

The Concerned Citizens for Peace is a group, which came into being following the violence that erupted in Kenya after the disputed December 27th 2007 elections. The group embraces the values of peace, justice, inclusiveness, non-discrimination and non-violent action. Through regular meetings, the group seeks to provide a forum where members can generate and harvest ideas to restore peace, truth and justice in Kenya.

## Night Vigil

By Mercy Wairimu Gichangi

"Hakuna Kulala!!!! Kenya ni Home" was the theme of the Night Vigil organized on 25th January 2008 by the Concerned Youths for Peace, which brought together youths under the Peace Net and Every One initiatives for this cross-community and cross-generational event hosted by the Concerned Citizens for Peace.

More than 250 youths, including many from the poor urban settlements of Kibera, Korogocho, Babadogo, Dandora, Mathare, Kariobangi and Kawangware came together for the vigil in solidarity with the cause of peace, reconciliation, and healing for Kenya.

From 8 p.m. to 6 a.m., attendants paying their respects to those who lost their lives lost in the post-election violence



Some youth who attended the night vigil

presided over the gathering held at the World Harvest International Church on Koinange Street in Nairobi. The night vigil was open to all, whether youths or simply the young at heart.

A memorial board and a banner in memory of those who have died due to the post-election conflict greeted participants at the entrance to the vigil. Each participant stopped by the memorial board to light a candle to remember those lost to the violence. Those who wished to write message of hope to the many Kenyans affected by or lost to the violence tied their note to a flower, which then was laid before the board as part of the memorial. Participants also had the option of choosing to lay upon the memorial one of the many flowers with messages from women in the various camps for internally displaced people. Together, the heaped flowers represented a powerful show of support to and aspiration for all those affected around the country.

As the night and vigil went on, speakers who came forward to share their thoughts on the national grief and their hopes for the future included Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, General Daniel Opande General Lazarus Sumbeiywo, and Joe Kibutu of Concerned Citizens for Peace. Dr. George Wachira of Nairobi Peace Initiative, Dr. George Wainaina of One Kenya One World, and Life Coach Jane Katuga also



George Wachira, a CCP member giving a speech.

shared with the group their messages of peace and healing. Artists

Mbuvi and Manasseh, who performed free of charge supported us all with their music throughout this very moving Friday night vigil.

Mercy Gichangi, Diana Kamau, Berly Williams, Ben Lyai, Eric Guantai, and George Munami organized this beautiful Night Vigil on behalf of Concerned Citizens for Peace, Peace Net and Every One. Together we thank all who contributed toward the Night Vigil including Irungu Houghton, Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, Mike Eldon, Shalini Gidoomal, the staff of Oxfam Kenya, Daniel Ochiwa (security firm services), Saba Douglas-Hamilton (flowers), Frank Pope (photographs), Peace Net (messages), World Harvest International (venue).

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"Talking something over is better than leaving it pending."

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Kenyan proverb from African Wisdom on War and Peace,  
compiled by Annetta Miller

## Healing Ourselves and Others

*Doreen J. Ruto*

When violence strikes a community, it often leads to trauma. Traumatic events or situations can leave us feeling helpless and terrified. When this happens, it is not always possible to obtain expert help right away, although churches and mosques and personnel assisting displaced persons usually offer such assistance. Fortunately, we can help ourselves and others in some very basic ways:

### Helping Yourself

Pay attention to the signals in your body that tell you that you are feeling stress, fear, or anger. When you experience this, try doing the following:

- Breathe deeply. This will calm your body and mind.
- Relax your muscles instead of keeping them tense to help release the tension.
- Engage in physical exercise like running, walking, dancing, and sports.
- Express your feelings. Keeping your feelings bottled up inside may make things worse.

Identify feelings that prevent you from healing such as anger, guilt, shame, or desire for revenge, and try to let go of them.

Tell your story to a person you trust. Include your thoughts and feelings before, at the time of the traumatic event, and afterward.

Memorialize your loss by writing a poem, song, journal, or letter or by drawing or painting a picture.

Recognize what may trigger your trauma response and try to find support from your friends, family, or church instead of staying in isolation..

### Helping Another Person

The traumatic experience of a friend or someone else you are close to may leave you wondering what you can do to help. The greatest help can often come from quite simple gestures on your part:

- It is important for them to know that you are there and that you care.
- If they want to talk about their experiences, stay calm and just listen.
- Don't judge their choices or behaviors.
- Don't give advice or answers.

Sometimes your presence and compassion is the most meaningful gesture to the other person.

### Compassionate Listening

Effective listening can be a powerful tool for reducing tensions and resolving conflicts, building bridges between people, and deepening our understanding of others. Hearing each other's stories allows for mutual compassion and understanding. Listening in ways that heal and connect people is a skill that can be learned. When listening to heal and connect people,

- Be present for the person who is sharing their story. As much as possible, leave your own concerns behind. Try not to act hurried, distracted, or restless.
- Listen empathetically. Try to see the world through the eyes of the other person.
- Follow the basic ground rules of good listening: Don't interrupt, interrogate, or give advice unless asked.
- When listening to another, don't tell your own story or share personal problems except on rare occasions.
- Communicate—through words and nonverbal behaviors—these powerful and positive messages: "I am interested in what you are saying." "I am trying to understand your emotions and feelings." "I am not judging you."
- Be a sounding board: Allow the speaker to explore a variety of options and ideas while you remain nonjudgmental.
- Be careful not to ask a lot of questions. If you do ask questions, make them open-ended ones that can't be answered with a mere "yes" or "no" to clarify and encourage the person to share in greater depth. Some examples of open-ended questions: "What has happened to you?"; "Would you tell me more about . . ."; "What was it that was most frightening to you?"; "How has this affected you?"; "What signs of courage and kindness did you see?"; "What other difficulties have you survived in the past and how did you do that?"; "How can I help?"
- Create a safe, positive atmosphere through culturally appropriate nonverbal behaviors.
- Listen for indications of strength, survivorship, and resilience. Identify and affirm them for the person who has shared their story.

## Acknowledgements

On Friday, 15th February 2008, the Concerned Citizens for Peace meeting was honored by the presence of a significant number of retired Kenya Army personnel from various parts of Kenya who call themselves the Kenya Veterans for Peace. These veterans have served in Kenya and as peacekeepers in other countries. They all expressed their concern about the instability in Kenya today and their commitment and willingness to restore peace here at home.

## Upcoming Events and Highlights from *amani sasa* daily

### Calling All Writers

Kwani Special edition is looking for stories, those who have written any or want to write this is your opportunity!

Kwani Trust is organising a workshop for writers wanting to engage in the narratives and life experiences of diverse Kenyans during this historic time. There will also have a half-day photography workshop for the Kwani issue for potential photographers. They are additionally giving an opportunity for paid work, for persons who want to avail themselves to write on Generation Kenya 45 heroes corner, which will profile people born since independence who have assisted during this time. Two stories of 1500-2000 words on heroes will be used each week, with photographs. See . Details on when this will be carried out will be announced shortly.

### Saturday 16th February 2008

One Stop Youth is organising a talk show targeting all youth Under the theme of 'Post election violence: The underlying issues' on the 16th of February 2008 at 11am, at the One stop youth centre located at Kenya Railways Traffic Superintendent Building on Haile Selassie Avenue, Next to Uchumi Railways of Easy Coach Bus Services. The youth are appealing for media coverage for the above-mentioned event. All are welcome to join us.

Concerned youth for Peace is hosting leaders from poor urban settlements together with media practitioners at a meeting to discuss various activities being undertaken in the poor urban settlements and how these can be publicised. The meeting will be at the KEPSA boardroom, shelter Afrique House (Mamlaka road), 2nd Floor between 2 and 4 p.m. This is a weekly meeting taking place every Saturday; those who are interested in working with the youth from poor urban settlements are invited.

### Sunday 17th February 2008

CASAM is having a meeting at Kasarani on Sunday afternoon. They would like to request for roses and transport to the venue.

### Monday 18th February 2008

The Dedan Kimathi Peace Foundation is organising a prayer meeting and tree planting in Ihururu Nyeri on Monday 18th February 2008. all are invited.

### Tuesday 19th February 2008

The Leadership Institute of Kenya Kirichwa Road near Masaba Hospital is holding their weekly meeting at their offices on an intellectual approach to harmonising tribes, clans and races in Kenya and to develop materials for schools and colleges on Tuesday 12th February 2008 at 5.00 p.m. Persons from various cultures and backgrounds in Kenya are invited.

### 23rd February – 1st March 2008

All are invited to the National Youth violence Prevention Week from the 23rd February -1st March 2008. The activities planned for this week include: Peace concerts, guidance and counselling in schools and IDP camps, a conference to encourage dialogue among the youth, Laying of flowers at KICC and freedom corner. These activities will take place concurrently in schools and informal settlements around Nairobi that is Kibera, Mathare, Huruma and Dandora.

The organisers are requesting for assistance in the form of flowers for the week, and assistance in organising a peace garden for Kenyans, which will be run by the youth as a way of curbing unemployment.

Compiled by Linda Bore

### Outstanding information of the week

Kenya's National Anthem derives its tune from the Pokomo community situated at the Coastal Region of Kenya. Its words are a prayer used in learning institutions and public meetings. It is the Kenyan prayer to God that is understood and said by all Kenyans, regardless of their religious, ethnic, political, or social persuasions.

### This weeks profile

#### Jane Mwhaki Kibet

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The Reverend Mrs. Jane Mwhaki Kibet is a Kikuyu by birth and a bishop who firmly believes in intermarriage since she has married into the Kalenjin community. Her husband, John Kibet, contested the parliamentary seat for Ainamoi constituency in the 2007 general elections just concluded.

Rev. Mrs. Kibet is the founder of Jamway Ministries, which aims to reconcile people to God as the source of all peace through the spread of righteousness. Jamway also seeks to bring healing to interethnic marriages, which Kenyans find are now challenged as never before.

Mrs. Kibet says that now is the right time to strengthen interethnic marriages instead of allowing them to disintegrate as a result of the tribalism being experienced in Kenya today.

Rev. Mrs. Kibet also serves as the Secretary General of Peace Ambassadors International and is a representative of Ndoa.

Compiled by Fraciah Ngamau

*E mungu nguvu yetu  
ilete baraka kwetu  
haki iwe ngao na mlinzi  
na tukae na undugu  
amani na uhuru  
raha tupate na ustawi*