the grassroots level in the Great Lakes region of Africa (Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda). To this end, AGLI responds to requests from local religious and non-governmental organizations that focus on conflict management, peace building, trauma healing, and reconciliation. AGLI sponsors Peace Teams composed of members from local partners and the international community.

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This is the Global Village

Dear David,

On Friday I visited the postbox and picked up your Fall 2006 PeaceWays. I have rarely felt so exalted, from your opening words, "Love was the first motion" to the closing testimony, "I took him to my home, I cleaned him, I gave him food and water...." There were many places where I had to hold my breath as I read. Perhaps most of all, in "How much is one white woman paid?" Or maybe it was in the tribute to Rose Imbega. No, looking over the issue again, it was in Malesi Kinaro's description of the Ndalul workshop; of the women's anger at their husbands and families. Because this is also Botswana, this is also Canada, this is the global village.

On the other side of my yard, Mama S. has been shouting at her children all afternoon. Not, I think, because they have done anything wrong, but rather because of her inner anger at her absent husband who does not earn any income and comes home on weekends only to eat. A few minutes ago I took a cell phone message from a young friend, a Form V student, asking me to phone her 24 year old boyfriend who had just threatened to beat her. I know him as closely as a brother and he was indeed very angry as we spoke. I calmed him somewhat but realized their dispute was not finished and could still flare up again tonight.

And so it goes. In this, perhaps the most publicly peaceful of all societies [Botswana], domestic antagonisms and domestic violence are endemic, a recognized increase since Botswana generally adopted the nuclear family household instead of the multiple family household. It is talked about at length, but there are no general answers, only individual ones.

All of which is to say, your magazine spoke to me with amazing power. I will photocopy it tomorrow when I visit the shops. If there are any heroes and heroines in the world today, then they must be the women and men trying to bring peace at the personal level, within the human heart, one human being at a time. And it grows more difficult as people face new and baffling stresses.

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At the social level, our voices seem to be drowned. Society works against the plain speech that reveals and in favor of the calculated speech that conceals. Why? Because “no justice, no peace.” Because the words that speak truth to power must also ask that power to melt away. Somewhere far down the line, I pray that Alternatives to Violence will realize a transforming force for the powerful, an Alternatives to Power. Then we can perhaps speak of removing the causes of all wars. Then the personal exaltation of the human heart is also offered to the once-rich and once-powerful — those who no longer wear their swords — as well as to the poor and the powerless.

Let me go back a little. In 1994 the Montréal newspaper La Presse ran a huge front-page picture of a Rwandan schoolteacher who had been hacked to death in his classroom, his body sprawled face-up across some school benches, his writing still clearly visible on the blackboard. I wept and wept again. The image haunted me. I vowed I would do something to make sure that such an atrocity could never happen again. In the intervening years I nearly did this, I nearly did that. One summer I almost brought myself and my two teenage sons to an AGLI Burundi workcamp. But I know that the vow remains unfulfilled.

Now, when I read your AGLI reports, I know that something very profound is at work, something that touches us all at one of our deepest and most universal

levels. Years ago when I first encountered Franz Fanon, I remember the dangerous thrill of reading his theory of liberating violence. Even today I do not believe he was wrong as a psychologist. The violence of the slave can be, has been, one road to outward freedom and inner liberation as well.

But we hardly need to discuss the hopelessness of such theories in today’s global village of people who want to think of themselves as consumers, not as slaves. Today’s liberation will depend on people coming to an inner exaltation of their common humanity and love rather than of their material wants. The AVP workshops, the one-to-one outpourings, seem to offer a way to such transformation.

Your heroism, and the heroism of every AGLI peacemaker, make me more confident that it is possible. I feel strengthened to speak from my own heart on these subjects, a thing which is always difficult for me. The beautiful meditation from Woolman also gives immense comfort and confidence, “Love was the first motion...” I think many of us feel the love, but we feel constrained in putting forward our particular kind of light. I am struggling, David, but I think you know what I want to say.

Continued steadfastness and solidarity to all of you, and with a respect difficult to express,

[Canadian AGLI supporter living in Botswana]

From Silence

By Laura Shipler Chico

On the third day of an Advanced HROC workshop in Ruhengeri, Rwanda, my co-facilitators asked me to begin the day with silent worship. It is customary for each morning of our workshops to begin with worship – usually at least thirty minutes are devoted to singing songs of praise, reading a relevant passage of the bible and listening to a sermon from one of the facilitators or one of the participants. But this was the first time my Rwandan colleagues had asked me to lead the group in silence.

It had been an intense two days. The twenty participants were being trained to become Healing Companions – informal community peer counselors who would accompany family, friends and neighbors on the long journey from genocide to recovery. And to be effective Healing Companions, all agreed that they needed and wanted space for their own healing.

“Will they really like the silence?” I asked, a bit surprised at the emphatic insistence of my co-facilitators.

“Yes, yes,” said one. “It may be hard for them. Some may cry a lot. But it will be good.”

And so we decided that we begin the day with just ten minutes of silence and close with a simple prayer. After that, one of my colleagues would ask the group to go around the circle and every participant would describe what the silence had been like for him or her.

“We spend a lot of time thanking God and asking God for what we want,” I said the next morning to introduce the session. “This morning we are going to sit in silence and listen. We are going to listen deeply to God.” And so we did. And then, one by one the participants started

to share what they had experienced. The statements are paraphrased from memory, and not exact quotes.

There have been times in my life when I wish I were dead, but if I had died before I would not have lived to have this beautiful moment.

A widow

I didn't hear any words, but I had a problem and I felt it tight in my chest, and during these ten minutes, I felt... He relaxed his fingers and touched his chest, and let a deep breath out.

A co-facilitator

I heard God say to me, I have a plan for you. I know now that there is a reason that I am alive.

A young man

Before, I saw that my life had no meaning. I thought that there is no reason for me to be here. But now I hear that God has a plan for me, that I am meant to help people.

A young woman

Again and again this was the message – you are not nothing. You are alive because you have something to give.

Round we went, each person sharing soothing words of deepest wisdom that helped them find a place in their wounded world.

To be honest, I don't always know if I believe in God. But in that room, on that quiet morning, I did.



I heard God say to me, I have a plan for you.

I know now that there is a reason that I am alive.

Love and Caring for Each Other: AVP and Spirituality From a Kenyan Christian Perspective

By Malesi Kinaro

The spiritual part of Alternatives to Violence (AVP) began with the first basic workshop in Kakamega and Eldoret. The foreign facilitator asked the participants to pass around an imagined magic wand. In Kakamega people did this but with a great question in their minds: “These are spiritual issues, are we being inducted into witchcraft?”. In Eldoret when the same facilitator tried this again, the participants completely refused. They felt that they were being inducted into devil worship.

At an apprenticeship workshop with the police and prison officers in Kakamega another issue came up. This time it had to do with the guidelines. The participants were told that there would be no prayers during AVP because AVP is not religious and prayers would seem to be exclusive. There was open rebellion by these born again Christian police officers. They started the day with a prayer and ended with a prayer. There was one Muslim participant who, when asked to pray, said he had no difficulty in letting the Christians pray.

The question always was, “Since we are all Christians why are we being asked not to pray”, or “In Kenya when we have more than one religion all religions pray, either one after the other or one prays to start and another to close. Why are we being asked not to pray?” Some participants even wondered, “Do these people want to bring conflict between Christians and Muslims, which does not exist at present? Why do they always carry their conflicts to us? We are adults and we know who we are”.

The issue was even thornier at the Kaimosi Friends Theological College (FTC), a basically evangelical college. I was one of the facilitators who introduced AVP at this college. As usual in AVP the philosophy was discussed; “Not religious but can be spiritual”. This immediately put us on a collision path with the students. Later the transforming power was introduced. It talked about “A power around us and in us which can use us and transform us”. The wheel was introduced and called “mandala” and we were asked to explain what the word meant. We said that it had an Eastern religious origin, possibly Buddhist.

We had the most difficult basic AVP workshop I have ever been part of. We were seen as introducing witchcraft, Buddhism or even satanic worship. I was confronted in all these places, “You say you are an evangelist, a born again Christian ... how can you be part of this thing ... this new religion that is disguising itself as a peace program?”

Of course we made the AVP explanation that although AVP was developed by Quakers, the concept has been found to help Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists etc. If we used only Christian terminology how would we help a Muslim or a Buddhist, or a Hindu who might benefit from the experience? The immediate response was: “Aha so you are becoming a Universalist? How can you marry that with the fact that you are a Christian evangelist? What does being a Christian evangelist and counselor mean to you?”

I did my MA counseling in a wonderful Evangelical University, Nairobi International School of Theology (NIST). This is the place where I experienced the greatest Spiritual growth and Christian rooting. NIST had a very loving environment. You went to learn counseling but you ended up doing Theology, Bible study, Christian growth, just name it. You really came out of NIST aware of all major theological debates that are going on in the world.

Before joining NIST I had a very great exposure to Quakerism in all its branches. I had attended the un-programmed Christ centered meeting at the Nairobi Friends International Center for all the 3 years I was at the University of Nairobi. I had worked for a fairly liberal Friends organization, Friends World Committee for Consultation, and I had come in contact with Quakers in their diversity. In 1991 I had been so SHOCKED by the diversity at the FWCC world conference in the Netherlands that I almost packed my things to come back to Kenya. In Kenya I knew who Friends were. They were all Christ centered whether they attended the programmed or un-programmed meetings. Now I was meeting people who asked us “why did you pray and say ‘in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior?’”, Jesus is NOT my savior. Nobody is. Jesus

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was just a good guy like the Buddha, or Gandhi who speak more to my condition than your Jesus.”

From NIST I came to recognize the strategies that can be used to lead one from a purely evangelical to a liberal outlook. I began to see the strategies the devil can use to cleverly, profusely but surely lead a firm believer in the Christian faith to a diluted unclear position. The government of Kenya had done research to find out the extent of devil worship in Kenyan institutions of learning and had come out with a revealing article on how this practice was taking root.

At the Kakamega workshop I asked myself many questions. “What is the magic wand we had passed round? Was I becoming part of an organization that was anti-Christian? What exactly is the transforming power? Why weren’t we allowed to pray or even talk about any link between Christianity and AVP especially in a purely Christian environment?”

Like many things I have done in my life when I have not had clarity but at the same time I have not felt my faith threatened, I continued being involved in AVP workshops becoming the coordinator of the AVP in Western Kenya. We have done AVP workshops for church leaders, teachers, prison officers, police officers, Friends Theological College students, community members, womens groups, youth groups, and high school students.

I have seen tremendous change in many but not all, who have taken these workshops, even if it is only a basic workshop. These are some of the human stories from the various people that have taken AVP workshops in the areas I have been involved:

- *AVP just opened a place in me I can't explain. The transforming power is just using me and all the time I am aware when I am about to act in a way that will bring violence.*

Getry Agizah,
a lead facilitator in Western Kenya

- *We were kind of childish and narrow minded when you first brought AVP to us. As we continued with the other levels we got to understand that AVP was about learning skills for personal reactions when faced with a potentially violent situation. It was not challenging our faith.*

John Bulimo a former student from FTC.

- *To me AVP is a discipleship tool. It does not take away from Christianity. In fact it adds value. The exercises on affirmation and building a community of Trust, are Biblical. It is a great discipleship tool.*

Pastor Joseph Shamala,
a pastor from Kakamega Friends Church

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Just now I have just come from the peace center. How I wished you [Nancy Shippen, one of the first year workcampers building the Center] were all there with me. I mean you and that first team of workcampers as well as the second lot that



consisted mainly of Eileen, Trevor and Kenyans. When I last saw the guest house only one part of the roof had been put. Today when I went the roof was all done, the walls plastered, the floor all done with red oxide and all window panes in place. We are carrying out our training in Mediation in the living room. It looks so beautiful. I kept on just praising God for a dream I have managed to see become a reality. Getry and Eliza carried mattresses and blankets. There are even beds. Five of the participating ladies are staying in the brand new rooms.

Malesi Kinaro

Planting the Tree of Peace among Enemies

By Anna Crumley-Effinger

AVP wasn't new to me. I had heard enough of it from my father. My father, being a busy pastor and a volunteer with AVP, always tried to show love and I had never seen him violent. I admired him but I never thought I would be like him. I was violent, and always underestimated what my father did. I always thought if you are too good people will call you a coward.

Seconds after completing the first workshop, I was on board a vehicle headed back home. Suddenly I thought about myself, my family, my society and my country. I seemed to sense violence everywhere; AVP had opened my heart. The poverty in Goma was very visible. Yet all this was as a result of war which has now claimed five million lives. Tin houses and poorly built houses could be seen. The roads were very poor either due to neglect or vandalism. I thought about the ill-clothed children, the policemen harassing an alleged criminal and the power in me seemed to lose sway.

Then I thought about Rwanda. I started to see the real picture. More harm than good. One million had died within three months; many displaced and as a result dead in the bushes of Congo (a foreign country). Then I thought of AVP. Something reminded me of a good future, promised me light beyond a dark tunnel; and, that was the transforming power.

There is good everywhere in both the gentle and the rude. Good is more than evil and peace will prevail over violence. Today I feel different and a greater pacifist than I was. So much thanks to AVP.

A Young Rwandan

The Historical Context:

Goma, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Gisenyi, Rwanda are border towns on the northern edge of Lake Kivu. After years of civil war, population displacement, refugees from the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, armies and militias – some backed by the two governments and others by local leaders — and fighting; they have a difficult, inter-connected history. The area has many tribes and language groups; the Hunde, Tembo, Nunde and Nyanga are thought to be the indigenous tribes. Additionally there are groups

that speak Kinyarwanda, the language of the Rwandan population. The addition of Tutsi and Hutu expatriates from Rwanda has added great tension in earlier periods of Rwandan exile and more recently with refugee population of almost two million people following the 1994 genocide.

During the Belgium time there were not many people in what is now the Masisi area, about 50 kilometers from Goma. The Hunde people moved into this area. In the 20th century as the crowding in Rwanda increased, Kinyarwandan speaking groups started moving into the Masisi area which has been the center of much of the conflict in North Kivu. After awhile there were more people of Rwandan descent than of the earlier settling Hunde people. The Hunde began to worry that there could be an uprising by the majority population so they began a campaign against the Kinyarwandan speaking peoples. Due to the violence against them, many of the Rwandan population began returning to Rwanda. During the early part of the reign of Sese Seko Mobutu, 1971-1997, the violence by the Hunde was stopped by government military force. The people of the towns began living together. The influx of vast numbers of Rwandan Hutu refugees in July 1994 exasperated tensions in the province. A number of legislators from the eastern Congo got a law passed that said that people who were not in the DRC (at that time Zaire) before 1886 were not citizens of the State. The effect was the stripping of nationality from most of the Kinyarwandan speaking population.

This led a Kinyarwandan speaking group, the Bamyamulenge from South Kivu, to revolt in 1996. With the help of Rwandan and Ugandan armies, Mobutu was ousted and Laurent-Désiré Kabila became president of the DRC. Kabila later became at odds with his Rwandan and Ugandan backers and ousted them from the Congolese government and army. This led to the second Congo War with Rwandan, Ugandan, and local Congolese militia fighting the Congolese army and militias supported by Zimbabwe, Angola, and Chad. Over four million people are estimated to have died in these wars which lasted officially until 2003; but the many militias have continued to exist and to destabilize the region. These militias support themselves by looting the considerable resources of the eastern Congo.

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Essentially, North Kivu province has not seen a functional government since the early 1990's.

AVP-Workshops:

The goal of the workshops was to bring together people from these two antagonistic countries in cross-border peacemaking. The Gisenyi/Goma workshops served eighty people in the bordering towns between the DRC and Rwanda. Each workshop had around twenty participants, equally split on gender lines and border lines. First, two basic workshops took place in Goma (10-12 July and 13-15 July) followed by an advanced workshop (17-19 July) in Gisenyi. Later two basics (25-27 July and 3-5 August) took place in Gisenyi followed by an advanced (8-10 August) in Goma.

Two Rwandans and two Congolese were workshop facilitators for all of the basic workshops with separate interpreters. Advanced workshops diverged from the model because the necessary qualifications of experienced advanced facilitators prevented having Congolese facilitators.

The participants were in being a diverse group of students, pastors, a doctor, and program administrators, including someone who works with former military youth. Therefore, in addition to bringing two communities together, the program also served as bridge builder between different parts of society.

The Challenge of Language:

Language is a challenge and continues to be of the utmost importance because access to language is also a symbol of status and privilege. In Rwanda, Kinyarwanda is the local language; most Rwandans do not know Swahili. In North Kivu, while each tribe speaks its own local language, Swahili is the language of general communication. Only Congolese of Rwandan background are able to speak Kinyarwanda. While French is the European language common to both countries, only the well-educated speak it fluently. Therefore it was essential to have an interpreter and to write everything in both Swahili and Kinyarwanda.

The Results:

We are neighbors, in neighboring countries, and I was not comfortable mixing up with them because I used to feel that we are different from each other. After the first workshop I realized we are all the same people— they are just like me. We are all the same even though we come from different tribes, regions or countries. Personally I feel now I have to make a decision of how we can both all live together in peace whereby I can avoid anything that will hurt the Congolese and they can avoid anything that will hurt the Rwandan so that we can all live in peace. The issue of looking at somebody and saying that we are not the same is no longer there. Sometimes in life you go through difficulties and you feel that all the problems are overwhelming and you are not free, but due to the training, I feel that my burdens have been lifted and I feel free.

Rwandan participant

Looking back at the situation that happened between Rwandese and Congolese, they were living in a complete division. But due to the training we have received we can now live together as brothers and sisters. And now we have Congolese coming from Congo to Rwanda, and other groups from Rwanda going to Congo.

Congolese participant

What do you remember most about AVP?

The fact of bringing Congolese and Rwandese together. As you can see the Rwandese and Congolese do not get along with each other. And this workshop they have taught us how to be patient with each other, how to carry each others' burden and how to live with each other, forgiving each other because we are all the same.

Congolese participant

Bringing together the Congolese of Goma and the Rwandans of Gisenyi very much affected each participant's perception of the other group. Beforehand they described the other as enemies, as groups that

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We are neighbors, in neighboring countries, and I was not comfortable mixing up with them because I used to feel that we are different from each other. After the first workshop I realized we are all the same people— they are just like me.

Rwandan Participant

HROC—What Are We Really Doing?

A Discussion between Peter Yeomans, Laura Shipler Chico, and Dave Zarembka

This discussion began because Peter Yeomans is planning graduate level research which he will do on the HROC program in Burundi. This is follow-up/improvement of the research he did in 2005 on the HROC program. The discussion is much deeper than the usual descriptions we share of the workshops and stories/testimonies of the participants and facilitators.

From Dave to Peter and Laura:

Here are my comments on your research idea.

An elderly Masai man might look at Kilimanjaro and say, “There surely isn’t as much snow on Kilimanjaro as there was when I was a kid.” If you told him that the glaciers are melting all over the world like this and that this is due to global warming, he would understand immediately (and be better informed than George Bush). The fact that the concept of global warming came from the US would have no significance for him since he can see the evidence right in front of him.

As you sit down to dinner tonight with turkey, mashed potatoes, and corn on the cob, do you think, “Tonight I am being a Native American”? Are you a Muslim when you use the concept of “zero”?

I made this same mistake when I first went to Africa in 1964. One of the teachers at the school got married. As I watched the wedding I divided everything up into what was traditional (leading the woman with all her possessions from her village to the man’s village, the Twa buffoon whom I knew very well playing the “fool”, etc) and those that came from the West—the church wedding with the bride dressed in a white gown, etc. But when I asked the groom, he didn’t at all look at this as I was. He said, “This is the way we do things—we have a church wedding and then we bring the bride to my house.” In other words they had integrated what they liked into a workable whole for them.

It is a complete myth that there are “traditional” societies that don’t change. All societies are in a constant state of flux (even in the old days when there was not much communication between different groups). Putting this another way, youth have always been innovating things from their stodgy elders. Even Amish society is not static.

There is an almost mythical belief in the US that old African traditions and culture are better than our modern society. This is why folks like the Masai so much. (Read *Out of Africa* to get a real good sense of the “noble savage” concept which is part of the US image of Africa.) But as Adrien Niyongabo has said, some traditions are not good and have to go. Wife beating, for example, which 150 years ago was the “tradition” in the US also. What I think the Rwandans and Burundians are doing (which Americans seem very reluctant to do) is to assess the condition of their society and decide what has to change—and so frequently, this means to drastically change their own behavior with their spouse, children, other family members, neighbors, and enemies!!! In truth this is how society really does change for the better. It is as if they act upon the transforming power much more than Americans, who usually put the blame on what is going wrong on larger outside forces.

What might be really interesting is to forget what is “Western” and what is “African” and see what people in Africa think/describe/consider important about trauma and its effects. Are these thoughts, descriptions, etc., the same as a similar group of people in the US? If not, where are the differences? This could lead to learning what is cultural and what is universal which would be a very important question to answer not only for Rwanda/Burundi but also for the US.

From Peter to Dave and Laura:

Thanks for your thoughtful email about the research question. I agree with your comments about the nature of cultures and how they interact. I know that my time in the Great Lakes really helped me shift from a notion of cultures being distinct and different and in need of protection to a perspective of how dynamic they really are. In the first AVP workshops in Burundi, I remember feeling almost apologetic about introducing new ideas, and was then so struck by how the participants indicated a hunger for new ideas and a great confidence that they would adapt these ideas appropriately. It helped me see that cultures are always evolving, and as much as cultures deserve respect and acknowledgment as different, all cultures are also in need of critique and the offering of new ideas. The whole thing is ever-changing and the boundaries are much blurrier than people sometimes think

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While cultures do overlap and blur around the edges, I'm sure you'd agree that there are differences too. And while some trauma seems to be definitely biologically based and therefore truly universal, there is really interesting work that supports the idea that an experience of trauma is substantially shaped by cultural factors. Studies have shown that when people really believe in the cause they are fighting for (e.g. Israeli soldiers) they are less likely to have symptoms of trauma. Or in Guatemala, where people who experience intrusive memories and dreams (that we would call PTSD symptoms) react to these dreams positively as sources of comfort. The dreams carry different cultural meaning for them than they would for most Americans.

Most important, I am enthusiastic about being able to help demonstrate the effectiveness of HROC through scientific methods with the hope that it earns more support for the program; I believe we share that common purpose. I know that as a student I am coming at this from an academic perspective which has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that I can help to answer some questions with a rigorous methodology to which funders and some of the public will respond. The disadvantage is that academia can sometimes get caught up in the methods and precision and overlook the real purpose of things.

From Laura to Dave and Peter:

Not long after arriving in Rwanda, I became fascinated by the difference in the way that the world of "emotions" are conceptualized and understood in my cultural framework and in Rwanda. I think of emotions

as abstract ideas in a way — I get a feeling (often, a physical feeling) which I then quickly ascribe to certain emotions (joy, stress, fear, etc.). When I started working in Rwanda, particularly when we started the Healing Companion training, one idea I had of how to be a good listener is to show compassion for someone's emotions, and to show compassion, I usually articulate what those emotions might be ("I can imagine that you must be feeling incredibly frustrated at not being able to ...," etc.). But what I found myself thinking is that the people we were working with do not have a large "emotional vocabulary." This is what I was thinking because people were simply not conceiving of the emotions in a given situation in the same way I was, and certainly were not articulating them in the way I thought would be helpful.

Human emotions are human — we all are subject to them, but the way we conceive of them, the way we express them, and therefore the way that we understand them in ourselves and others, can vary quite dramatically from culture to culture. There are some things that seem to cross lines — crying is something that is almost a biological response to intense sadness or anger. We all love, we all grieve. But how we explain that to ourselves can be very different. In Rwanda, people usually meld physical well-being, material well-being and emotional well-being into one huge thing — or the categorizations between those are drawn in such different ways that I still haven't figured them out.

For me there is no question about one thing — I regularly saw relief on the faces of our participants when they said that they had thought they were crazy but now

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they understood what they had been experiencing — and that it was trauma. I also know that there is something kind in helping people name and normalize the thing which is tormenting them; in helping them to break it down into manageable pieces. I think that Dave is saying that it is happening already — people in Rwanda and Burundi wouldn't have been as taken with the concept of trauma if it didn't somehow ring true to their human experience. That perception is certainly reinforced by what I witnessed in our work there.

On the other hand, I once read a statistic that in the US, college-educated women are more likely to suffer PTSD than women with a high school education. My supervisor asked why we thought that was: people with more money have more time to wallow, suggested one colleague. People who know what PTSD is might be more likely to experience it, suggested another — and isn't this exactly your research question, Peter? Has it changed much? What I remember you describing is that you were wondering whether, once exposed to education about trauma, people were more likely to suffer from it.

Personally, I think it's a good question. Like Dave, I would like to know how those who have suffered violence and war — and have not been exposed to any workshops — describe, understand, and explain what they have been experiencing. I think that the answer to that question will strengthen our work in HROC. Then, I am interested in the next question; do those explanations help folks move toward recovery? Do they hinder recovery? Are they neutral? For example, many explain symptoms in terms of demons and being possessed by demons, but if prayer and exorcism don't work — people are left feeling evil and helpless.

There are many variables to consider. But the one that stands out is, how will you, in your study, control for stigma? Many of our participants say that they thought they were crazy, but now they see their symptoms as normal. Thus, it would be natural to hide symptoms if you think you are crazy and to talk about them once you hear that they are normal and others are going through a similar thing. I think that this will be a big hurdle to overcome in the research.



I am very interested in your research question, Peter, because in Rwanda I felt constantly humble in the face of the overwhelming hurt there. I believe in our work, I believe it helps. I certainly hope that by introducing the concept of trauma we were not in some ways helping to create it. But Rwanda is such a wounded place, and sometimes Theoneste [Bizimana] and I would sit and just admit that we didn't know what to do. Beneath each layer that we peeled off there was more pain and more suffering aching to be eased. Each time we developed a new approach there was a new tide of need that threatened to drown us. Or drown me, I should say. Theoneste always seemed to stay afloat, and Solange, and Adrien and the others who use their own lives to become the living breathing pumping heart at the core of the work.

Whatever you find out, I hope that it can help HROC continue to become better at what it does, at what it strives to do. I hope it can uncover the vastness of our differences as it ties us inextricably to one another in our fundamental humanness.

From Dave to Peter and Laura:

Here are some comments. I doubt ignorance is bliss. I remember some research from way back that young women who had been sexually abused by family members thought it was normal, but when they went into therapy and learned that this was abnormal behavior they had a breakdown. Would they have been better off continuing to think that sexual abuse was normal? Wouldn't this make it more likely that they would abuse their children?

My great-grandfather had three brothers who all fought in the Civil War, all were wounded, all became alcoholics, and all died rather young. I am sure all of them had PTSD, but of course the concept was not

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around then. Would they have been helped if the concept and therapy were available? I would think so. Certainly they wouldn't have been worse off.

If a man stops beating his wife and children and starts talking to them, if a mother stops beating and yelling at her children and begins listening to them, a profound change has occurred. I have often wondered if the listening lessons in both HROC and AVP aren't really the crux of the workshop. People who have been wounded deeply withdraw into themselves which means that they are not listening to others. To be reminded that to listen and communicate is peacemaking is important. How many times have we heard a participant say, "I thought I was the only one who went through this and now I see that other people had even worse experiences." So perhaps the listening that occurs in the workshops is the "magic" that makes whatever happens work. They are drawn out of the isolation of their on sorrow.

Unfortunately I am not much of a researcher—I have always wanted to do things and let others to the research—likewise I majored in history, but find it much more interesting to be involved in the real world of today than write about history. But helping folks to put Rwanda and Burundi back together after the war and genocide is so much more immediate and important. The more we learn about what we are doing, the better tool HROC will become. In your research, Peter, there is the academic criteria which you must use (and this is important), but there is also the informal education we all can get about what this all means.

I just wrote Val an email where I said that I thought HROC workshops (much more than AVP workshops) are spiritual (or religious). God has forsaken these wounded people ("God goes around the world doing good, but he fell asleep in Rwanda"—Tutsi survivor) and they have to find their God again which they do by seeing that of God in the others in the workshop including their enemies.

From Dave to Laura:

Since I am in a theoretical mood, before I have to go back to doing the mundane details of AGLI work, in your Nyamata report you have the comment:

Some see genocide as an extreme result of psychological projection: when one group projects all that is hated about itself onto another group,

the target group comes to represent all that is bad and shameful and evil about ourselves. Then it becomes not only possible but necessary to exterminate.

I have found this to be extremely thought provoking. Can you add more to this idea so that I can understand (and think) about it more? I am wondering if this is not what the US is doing with "radical Islamic fundamentalists," i.e., when we are talking about them we are really talking about ourselves.

From Laura to Dave:

To put it simply, someone once told me that every time I criticize someone, I should just add three little words to the end of my sentence: "just like me." It is eerie how consistently it works! This is psychodynamic theory—beginning with Sigmund Freud, continuing with Anna Freud (his daughter) and others. The theory talks about the defense mechanisms the mind or psyche sets up to protect the ego—or sense of self. Among these defense mechanisms are things we have all heard of—denial, acting out, intellectualization, etc. One of the most basic ones is "projection"—projecting that which we don't like about ourselves onto someone else or a group of people, in order to preserve our own positive self-image. Absolutely, when folks in the US talk about radical Islamic fundamentalists, we are really talking about ourselves—I absolutely agree that this is part of the complex swirl of why it has been possible to sucker the American public into this war between civilizations. When we listen to how Bush characterizes the "enemy" and we add the three little words, "just like us" to the end, frighteningly, it almost always works.

From Peter to Laura and Dave:

This is becoming a rich conversation and my thoughts and questions are stimulated by both of your emails. Here are some thoughts and reactions to both of your emails. Laura, your description of how emotional, material, and physical well-being is melded into one, resonates with me as something I have tried to put into words, but have not ever been successful. This difference in sense of "feeling" is the background or context to this whole discussion.

In both of your emails you seemed to point to possible mechanisms in the workshop responsible for its beneficial effect. Sounds like one such mechanism might be the listening that goes on independent of whether models from outside are presented or not. Sounds like

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another might be reconnecting to a sense of purpose. It seems that there might be multiple mechanisms at work. You both suggest that foremost it hinges upon the experience of normalization of distress. People no longer feel crazy or alien; people are helped to overcome a stigma about being public with the “feelings” they are having. It seems that the presentation of outside models and a facilitated process in which people are encouraged to disclose those “feelings” may contribute to both this normalization and sense of relief. Which approach makes the main contribution? Are they best in tandem? I imagine that the presentation of new ideas about how these “feelings” are part of an identified construct like PTSD definitely helps to break the ice and prompt people into disclosure and a process that serves to mutually normalize the experiences/feelings. Could a careful facilitation that was true to the experiences and perspectives of the participants be equally powerful?

Laura was talking about crying as an example of a universal emotional reaction. I would venture that a good number of the symptoms in the Western trauma model are universal and would even show up when you ask people open-ended questions without any hint of what you are looking for (once we are able to overcome the stigma Laura mentioned). As we were talking in earlier emails, there is still the question of the cultural meaning of those symptoms. Western critics of the PTSD model say that while it helps to normalize symptoms, it can also contribute to increased expectations of having problems, as opposed to a more resilient response. The US military in Iraq is currently using a controversial strategy of telling soldiers who have experienced near-death combat situations that “you can now expect some normal reactions (= PTSD

symptoms) to this abnormal and horrendous event you’ve been through; you need to rest but soon you will be able to return to your duties.” It sounds heartless, but may in fact help a soldier in the long run. They are trying to ensure that the soldier still maintains a level of functioning instead of getting over-identified with the idea that they now have a perhaps uncorrectable problem. I say all this to suggest that another aspect of what might shape outcomes is not whether an outside or “inside” model is facilitated, but HOW the symptoms are contextualized. If a Burundian woman (or an American woman) learns that they have PTSD symptoms, their next question might be, “What does that MEAN about me? Other people seem to have this too and that is a huge relief. Now I have a name for it, but what does this mean about me? Am I sick and unable to do my work or am I still capable?” I really have no idea what sort of message the facilitators attach to the symptoms. Given the Western reputation for psychological disability, I can only imagine that the Burundian facilitators present the model with a message of “Yes, you have this, and you can continue to go on” - much more so than sometimes happens in American culture. Might the risk of implying long-term problems be greater when introducing an outside model than when only soliciting participant perspectives on their distress AND their ability/necessity to carry on? As in the study Laura mentioned, people who can afford to be struck down by trauma may be more likely to experience long-term problems. With Burundians being that much more on the edge of survival to begin with, functionality in the face of distress is probably much greater.

This leads me to something I am really excited about adding to the next study. We all agree that trying to talk

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Burundi, Congo, Kenya, and Rwanda:

Kim Bush, Judy Friesem

about “feelings” across translation is messy and imperfect. Even if it were perfect, it is only one aspect to assessing change in someone’s condition. Another big one is function. A doctor at John Hopkins, Paul Bolton, has been doing really excellent qualitative research (lots of open-ended questions and then categorical sorting of responses by local people) in Uganda and Rwanda. He has been using these methods to try to assess the degree to which depression holds up as a useful construct in those cultures. In the process, he has developed a measure of functioning based on the responses of hundreds of rural Ugandan and Rwandan responses to questions like “What are the basic things you need to do to take care of yourself, your family, and to be involved in your community?” The responses aren’t anything surprising (wash myself, go to market, go to community meetings, etc.) but the measure has been tested as a valid cross-cultural measure of assessment for this region. While Burundi is not Uganda and Rwanda, the rural lifestyle is certainly similar such that this measure would be a very useful complement to asking people about feelings. And wouldn’t it be exciting to document that the workshops helped people to improve, not just their feelings, but their functioning - their ability to participate in life and meet their responsibilities (though, as I said, I would guess functioning is relatively high already out of necessity). Anyway, I think this would be a great addition to the investigation.

From Laura to Peter and Dave:

Just a quick response, since I’m rushing around a bit. In Rwanda, to be honest, not that much of the conversation focuses on “symptoms.” That part of the workshop probably takes an hour at most. The vast majority of the time is spent looking at consequences in a fairly systemic way (consequences on the individual, family, community, and society, and how those interact). During the time on grief and mourning, when people share their stories, it is never about “symptoms”, but rather about the whole story — the losses, the daily struggles, the family relationships — it always is far more contextualized, and that happens very naturally.

From Dave to Peter and Laura:

Peter, you wrote, “With Burundians being that much more on the edge of survival to begin with, functionality in the face of distress is probably much greater.” I doubt this is true. Read page 8 of *After the Guns Have Stopped*—the story of Ciza Consile whose desire is to have her children back with her. Clearly she is not able

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Giving and receiving African style:



While I was a little boy, I used to see my mum going to ask for a spoon of salt from our next door neighbor. In case the first try was not successful, she would try to go to another neighbor. Most the time, she had not to make many tries. Other times, she may come empty handed essentially when there was a general shortage of salt. That was a common practice in the community at least whenever one was short of any thing that could be gotten from the neighbor. The first comer would be served while the next one was not; because there was no more to give to the person. Curiously, I never heard my mum complaining that this or that person had not been willing to offer her salt. At least, that was the life and we were in a family. I, thereby, noticed that the most important thing was the fact of being accepted throughout the village, going freely in the neighbor’s home completely relaxed, and feeling connected. I think that this was the key that kept folks from being hurt whenever their request was not fulfilled.

Adrien Niyongabo

to provide for them and I think it is probably both physically and emotionally. I doubt that she is functioning well on any level.

When I was at the Community Celebration in Ruyigi, the participant selected to make a presentation told the following story. There was a man in his community who was obviously crazy. He would take his clothes off and put them on his head, etc. After the HROC workshop, he decided to talk with this man. He found out that he had watched his wife and nine children being killed (and there was probably an awful lot of guilt in that he hadn't protected them and that he had somehow survived, perhaps by running away in the forest). After listening to the man and understanding why he was behaving the way he was, he got him to settle down some. He continued to meet with the man and talk with him and he became at least more normal. Clearly this man was not functioning.

I am certain that the people who come to the HROC workshops are a selective group. First they are chosen by those organizing the workshop, and they are not likely to invite the kind of non-functioning people I have described above. Moreover even if invited, people may turn it down or not come if they are not ready. Recently in Rwanda, 9 out of 10 Tutsi survivors did not come to workshop because they did not want to meet "eye to eye" with the perpetrators. So another reason that the workshop succeed is because the people who show up are somehow ready—perhaps they have a feeling that something has to change in them, that the weight of what they have gone through needs relief—we get many testimonies where people say they feel "lightened" after the workshop, that they have shed a burden, a load. Carrying hatred, bitterness, anger, revenge, hostility around for a decade or more must destroy one's soul.

From Peter to Laura and Dave:

I reread Ciza' story. Your examples are sobering and it may well be that I overestimate how functional Burundians are after traumatization. I am also interested in what you wrote about the readiness that people have who actually come to the workshop. I think this is an important point and one that I hadn't thought of before. These people have both distress and a readiness to try to address it, and to begin to heal. Not everyone is ready for a workshop.

Applications are still being accepted for July 2007 workcamps in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. Please contact dawn@aglionline.org for more information.



Friends Women's Association Kamenge Clinic built by AGLI workcampers in July 2006 as it looked in November 2006. Since this picture the FWA is finishing the center room—door, window, plastering walls, floor, and electricity—so that they can move in by April when the lease of their current building expires.



This was built by the July 2007 AGLI workcampers for the street children's program in Rwanda. The blocks were made by the older children who would like to make cement block-making into a business. Because of the considerable amount of firewood used to make bricks, the government has banned the use of bricks.

didn't like each other. They came away from the workshops saying that they had come to realize that they were all the same, that they could be patient with each other and understand each other. It was particularly telling that in many of the interviews participants responded to the very first question, "What do you remember most about your AVP workshop?" by citing the bringing together of Congolese and Rwandans. This was no longer the case with people who continued on to the advanced workshop. By the advanced training less was said about the two groups and participants had to be specifically asked about the make up of the group to respond about the relationship between the Congolese and the Rwandans.

Recommendations for the future:

I didn't have any bad impressions because before the war Rwanda was a good friend to the Congo. Rwandans were living in Congo and we were living as brothers and sisters. Only one thing brought a problem, and it was due to the leadership of our country, the politicians. We the common people do not have a problem. - Congolese participant

AVP Gisenyi/Goma was the beginning of an important initiative; but it was only the beginning. For these communities to become closer together a wider and more encompassing program has to take place. Many participants suggested that politicians need AVP, but also the power of citizens to come together and build friendships between communities will most certainly aid in the relations between Goma/Gisenyi. Many participants talked about sharing the AVP lessons with family, neighbours, and church groups. It is important that there are more people adequately trained. People also had visions of AVP moving from the cities into the villages where they think more conflict happens.

Future plans:

David Bucura, from Rwanda, plans to organize AVP workshops with Rwandan and North Kivu leadership. AGLI's workcamp in Rwanda this summer will begin the construction of a peace center in Gisenyi near the border between Congo and Rwanda.

End quote:

As we passed around the room, person after person responded that they wanted to share what they had learned in AVP with their neighbors, their children, their husband or wife. They wanted to learn more and share with as many people as possible these

concepts that helped them to make something of the tribalism around them that causes death and pain—the nurse at the hospital that does violence to her patient with inattention or assumption of condition, the rumors about family members that placed them in prison for years in poor conditions with only knowing people in high places to get them out, relations with house workers or kids who are adopted and then abused, for the pastor helping to solve conflict between members of the church, understanding how we cause violence to each other, how violence is rooted in our relationships, our cultures, our communities, our families.

The energy in the room surged, like the long florescent lights that dim and get brighter as the electrical current fades in and out. This group, that had been together for a relatively inconsequential amount of time, was at its peak. All the lessons and practice of having to be called upon and acknowledge your preceding speaker was suspended. In listening was suspended as arms and voices jumped into the air. They were responding to the question of what groups are oppressed, voices quickly – prisoners, the poor, unemployed, orphans – people were speaking out of their own lives. It was the exercise entitled "Speak Out"; a chance to tell your story. You have the floor for those minutes. You are the one, with a support person joining you on either side, to talk through your experience. Much had already transformed in the room, beyond the symbolic moving of table with chairs, to the tables at the end of the room and the chairs in a large circle. Soon stories and experiences were filling each of those chairs. Some experiences that were just beginning to heal helped along by the lessons of AVP. But it was not the experiences and the stories that were transforming by the miraculous magical power of AVP; it was the hearts and minds of people opening themselves up to the transformation. The changes were not inconsequential. In an interview, a young man in his twenties explained to me that after the last day of AVP he had gone to someone who had wronged him and forgiven. He was working to teach his father the lessons of AVP that had enabled him to do that, hoping his father might also someday forgive. Another young woman spoke about her families' home being hit by a bomb, holding up her finger and covering her eye, she explained her mother's loss. The family lived in town and she had gone to forgive them for that wrong.

Anna Crumley-Effinger

- *AVP just changed my life. Before it, I never took time before reacting. When I was angry, I just flew into a rage. I was a terror in the home. In fact my family doesn't believe I am the same person.*

Florence of Ndal
Kitale, Kenya

- *What did you do to my wife? She is not just the same person. There is so much peace at home I just cannot believe it? I too need this training.*

Florence's husband

- *I think AVP has saved me. I was always angry. I never thought about myself. I would go for my salary, buy bread and some meat then just rush home. I was always in a hurry, always harassed. Now I go to the bank, go to the hotel to take a meal. Since the first basic I have bought myself 3 dresses. As a result of reminding myself that I matter, I have become a much better mother and wife. I listen to members of my family.*

Lydia Osama
a teacher, of Ndal – Kitale

- *Thank you so, so much!! Here the teachers just tell us "read to get A to go to the University." The parents tell us the same. Some of us know that we shall never get 'A'. We shall not go to the university. You have really opened our eyes to look at ourselves with value. Now I see from the merging of the tree of violence and that of non-violence that I have alternative ways of making development.*

James, a student at St. Don Bosco
Secondary School, Nyabiosi in Nyamira.

The stories can fill a whole book.

I find AVP to be a tool that allows sharing, that makes people look at each other as equals. This is difficult at the start, especially with disciplined forces (police, military), where ranking is important because it enables discipline and therefore effectiveness. Yet, by the second day, these people of different ranks forget their ranks and just become human beings wrestling with issues that affect them all.

Because AVP is so participatory, it speaks strongly to the African idea of community which has always been

so valued but which is fast disappearing. Everybody is busy trying to make ends meet. With 60% of the community living below the poverty line who has time to listen to another? Who has time to sit and reflect on the way they are rowing their lives? Who has time to think about the language they are using to talk to each other? The stress level is high. Men have lost their traditional role as bread winners and much anger exists in homes. Women feel over burdened with bringing up their families. The young adults with no jobs have lost self confidence and sometimes self value. They are angry with the world. Those in school see no value in their education because it has no benefits unless you are very brilliant.

Then comes AVP and you have 3 full days, virtually locked up, away from the hassle and bustle of life ... phones switched off, no going in and out to attend to other chores ... just being listened to, affirmed and loved for 3 full days.

For me and for those I have interviewed, this is where the crux of the matter lies. The most important spiritual principle is stressed ... LOVE & CARING for each other. When Jesus was asked by the Pharisees what he thought was the greatest commandment, He said "Love the Lord your God with all you heart and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matt: 22:37 NIV).

Jesus commanded Christians to love others as they love themselves. In many instances the priests, pastors and evangelists do not tell their congregation how to love themselves. You can only love as much as you love yourself. During the processing of the affirmation exercise, participants are asked to talk for 3 minutes about "what I like about myself". When asked how this exercise was for them many participants respond, "I was embarrassed. It looked like I was being proud and indulging is self pride." Many Christians have forgotten that Jesus said "love your neighbor as you love yourself". They just tell how one should love his/her neighbor.

In AVP one begins to learn how to love herself. How to affirm herself, actually take time to look into herself to not only think but verbalize these traits that she likes about herself. Then he is asked to tell another person traits in a leader they love or a person they respect and why. One is given time to THINK positively about themselves and others.

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Updates

Kathy Wright: The Friends Peace Teams (FPT) has hired Kathy Wright to be their Administrative Coordinator including the administration of the AGLI program. She is a CPA and a Sister of Loretto who has over 25 years of experience with non-profit finances. She has worked for a variety of organizations including the Quixote Center, Witness For Peace and the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign. After living and working in Haiti for two years, she has returned to the St. Louis area to work with the Loretto Community and the African Great Lakes Initiative and the Friends Peace Teams. Your thank-you cards will now have her signature! We welcome Kathy and expect her to be a tremendous asset as AGLI's and FPT's work continues to expand.

Solange Maniraguha: With the departure of Laura Shipler Chico from the HROC program in Rwanda, the Friends Peace House has decided to hire Solange Maniraguha to work with Theoneste Bizimana. Solange has been working with the HROC program since its beginning and has been one of the trainers in all of the HROC and Healing Companion training programs. She will be a great asset to the program.

Mediation trainings: Shortly after AGLI introduced AVP in the Great Lakes region, people asked for additional training in mediation since after the workshops they were frequently asked to help resolve conflicts. This sat, like too many things, on the back burner. Then an experienced mediation trainer, Judy Freisem and her Swahili-speaking husband, Kim Bush, planned to go to Africa for six months and asked how they could be useful. As is said, this was a no-brainer. Since November, they have done five one-week trainings—one each in Kigali, Rwanda; Bujumbura, Burundi; Goma, Congo; Nairobi, Kenya, and Lubao, western Kenya (where they used the almost-finished center built by the AGLI workcampers over the last two years). This training has been enthusiastically received and AGLI is working with CAPI (Change Agents for Peace, International, an outgrowth of Norwegian Friends work in the region) to develop a more significant, long-range program. This effort will begin by training all the AVP and HROC facilitators in mediation and then training pastors, church leaders, teachers, youth, community leaders, etc. Thanks to Judy and Kim for the great beginning!

Thailand: Laura Shipler Chico re-visited Thailand where she once spent a year working with refugee and exiled Burmese women involved in the Burmese democracy movement. On this two week trip she took Solange Maniraguha and Cecile Nyiramana from Rwanda along to meet Burmese democracy activists in Chiang Mai and along the Thai-Burma border. Cecile and Solange learned about the ongoing violence and human rights abuses in Burma and shared their own stories of survival and peace building. The exchange was rich with lessons and insights, compassion and hope. Solange wrote the following report:

The trip in Thailand was interesting to me. I was with Cecile for two weeks there and we were invited, as women from Friends Peace House, to attend the conference and share with other people our experiences in work, and, our personal experiences. We did two different workshops; the first were men and women; the second was for women only. We visited different organizations who work on reconciliation and peace process; like one association of released prisoners from Burma (the neighbor country of Thailand). I had a time of sharing my experience during the time of war, which is Genocide of 1994. I talked about how I was traumatized after war, and how I got healed from my trauma. I talked also about my experience of working with HROC - how HROC works. People there enjoyed the time we had with them; they said that the way we are working will help them to find new ways to deal with the problems they meet, especially people from Burma because they have war in their country which is ethnic conflicts. I enjoyed my time in Thailand where I found many people who are suffering. I listened to them with my body because they are suffering the way we suffered, or are still suffering: like having people in camps, orphans, widows, wives with husband in prison. I was happy too to see how people from there valued what we said. They told us from our experiences, they are going to begin building the trust between them and those they consider their enemies.

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This is an area that modern Christianity does not stress. Even when Christians go for a retreat of 3-5 days there are experts who teach the participants with limited time for discussion. The whole concept, which is gaining more and more prominence, is that of “the servant of God”, that an anointed pastor or priest has all the answers. He has been set aside by God and talks to God on behalf of his congregation.

Personally my position has crystallized as I have facilitated AVP workshops. AVP takes people back to what Christianity was meant to be. It brings everybody back to an equal level where all are teachers, all are learners. Facilitators simply lead the process but they also learn all the time.

AVP gives people time to be there for each other for 3 full days. If one goes through the 3 levels and becomes an active facilitator the AVP principles become a way of life. AVP opens one’s mind to areas of caring for others, of self respect and love that have a profound effect on one’s outlook.

AVP recognizes that for true change to take place one must allow a power greater than himself to come into play. This is the transforming power. I recognize that this power works even among people who are not Christians. Paul says in Romans 1:26 “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse”. This to me means that God’s Power and Divine Nature are there in the world and can be tapped by all humanity. It can use you if you align your thoughts and actions according to His will. This to my thinking is different from allowing yourself to be led and guided by Jesus Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit in your life. Indeed, this to me is a higher level which, when combined with the aforementioned natural eternal power and divine nature can make one the most transformed being there can be.

I believe like Quakers do, that there is good in everybody; and I can help one to see and express that good in them by the way I interact with them. The concept of salvation through Jesus Christ is a higher calling which requires a conscious and intelligent understanding and is based on Faith. I embrace all religions of the world because I know that we have all traveled different paths. That does not stop me from telling others about the wonder of being in Christ as a Christian. AVP is a great tool that enables me to interact with humanity, sharing with them a concept that truly transforms violence to non violence.

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Colombia: Val Liveoak, the coordinator of the Friends Peace Teams’ Latin America/Caribbean program visited Rwanda and Burundi with Alba Luz Arrieta Cabrales from Colombia, to observe and be stimulated by AGLI’s AVP and HROC work in these two countries. Cece Yocum reported, “The Rwandans and Burundians were very excited to have Alba there from Colombia and to hear that they were not alone, and especially to know that their work could be useful to those in other countries. Alba was very excited to see what they are doing since Colombia also has many displaced persons and demobilized combatants returning to their villages. So this was a very good exchange.”

Peace team members to Africa: In addition to Judy Friesem, Kim Bush, Val Liveoak, and Alba Luz Arrieta Cabrales mentioned above, Cece Yocum, AGLI Working Group member from St Petersburg (FL) Meeting, participated in the one-week training of the healing companions in Rwanda and observed a HROC workshop in Burundi. In January Eric Goldman from Alexandria (VA) Meeting, arrived in Uganda for three month’s involvement with the Children of Hope and the Bududa Hope Technical Institute. Minga Claggett-Bourne from Beacon Hill (MA) Meeting, spent two weeks in Western Kenya, helping to facilitate 4 AVP workshops. Sara Wolcott, a young Friend from Strawberry Creek (CA) Meeting, is spending a month or more in Western Kenya with Getry Agizah of AVP-Western Kenya. Peter Yeomans of Germantown (PA) Meeting, will return to Burundi in April where he will conduct another evaluation of the HROC program. Peter will be joined later by his father, Thomas Yeomans, who will offer a one-day training on Leadership. Barbara Wybar, many time workcamper from Germantown (PA) Meeting will travel to Bududa with Lorna Pitcher for a two week stay. May Kay Jou, an AVP facilitator who has gone to the Congo twice, plans to facilitate AVP trainings in Rwanda during May.

Friends Women’s Association: Cassilde Ntamamiro, founder of the Friends Women’s Association in Kamenge, Burundi, has moved to Los Angeles to be with her husband who is studying for a doctorate in theology. She is being replaced by Alexia Nibona, (1999 Kamenge workcamper) who is now a doctor and will cover the medical aspects of the clinic and Joselyne Dusabe who will be responsible for public relations, grant writing, and other administrative tasks. We wish Cassilde the best in this transition!

Can We Stop Genocide and Other Violent Conflict?

Thoughts by David Zarembka

The African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of the Friends Peace Teams has received, from Rwandan participants in our workshops, many testimonials which indicated that if Alternatives to Violence (AVP) had come to Rwanda before the genocide in 1994, there would have been no genocide. This implies that AVP and Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) are tools that can prevent violent conflict. Therefore, rather than sending in armed UN peacekeepers or other military solutions—the knee-jerk reaction to conflict that is favored by so many—these non-violent methods could heal the wounds, bring opposing sides back together, and avoid the violence. If we believe in peaceful, non-military solutions to conflict, we have a gigantic task ahead of us. Our programs are a “bottom-up” method of preventing violent conflict—certainly there are other “top-down” political, economic, and international methods that are also needed.

AGLI’s first stage, begun in 1999, was to introduce AVP in the region. One trained in the concepts the new facilitators had to adapt the program to their culture and conditions and gain experience. Then we had to conduct a second set of trainings to develop lead facilitators. In 2003 AGLI’s Rwandan and Burundian partners began developing the HROC program which is just now in its final stages of development with the Healing Companion program.

Our second stage was to extensively expand use of the AVP and HROC programs to address societal problems in the region. Conducting 100 workshops for almost two thousand *gacaca* judges in Rwanda and the workshops with the young “Guardians of the Peace” in Burundi are examples. Later, we focused more narrowly and intensely holding 20 AVP workshops and 6 HROC workshops in the one community of Nyamata, Rwanda and a series of 24 HROC workshops, 12 one-day follow up sessions, and 4 community celebrations in four communities in Burundi. This is important

work. In addition we began doing preventive work in the Rift Valley of Kenya which had had tribal clashes in the early 1990’s.

This work has begun to bring recognition to AVP and HROC programs and other organizations have begun to fund AVP workshops in the region. Two Rwandan women, Cecile Nyiramana and Solange Maniraguha, traveled to Thailand with Laura Shipler Chico to work with exiled and refugee democracy activists from Burma. Alba Luz Arrieta Cabrales from Colombia, South America has traveled to Rwanda and Burundi with Val Liveoak, Friends Peace Teams’ coordinator of the Latin America/Caribbean program, to observe the AVP and HROC programs.

Now we are beginning the most challenging venture—resolving violent conflicts as they are occurring. With support from AVP-New Zealand, we held six AVP workshops in Goma, North Kivu, Congo and the nearby Rwandan city of Gisenyi; each with half Congolese and half Rwandan participants. See page 7 for Anna Crumley-Effinger’s report on these workshops. David Bucura of Rwanda hopes to expand these workshops to include top government leaders from Rwanda and North Kivu province. We are just beginning AVP workshops in Turkana, Kenya where the traditional Turkana and Pokot pastoral warriors have acquired automatic weapons which have escalated this conflict into a destructive/deadly one. There is also interest in resolving deadly conflict in Molo, Kenya and, through the Rwandan peacekeeping mission in Darfur, between the conflicting sides there.

Are we up to these challenges? Can we stay focused and organized? Can we implement successful programs under very difficult circumstances? Can we acquire sufficient resources to make a significant difference? Can we prevent a violent conflict, a war, or genocide?