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Amahoro and God: Peace through Christianity and Ritual in Burundi

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Abstract

This study focuses on ritual and Christianity's ability to transform people's perceptions of each other. In Burundi, the Evangelical Friends church uses ritual to break down the animosities between the country's two main ethnic communities, Hutu and Tutsi, and turn them into one group based on a love of God and others. The church succeeds in doing this through a program called Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) and its Sunday gatherings. This study concludes that reconciliation is happening at a communal level, thanks in most part to Christian ritual.

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Introduction: Amahoro

I arrived in Bujumbura, Burundi, in the middle of June, during their dry season. I was scared, intimidated, and nervous and felt like I was never going to fit in. To this day I still don't fit in, but after two months I can say that I left a second family there. Soldiers and policemen with guns slung over their shoulders, dirty children running in herds to look at me, beggars at the bus stop opening my window to ask for money all flood my memory. Yet, the most powerful image kept in my memory is that of the church and its affect on the community. I witnessed a community heal. It was through the ritual and safety that the church provided that allowed so many people to come together and reconcile with a traumatic past.

Burundi's history may appear similar to a colonized African country on the surface, but it has faced its own set of unique circumstances. Before Burundi was colonized, it was under the rule of kings (Niyonzima & Fendall, 2001). There were tribal justice systems set up for any disagreements that may occur. During this time, there were Hutu and Tutsi. Hutu were seen more as farmers, cultivators of the field. Tutsi tended to own cattle and were considered to have been derived from the kings. The different ethnicities were not a source of conflict during this time (Niyonzima & Fendall, 2001).

During the colonial period they started under Germany's control in 1899 but after WWI went to the Belgians (US Gov., 2008). During this time, Belgium used the current system in place for the government. Burundi gained its independence July 1, 1962. The Tutsi remained in power and it was not until 1993 that a Hutu president was elected. Throughout the 60s and 70s many conflicts occurred between Hutu and Tutsi. Now that they were in control of their own country, the Hutu felt it time for their voice to be in the

government. When Melchior Ndadaye, the first Hutu president, was elected it was meant to be the beginning of a new era. That same year he was assassinated (US Gov., 2008). Tutsi military killed Ndadaye which resulted in many Hutu taking up arms to fight. This began an over 10 year civil war which resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths. It was not until about 2001 that a transitional government was put in place, with the help of the United Nations (US Gov., 2008). The government has run into many problems but has women in its parliament and has 60% Hutu and 40% Tutsi, as agreed on during negotiations with Nelson Mandela (Reyntjens, 2005). Currently only one rebel group has not signed the agreement, Forces of National Liberation (FNL), remains somewhat active but is currently in peace talks with the government (Reyntjens, 2005).

Kamenge is where, in 1993, the main Hutu uprising began. The members of this community still live in bombed houses. I attended the Evangelical Friends church of Kamenge. This sanctuary could hold 700 people, but there were still not enough seats. People stood in the windows and doorways. This was not a typical Quaker church. The Burundians had created a mix of choirs, sermons and personal prayer time into a three hour service. It was beautiful. People came from all over the country to attend the church service. After having gone through so much, and still dealing with not having jobs or other life circumstances, church provided an escape.

It was my third time attending that I saw what the church provided for the community. A university choir was performing and a local hand pointed out to me the men that had once been rebel soldiers. One man stepped forward from the choir and began a solo. His voice struck me with the amount of pain it held. Tears fell down his face as he sang and when he was done, with a smile of relief, he returned to his fellow

singers. Not only was God's presence felt in this church, I saw a man healing through His power, the energy and passion that he put into the words spoke of a faith beyond which we can imagine. My purpose for writing this paper is not to convert anyone to Christianity and I acknowledge that Burundi is almost 70% Christian which means there is still a 30% that this report will not address. Through speaking to community members and observing interactions at church and in the surrounding area I was able to see how the church functions as a source of community.

Upon returning to America, I discovered in my research that a vital component of peacemaking through Christianity is its rituals. "Ritual is an essential element of religion because it binds people together; ritual is a tool for building relationships" (Schirch, 2005). The root of the word "religion" comes from the same as the word "ligament," *ligare* means to "bind together" (Schirch, 2005). The rituals used in the church I went to did just that, the choirs connected with, and were a part of, the audience. Community members, not only clergy, gave sermons. Those in the audience were given the opportunity to come to the stage and pray together. The rituals help "people experience a fuller sense of health, wholeness, and holiness" (Schirch, 2005). Due to the extreme poverty and aftermath of war, Burundians need a place to gather in which all of that can be achieved. Though it was a mainly Hutu neighborhood, many Tutsi attended.

The focus of this paper is to show how Christianity in Burundi is a source of peacemaking. By looking at theology, the Bible and other sources of religion based research and mixing them with the programs that the Quakers have created and personal stories people had told me, an analysis can be made based on religion. This opens the door to a very important part of Burundi's peacemaking process, that of using ritual.

Ritual used by the church is pivotal in creating peace within the area. Through ritual, Hutu and Tutsi animosities are broken down so that the two groups may be built together as one that includes all. My dear friend Fiston once told me, “I am Burundian first, Hutu is second.”

Being only one person observing a small amount of time in the country leaves me at a disadvantage. Yet, through research and analysis what was observed was able to be explained. I believe that the programs the church has put in place are able to include all religious beliefs and have actually already worked with Muslims, traditional beliefs and other sects of Christianity. It is a community based form of peacemaking that takes its foundation from Christianity and could, if and when it has reached true success, be an example to other predominantly Christian countries. Burundi has a long way to go before it can be considered peaceful. The traumas of war are deep and take constant healing over long periods of time. This is my gift to all those who touched my life there, it is meant to show how they are healing and to use their actual words to show the hope, faith and drive toward making peace within their country. “Amahoro” in Kirundi means “peace.” Burundians do not say hello, they greet each other with peace every day, that is how it was in the past and how it will be in the future.

Peacebuilding Theory and Methodology

The theoretical framework that fits Burundi’s unique situation of healing through the church is outlined by Lisa Schirch, *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding* (2005). Her work on peacebuilding through ritual portrays the important connections actions and symbols have toward healing and creating a community. Ritual is defined to have three parts: space, symbols connected to emotions and its ability to assist change (Schirch,

2005). In ritual peacebuilding, the actual meeting space used must be a different setting than that which the participants see in everyday life. The use of senses and symbols during states of heightened emotions facilitate the last part which is the ability to create change. The senses and symbols both represent something that people have a connection to, thus drawing them deeper into engagement. Ritual is able to “transform people’s worldviews, identities, and relationships with others” (Schrich, 2005).

The research conducted for this project relies on qualitative methods. Through taking into account Burundi’s history and current political situation allowed a detailed analysis to be conducted by combining current literature on peacemaking through religion and ritual. These resources range from books to peer reviewed articles. My sources of information include interviews of Burundians and my personal observations while I was in Burundi two months. The focus of the research is at the communal level.

Most of the information is focused on peacebuilding, ritual, African Christianity, Burundi’s political/societal situation and conflict resolution theory as well as Burundi’s recent history and current conditions. They stem from other case studies in Africa based on how Christianity became “Africanized” to how Christianity is used to forgive others during and after conflict in the Former Yugoslavia countries. In peacebuilding the literature range from more open forms of how peacebuilding is created such as Lederach’s *Moral Imagination* to actual outlines used by those in the field or members of the community.

Ritual is the most vital part to the methodology and will be focused on throughout the project through its most basic functions into its usage during post-conflict situations. In order to understand the need for peacebuilding through ritual one must

have a foundation of Burundi's situation. This will be portrayed through information on the war, the political situation, and what the church is assisting. Conflict resolution theory is mentioned for it is as the umbrella in which ritualized forms of peacebuilding is under.

The experiences and stories will provide the eye-witness account of how the church is succeeding in creating peace and unity. It is important to have facts, theory and many resources to support a statement but many times it is the actual experience that creates an understanding. By sharing the local's stories and my own personal experiences, gives an element of reality to this research.

Christianity in peacemaking: Burundi's Interpretation through Ritual

Historically, Christianity has often invoked fear in the midst of conflicts by being the reason for the violence beginning or sustaining. The Crusades, for example, and other Christian forms of violence have effected perceptions of the religion. Yet, Christianity has the amazing ability to create peace, heal and help people forgive. Through its doctrine (Bible), rituals, and values Christianity offers hope and lasting peace in the world and in Africa. Specifically in Burundi, this is shown through its unique version of Christianity and its practice in communities.

In parts of Africa, Christianity "has become a force for resolving life's problems...solutions to personal problems, moral guidance, and a means to personal salvation" (Ray, 2000). African Christianity transforms from what many believe to be "Western" Christianity to a version that includes traditional beliefs and rituals (Ray 2000, Spear & Kimambo 1999, Fendall & Niyonzima 2001, Phiri 2000, Smith 1994). Africans "imbued it with meaning within the context of their own values and experience" (Spear &

Kimambo 1999). In Burundi the traditional belief was that there was one main God, Imana. When Christianity was introduced to the country it did not deny Imana's existence, instead Christianity accepted traditional rituals and beliefs and incorporated them into the missionaries' teachings (Ray, 2000, Fendall & Niyonzima, 2001). Currently there are many armed conflicts in Africa and when the armed part of the conflict is over countries are in a state of devastation, physically and spiritually. Christianity has the ability to reconcile the spiritual conflict through seeking peace among all which will be shown later when looking at Burundi.

Forgiveness is another central focus of Christian peacemaking (Gopin, 2000, Little, 2007, Fendall & Niyonzima, 2001, Appleby, 2000, Volf, 1996). It allows people to break down "us versus them" boundaries and takes away from the concept of the "other" (Niyonzima & Fendall, 2001, Volf, 1996). When a conflict is particularly brutal and violent, deeper boundaries must be crossed in order to foster forgiveness. The forgiveness is usually focused around loving others. Jesus' two commandments are, "Love God and love others." This sense of loving others refers to caring for all human beings, regardless of ethnicity, disability and sex. David Niyonzima, *Unlocking Horns* (2001), believes that "Christians must be the leaders in reconciliation and forgiveness refusing to believe the myth that violence is inevitable."

Forgiveness is deeply embedded in Christianity for it is seen as a "gift of God" (Volf, 1996) and something that occurs when people have "peace in [their] hearts and are reconciled with God" (Fendall & Niyonzima, 2001). The church is a pivotal partner in creating peace. It has the ability to create community and give leadership to areas in order to promote reconciliation (Fendall & Niyonzima, 2001, Little, 2007, Phiri, 2000).

Church leaders have “the stature in the community and credibility to lead” (Little, 2007). The structure of the church provides a safe place where people may come together to worship and seek guidance. Using Christian teachings creates “biblical peacemaker[s] will never settle for leaving anyone out with no way to meet their needs. To do so would be to despair, to disbelieve in God. Instead, she will take risks and embody Hope” (Mock, 2001). Religious leaders who work toward reconciliation create a “social climate of civic tolerance and peaceful coexistence” (Appleby, 2000).

Focusing on Lisa Schirch’s concept of ritual, *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding* (2005), Christianity is able to transform world views toward one that exist in peace. “Ritual forces recognition of two competing realities. In the midst of everyday social structures and values that define and limit human relationship, idealized ritual space allows new values and relationships to form.” The church gives space to allow people’s participation in ritual in a safe environment, separate from every day life. The coming together of people at church shows that “rituals are inherently communal, while at the same time being imaginative and playful even when serious” (Driver, 1991). Traditional beliefs are combined with Christianity in an “imaginative and playful” manner in the rituals used by Burundi’s Evangelical Friends church.

Christianity seeks to create solidarity. Burundi is 67% Christian, yet has been in deep conflict since the 1970s. Sadly, this has been the case in many countries that are predominantly Christian. Ritual, “as a medium for cultural messages...enables people to modify their social order at the same time that it reinforces basic categories” (Bell, 1997). The church seeks to modify the violence and ethnic divide while keeping the solidarity of being a devout Christian country which was lacking during times of conflict. During

church, people are able to have certain emotional reactions to words spoken and songs sung because those rituals create “an environment within which quite distinctive symbolic behaviors can appear to proper and effective responses” (Bell, 1997).

Churches focusing on reconciliation within war-torn countries must also acknowledge the political transition that has or is occurring (Phiri, 2000, Smith, 1994, Fendall & Niyonzima, 2001). They are “active partners in political reconciliation and in the creation of new political communities” (Smith, 1994). In order for communities to be successful in creating peace, policies must acknowledge religious needs. In Isaac Phiri’s work, *Proclaiming Peace and Love: A New Role for Churches in African Politics* (2000), Harvey J Sindima explains that “Politics is in everyday reality in which everyone is involved...Politics is about building networks of relations between people; a way people communicate among themselves as they live together.” People of the community may seek political equality through the motivation that the church provides. Churches, therefore, play a significant role in peacemaking because they create communication that transcends the communal level and goes to that of state. “Christian practice acts as one factor that encourages a sense of community beyond the immediate setting” (Spear & Kimambo, 1999).

When politics and religion mix it can create volatile situations. Christian peacemakers are given tools to defuse the situation not only through forgiveness, but also through ritual that is used to create trust and a safe environment (Schirch, 2005, Bell, 1997, Driver, 1991, Ray, 2000). Lisa Schirch, *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding* (2005), explains the necessity of ritual for its ability to “make meaning, create relationships, transform and heal identities in a unique, safe space.”

Although Christian ritual is a subject open for much interpretation, one in which people have extremely differing views, it is an important aspect of peacemaking and is exemplified in Burundi. Reconciliation in post-conflict situations is desperately needed and when the country dealing with the situation is devoutly Christian, such as in Burundi, is vital.

Burundian Christian Peacemaking

Peacemaking can be defined as a process to create a sustained coexistence between two or more conflicting populations. The framework of peacemaking varies depending upon the literature read and the conflicts being dealt with. After the conflicts have ended, only ensures a cease of causalities, however, not necessarily an environment of peace. The point at which a war ends but true reconciliation has not occurred is called “negative peace,” it is only when the process of healing begins that a country moves toward “positive peace” (Lederach, 2005). During this time of negative peace many in the community are in need of some form of help and hope. Christianity offers the most comprehensive look at Burundi’s peacemaking process on a communal level through programs the church puts in place and the actual people living there.

Peacemaking is not a one-day workshop fix. When dealing with conflicts that run deep in the history and politics of an area, various factors must be recognized. Many times governments are weakened, if not brand new, after a conflict and are not able to provide necessities for their people. Basic needs must be met such as clean water, food/seed for planting, freedom of movement and ability to work. Dealing with emotional/psychological aftermath of war such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),

spiritual conflicts, emotional pain, fear, resentment, justice and other needs ideally should be addressed at the same time as basic needs are being met.

The Quaker church of Burundi has two specific programs that are used to deal with the animosities between Hutu and Tutsi which have created devastation within its borders. Alternatives to Violence Programs (AVPs, originally used in America to integrate prisoners into a life of nonviolence once released) and Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) have been extremely successful (Bizimana, Niyongabo, Zarembka 2004, Niyongabo, 2007). All workshops are required to have 10 Hutu and 10 Tutsi participants. Through both ethnicities working together, the community is able to see all members of equal value and this fosters an environment of respect, understanding and unity.

A different term for peacemaking in post-conflict situations is *reconciliation*. Reconciliation “must be proactive in seeking to create an encounter where people can focus feelings and experiences with one another, with the goal of creating new perceptions and a new shared experience” (Lederach, 1997). The ability to reconcile with another person creates a relationship that allows peaceful co-existence. Relationships built on trust and openness allow communication to be a constant in an area where ethnic divide put up walls for many years. John Lederach, *Moral Imagination* (2005), believes that to stop violence “requires that people embrace a more fundamental truth: Who we have been, are, and will be emerges and shapes itself in a context of relational interdependency.” David Little, *Peacemakers in Action* (2007), explains how to create peace through the same principles but includes “religious belief” for it provides “a critical basis for the vision, motivation, and perseverance required for the chosen task.”

In post-conflict situations, such as Burundi, reconciliation is achieved by having the “conflicting parties... acknowledge their responsibility and guilt” (Reychler & Paffenholz, 2001). For these groups to be accountable for causing pain to others and truly feel remorse for the “enemy” requires a paradigm shift. A paradigm shift can transpire when there is time, patience and determination on both sides to come together and work toward what is best for all, not a specific population. The workshops are open to those of all religions and backgrounds, the rituals are Christian, but the values focused on are within most belief systems. When two conflicting groups come together they still see each other as enemies, it is ritual’s goal to break down the boundaries they have put up and rebuild the groups as one. Noel is an example of this paradigm shift.

I met Noel briefly at the beginning of my AVP workshop only two days after having arrived in Bujumbura. He did not speak a word of English, but knew sign language. The locals I worked with had found him to interpret for Marcy, an American who is deaf. After a few days Marcy approached me because she wanted to share his story. Noel is a pastor and teacher at a local school for deaf children. During the war he had been teaching and on this day he heard gun fire nearby. Some of the children that were hard of hearing began to cry. Soon the radio began to speak “words of hatred” (Popp, personal communication, 2007). A teacher ran into his classroom covered in blood saying that he needed to come outside. Noel made his students stay and went outside. Soldiers began filling the courtyard and were screaming at the children, “What race are you?!” Noel tried to explain that the children could not hear them. They asked what race he was and Noel told them truthfully that he was Hutu. They then killed 260 children, only 40 survived. He drove up to a deaf community to warn them of the soldiers and as

he was there he saw the soldiers coming. The people were in church and said that they had no reason to fear the soldiers. The last thing he heard them say was, “Good morning officer,” before they were all killed (Popp, personal communication, 2007).

Many of the people I worked with that summer were Tutsi. The AVP workshop had attendees that were both Hutu and Tutsi with very different pasts. Noel still showed up everyday to interpret and actually began to participate in the activities. He still works at the same deaf school that now has about 200 students. When visiting the school with him one could see the love he had for the children. He believes that through his preaching and teaching he can help his country and those often overlooked, such as the deaf. The essence of the religion is to love others and love God. David Niyonzima, *Unlocking Horns* (2001), believes that “people must take up the challenge to live actively as Christians and put an end to the hatred that is based on being from different ethnic groups.” Noel is an example of “living actively” to fight what had happened in the very school he still teaches at. He exemplifies the ability to “invite God’s spirit to come and live with [them]...then will [they] stop seeing differences and realize we are all one” (Niyonzima & Fendall 2001). Noel has *reconciled* with those who killed so many innocent children.

James 3:18 states, “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.” The beatitudes explain how “blessed are the peacemakers for they are the children of God.” A theology student, Enoch, explained that, “On the mountain side there are many different colored flowers, that is what God wants” (Popp, personal communication, 2007). Similarly, the bible says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” Galatians 3:28.

Peacemaking is ingrained in Christianity. Elie, a local Quaker pastor in Bujumbura has had to rebuild his home six times because of bombings or Tutsi taking them (Popp, personal communication, 2007). Some of his closest friends are Tutsi and he is the main contact that the Americans of AGLI have. He helps the Americans make arrangements to rebuild his community with the help of the people living in his country. I have never known someone so full of happiness. He is the first to wrap you in a bear hug and ask how you are.

Elie was able to “readjust [his] identities to make space for them [other group], as prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity” (Volf, 1996). He is not upset about his past; he believes that there is room for everyone in the world. Elie, as a religious leader in the community is able to draw upon “religious resources in a call to forgive and to recognize the humanity of the ‘other’” (Little, 2007). Those in leadership roles within the community have the ability to communicate to all, Hutu and Tutsi alike, to show them the connections through Christianity. Practicing the religion “acts as one factor that encourages a sense of community beyond the immediate setting” (Spear & Kimambo, 1999). Because each person reflects God, they are able to seek out the “humanity in all people” (Little, 2007).

When combining basic peacemaking principles and Christianity, a framework that includes honesty, trust, love, compassion, humanity and faith is created. Using this structure Burundi is able to harnesses its religious ideals to create a lasting peace within its borders. Noel’s presence at the deaf school and Elie’s dedication for working toward acceptance through the church are two of many examples of how the church and its teaching has transformed people. Through focusing on Christianity and reconciliation

principles, Christianity through its rituals and the church, will at long last heal the wounds of a country in need of togetherness.

Burundian Ritual in Peacemaking

Within peacemaking, there is a commonly overlooked factor that is extremely important in creating lasting reconciliation, and has the ability to break down long standing hostility. Ritual is this component. Churches are able to harness this component and build trust among all groups. The way in which ritual can “make meaning, create relationships, transform and heal identities in a unique, safe space” (Schirch, 2005) allows it to be a valuable tool in post-conflict situations where peace treaties are signed, but communities have not shaken hands with their foes.

Ritual can be defined many different ways and applied in just as many. Lisa Schirch, *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding* (2005), provides the most relevant definition based on her focus toward groups dealing with the aftermath of violence/trauma. Ritual “uses symbolic actions to communicate a forming or transforming message in a unique social space” (Schirch, 2005). For a change to occur, emotions and deep fears will have to be addressed and ritual provides a structure to how those may be dealt with. The five types of ritual explained by Schirch are: religious, traditional, formal, socializing and constructive. Religious ritual explains how some actions are meant to be connected to a higher power, something unseen but believed in. Traditional is based on repeating rituals done in the past and has formal outlines on how a ritual is to be done. Socializing rituals perpetuate the status quo and constructive ones address all people of a population. All five forms have their opposites—secular,

improvised, informal, transformative and destructive. In peacemaking it is important to emphasize the religious, formal, informal, transforming and constructive types of ritual.

Actions such as prayer, dancing, singing and the structure of church services all play a very important part in peacemaking through religious ritual. A large majority of the actions are symbolic for the content in which they address and repetition used. The symbolic acts, “penetrate the impenetrable, overwhelm the defensive and convey complex messages without saying a single word” (Schirch, 2005). “Not saying a single word” is to not bluntly state what is wanted from the act, though many words may be said such as in song or prayer, the continuing of these actions every Sunday are what “penetrate the impenetrable.”

Religion is vital to many people after armed conflict and the church uses ritual because they “are not born out of affluence and leisure but are instead created out of necessity by those people who hang most desperately to life” (Schirch, 2005). The church and the programs it institutes use a formal ritualistic approach through its schedule of what is to happen, yet within the structure informal rituals occur.

Church services for the Evangelical Friends in Burundi last three hours every Sunday. Children sit on the ground in front and adults fill the pews. Over 700 people attend. When the seats within the church are full people stand in the windows and doorways.

The main focus of the service is music, which can be seen as an example of all the different forms of ritual being emphasized. Students from the University, mothers, Sunday school children, local youth and others all have their own choir groups. Some use instruments such as the base guitar, keyboard and traditional drums while others use

only their voices. Each has a unique way to introduce their choir. Some begin singing in the audience and walk onto stage and begin to perform. Others sit together near the front and walk up before singing. Traditional dance and clothing is at times worn, while Western clothing and forms of music are also acceptable. The choirs sing and the audience joins in, performing hand movements to certain songs and dancing to those with a fast beat.

Transforming rituals are necessary to reconstruct a different way of viewing all of those involved in the conflict. The ritual can take the participants a step further and work toward challenging cultural stigmas and worldviews. Ritual is what “helps lubricate the change process” (Schirch, 2005). Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (1997), explains how “ritual is an event, a set of activities that does not simply express cultural values or enact symbolic scripts but actually effects changes in people’s perceptions and interpretations.” The goal of transforming ritual is to change the paradigm of those involved. Claire is an example of how transforming ritual is able to create such a change.

Claire, a Rwandan Tutsi, attended the church with her husband Duestin, a Rwandan Hutu. Their children were at the Sunday school during the services. They fled Rwanda when it became clear that because of their ethnicity there was going to be trouble brought to them and their family. Claire told me stories of watching her mother, a Hutu, getting beaten because she would not say where her husband, a Tutsi, was. Claire had to take her three siblings and run to Congo so as to not suffer the fate that many Tutsi did. She never saw her parents again. Claire is a quiet woman, and that story was the only time she opened up about the traumatic past. Yet, every Sunday she is there, sitting in the

pew next to her husband, participating with the others. Claire is an example of how the church's ritual "strengthen[s] relationships both between humans and God and among human followers of the religion" (Schirch, 2005).

Claire has many reasons to be angry at the Hutu that have inflicted pain upon her and could be seen as justified in seeking revenge. Claire does not say she forgives the Hutu or that she has come to peace with where her life is. She is married to a Hutu, goes to a mainly Hutu church and works as a nurse at a women's AIDS clinic in a Hutu neighborhood. Her use of religion is "not about the elimination of desire but its *transformation* from lower to higher forms—the transformation of the suffering world into one more compassionate, loving and just" (Driver, 1991). The *transformation* is done inwardly through her choices and outwardly through her participation in Christian rituals. This form of ritual also shows the forgiveness that Christianity emphasizes.

Rituals that are constructive attempt to include the needs of all. "Rituals are inherently communal" (Driver, 1991) and must be inclusive to have success. The needs that must be dealt with in a time when there is a supposed "peace" but people have been deeply affected by war are the ability to heal, trust, coexist with those who have inflicted harm upon them, gain emotional strength and faith. Rituals that portray a constructive character would be those that Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities uses.

The Quaker church of Burundi has two specific programs that are used to break down the ethnicities that have created devastation within its borders. Rituals used are praying and singing before the programs starts and trust building activities. Through both ethnicities working together, the community is able to see all members of equal value which fosters an environment of respect, understanding and unity. These programs are

intended to, through ritual, enable people “to modify their social order...” (Bell, 1997).

On the third and final day, the workshop is dedicated to building trust, one activity used is the Trust Walk. This activity is done by all participants. Without telling the group what is going to happen they ask for 10 people to make a line and face the other 10 members. Once each person is facing a partner the facilitator explains that one line will be blindfolded (they are not in reality but instructed to pretend by closing their eyes). The partner that is not blindfolded must lead the blind one around a defined area. After a certain amount of time the participants switch places.

When the activity has been completed the group gathers together and is asked what they learned from the Trust Walk, what was difficult and how can it be related to trauma. The concept that the exercise was made for was to show that during times of trauma we are sometimes the blind needing help and those who are asked to be the helpers. By creating a “humanizing space” the ritual is able to “transform identity” (Schirch, 2005). Instead of looking at ethnicity, the participants are asked to look at each other as people needing help and those who can provide it. It allows the Hutus and Tutsis to change from enemies “to fellow problem solvers” (Schirch, 2005). By the third day of the program the participants are able to start seeing each other as partners and not those on opposite sides of the conflict.

Another form of ritual is that of performance. This is expressed throughout the five forms above mentioned but is important to explain for how it allows people to have “active rather than passive roles for ritual participants who reinterpret value-laden symbols as they communicate them” (Bell, 1997). In some cultures, women are not allowed to give speeches, but after a conflict, women may begin to play a bigger role in

communities and actually become the leaders, and through giving speeches at churches and other facilities, reinterpret a cultural standard. HROC and Sunday gatherings offer examples of performance ritual.

Each day during the three day HROC training there is a time for prayer and song. This is done every morning before anyone begins and after lunch a song is performed. Through the repetition of prayer and song the actions become ritual and break down Hutu/Tutsi differences. They come together, as a single unit, to give themselves up to God and must hear their voices as one in song. It is a form of Christian Sacrament. Tom Driver (1991) defines Christian Sacrament as, “an action of God together with the people of God, ritually performed to celebrate freedom and to hasten the liberation of the world.” The group no longer has any defining characteristics other than “people of God.” Christian sacrament can and will be used synonymously with “ritual.” By opening the workshop every day with this ritual, the first step toward reconciliation.

Another form of ritual takes place at the church on Sundays. After a sermon is given by a leading community member, it differs week to week who the speaker is, there is a time to come up if you have a private prayer needing immediate attention. Mats are set on the stage and slowly people from the audience come up, take off their shoes and kneel while a choir sings a solemn hymn. Those kneeling are deep in prayer, crying and shaking. They are not speaking in tongues, but are participating in a ritual hoping to get closer to God. Each person is able to perform the ritual while getting closer to God.

Ritual’s relationship to peacemaking is at times inseparable. Though not always mentioned, ritual is a part of everyone’s day-to-day life. It is only when this ritual is used

in a unique space, such as a church or workshop, that it has the ability to transform and create peace.

Voices of Burundi

Through combining values, teachings and the use of ritual, the Evangelical Friends church of Burundi are encouraged to take step toward peace. This process is not meant to be easy or fast, it is a deeply inward and spiritual task. In order to reveal if the church has succeeded it is more important to hear the actual voices of those who have gone through, or are going through the process. My words fall short of simply describing their transformation.

The Quakers who began the HROC program decided to follow-up six to nine months after people had attended the workshop to see how their lives had changed, or stayed the same. The interviews were conducted all over the country in the participants' homes. Adrien Niyongabo, a Burundian Quaker and facilitator of the workshops conducted the interviews and translated them from Kirundi to English. Two members of the Evangelical Friends Church, in Kemange, that I had the honor of working with during my two months in the country, Fiston and Samuel, are examples of how the church's ritual transformed their lives. Though the participants and my friends may not know the exact terminology for how the change occurred, the fact remains that one did.

HROC is a Quaker program, yet the attendees are from all religions and backgrounds. Catholics, Pentecostals, recently released from prison, living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, women, men, married, single, grandmothers and fathers all attend. Most of those who have attended speak of how they once felt compared to

their current situation. As Spes Ntirampeba said, “It is like I am a symbol of change!” (Niyongabo, 2006).

Most workshop attendees spoke before arriving, of having an exhausted heart “from carrying all the bad stuff,” how “he could not hug a Tutsi,” and “life was like a burden: worthless.” Some who attended saw old neighbors or people they had not seen due to imprisonment. One man, Jean Ntaco (Hutu), felt like leaving the workshop the first day when he saw a Tutsi from a local IDP camp arrive. Yet, he stayed and explained how later, “My former opponents asked me to forgive them for all the troubles they caused and I forgave them from my heart” (Niyongabo, 2006).

Jean told Adrien how on “the second day, we, as released Hutu and demobilized Tutsi, decided to start an association so that we may have many times meeting and working together.” Everyone did not create some type of organization but Tutsi, such as Goreth Ahishakiye, for the first time since before 1993, felt safe to leave her harvest in Hutu’s homes. Margaritte Butoyi, a Tutsi that witnessed the mass killings of other Tutsi in her neighborhood, said that, “Being able to share with those I met in HROC workshop tremendously helped. I have been able to let it go.” One man attended the workshop and was able to forgive his neighbor who had taken over his home with other Hutu and eaten his cows right in front of him. The neighbor was shocked, but to the man, forgiveness was the right thing to do because of what he had learned during HROC (Niyongabo, 2006).

The sentiment after having participated were of “I am not the only one...healing and reconciliation...love and compassion...human is always human...strength to surrender my revenge inner instinct.” Sylvain Toyi sums up his experience by saying,

“My heart was like a dirty cloth and now HROC has washed me” (Niyongabo, 2006).

The Quaker church that established the program is located where the war started in 1993, the Kamenge neighborhood of Bujumbura. Samuel and Fiston call this neighborhood their home.

Samuel is originally from Kibimba, a small town two hours north east of the capitol. When he was nine years old he decided to leave home and go into the city. He explains what he did by “asking gifts from cars” (Popp, personal communication, 2007). The war broke out when he was around that age and had to hide with all the others. I asked why he didn’t leave and he told me that it took money to leave, and many did not have enough. Years later, Marcelline, a pastor’s wife, met him through the church and worked with Samuel to get him a job as a motorcycle taxi. Marcelline owned the business and after Samuel got his license she allowed him to keep all the money he earned on the weekends. Eventually he became part of the youth choir. The choir was the time in his life that the church’s ritual was able to have an effect on his life. Through singing biblical hymns he was opened to a way of life that gave hope. He made lasting friendships with others in the choir, one being Fiston. The church now uses him as the main contractor on the jobs they carry out. It was through this job position that I was able to meet him and learn his story. Samuel is extremely quiet and sweet and the more you work side by side with him, the more he opens up. If it weren’t for the church he would be living an existence even more exhausting both physically and emotionally. The church has given him a new life and hope.

One would understand if Samuel had resentment toward life and all his misgivings. He had saved his money to build a house in his home town. The house was

bombed by the Tutsi government and shortly after his goat died. In Burundi, in order to marry, one must have a house for the bride and something to show wealth such as a goat, cow or chicken. Samuel lost everything that he had in order to secure a future with a family. I asked him one day if he wanted to marry a Hutu, like himself, or a Tutsi. Though our conversations were usually short because of the language barrier, this one seemed to have stopped time. Squatting in an empty room scrubbing paint off the concrete floor he looked at me for a long time. Smiling he said, "I want wife, Hutu, Tutsi, no matter, a woman I love matter." I smiled back and he continued, "If God say Tutsi, I take Tutsi, if God say Hutu, I take Hutu" (Popp, personal communication, 2007). His devotion to God confirms the impact of being in the choir and attending Sunday gatherings.

Fiston is an extremely tall Hutu. He plays the bass guitar in youth band on Sundays. His mother, Constantine, is a general in the police and usually helps with sermons on Sunday. Fiston and I would talk about religion quite often. He was curious about other religions and how people can *not* believe in God. We participated in an AVP workshop together where through role playing and listening exercises Fiston and I built a friendship based on trust and openness. Many of the activities required partners and though we did not mean for it to happen, Fiston and I were together the majority of the time. By participating in ritual together, praying, eating and singing we broke down the black/white barrier. A few weeks before I left I asked him the same question as Samuel; does he want to marry Hutu or Tutsi? Instead of answering, Fiston said it was his secret.

A week later he took me aside and said, "Whinny, I want to tell you my secret, but you must not tell anyone." His big smile told me that it would be alright if I told, and

I feel that what he told me should never be a secret. “I wish to be an example to my community. They need to know that Hutu and Tutsi can be together. I wish to marry Tutsi to show them we are all the same” (Popp, personal communication, 2007). I didn’t know what I was expecting, but it wasn’t that response! His selflessness and devotion to his community still amazes me.

Creating peace through Christian ritual promises a lasting peace. Having the constant of God in each person’s life opens the door to finding others in similar situations, regardless of ethnicity. Knowing that their pain and struggle was not without meaning allows each person to continue on, no matter how hard the circumstances. One day the country will be able to say, as Sylvain Toyi, “I slept more deeply than any other single night...” (Niyongabo, 2006).

I didn’t believe that forgiveness and healing truly could be achieved. Throughout my studies many examples of reoccurring conflicts, revenge killings and other forms of violence seemed to be more frequent than lasting peace. Ritual was used to incite violence and create boundaries between groups of people. After leaving Burundi it was clear that forgiveness was possible, but the *how* still remained a mystery. Now, after looking at the forms of ritual and different ways that Christianity unifies an answer has been formed.

A Starting Point

In order for Christian ritual to be successful it must have the participation of community members and leaders. Whether it’s going to a Sunday gathering or attending a HROC program, *all* people must participate. The programs and other rituals should not discriminate even if they are viewed as Christian. It can be viewed negatively if one

focuses on the conflicts between religions, but if similarities are emphasized there is a greater chance for peace.

Christianity and ritual is not a “fix all” method toward creating peace. Many other events must be occurring at the same time. Government reform, demobilization, economic development and health care are some aspects of post-conflict reconstruction that will help community members. What Christian ritual offers is an emotional peace through fostering a safe environment for worldviews to shift. Burundi is unique in its conflict but the methods discussed earlier can be applied successfully if there is willingness by the community. It does not have to be Christianity. What has been focused within this report are values that can be found in most major religions. If communities seek out what creates peace within their belief systems, ritual can be used to solidify peace.

What the report cannot do justice to is the subject of faith. For the transformation to occur through ritual there must be a faith toward people in the community and many times, toward a higher power. The stories told fall short of revealing the depth of those who experienced the events because there is an aspect that words cannot describe.

Christian ritual offers a starting point in creating a “positive peace” (Lederach, 2005) that can heal the wounds of a traumatic past. Burundians are not to the point where all Hutus and Tutsis get along and don’t view ethnicity. There are still those who hold hatred toward each other. With hope and faith one can look toward a day in which all Burundians are able to live with each other and settle disputes nonviolently.

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