



*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.*

## Valentine's Day for Humanity

By Tuzo Daisy Akoya

The weather was quite cool, ideal for the day in the calendar that many treasure as "Lovers Day," perhaps because it's the only day in the year some get to receive the most popular and cherished flower in the world . . . the red rose.

For once I could not help smiling to myself. Everything around me was simply beautiful: ladies in their gorgeous red dresses, well matched with either a classy handbag or shoes, gentlemen in their red ties—all were a sight to behold. At some point, though, my mind wandered to its own world, one I would like to refer to as the "IDP world." Don't crack your head pondering which kind of world I am referring to. It's just the world of Internally Displaced Persons.

Surprisingly, I was not the only one lost in this world. One Stop Youth Initiative, in collaboration with Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP), was at the Mathare Chief's

IDP camp on this very day, with the aim of sharing love with the displaced persons sheltering there. What a noble thing to do! As I entered one of the UNICEF tents where the One Stop members had converged for a small meeting just before the start of their planned "fun day" with the children at the camp, behold, my attention was diverted to a bunch of boxes filled with fresh bright-red roses! The roses were very inviting. Children, the majority unaware of the circumstances surrounding them, kept running in and out of the tent, occasionally trying to peep into the many boxes in the tent brought to the camp by these goodwill ambassadors.

I joined the team for a short orientation session on the camp. Pastor Marube, the camp coordinator, explained that the IDP had 80 tents, with a population of 550 displaced persons: 150 men, 200 woman,

and 200 children. Interesting notes were that 80% of the camp's population is Kikuyu and that life in the camp is very individualistic—every family cooks and feeds for itself. This was quite evident when One Stop and CCP kicked off their feeding activity at the camp. There was a lot of commotion and struggling for food. Every mother was struggling to get something for her child: "*Mtoto wangu hajapata,*" "*Niwekee juice nipelekee mtoto wangu analala,*" . . .

After the hard work of feeding, the goodwill ambassadors went from tent to tent, giving each and every person a rose as a symbol of love and peace. Later in the afternoon, the visitors laid roses with peace messages for the departed souls at Uhuru Park freedom Corner.

It was indeed a Valentine's Day for Humanity!

## The Resilience of Farmers By Sahondra Kiplagat

In interviews in late January, the Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG) conducted interviews with internally displaced farm families (IDFFs) in Trans Nzoia. During these interviews, more than 90% stated that they preferred to start working on their land as soon as possible rather than remain in the camps. Similarly, in Uasin Gishu District, IDFFs spoke to researchers with the Agricultural and Livestock Sector Working Group (ALSWG) of how much they were looking forward to returning to their farms. With assisted resettlement, most of the IDFFs were optimistic that they would resume farming in the second quarter of 2008. The sentiment was repeated in Bungoma.

What is remarkable is that there is such hopefulness in these statements, considering all that was lost. For example, in Bungoma alone ALSWG estimated that 5 metric tons of maize, beans, and wheat were lost. An analysis of the economic impact on agriculture in the affected areas revealed many more substantial losses.

More than 50% of maize in the Rift Valley, which produces about 60% of Kenya's crop, either was not harvested, failed to reach market, or was set ablaze. The total value of maize lost is estimated to be approximately KSH 11.2 billion. In the dairy subsector, farmers incurred losses of more than



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## Longing for Scars

*Keuro Macharia*

I have grown tired of picking at scabs.

The delight of playing with contrasting textures on my body, the woody and the tender, and the pleasure of watching my skin reconstitute itself, has given way to impatience with the constant welling up of blood.

I have grown weary of inadvertently bumping into corners only to discover that I have lost control of my scabs.

Now, I want scars.

I want visible scars that have texture and history, events inscribed on my body. I will not buy the magic potions that minimize the appearance of scarring. I have waited to scar and not bleed, to render myself immune to the vulnerability of scabbing.

In the club, the men with calluses on their golf-playing hands come and go.

\* \* \*

This is not about the children. This is about me. It is not about tomorrow. It is about today.

Tomorrow has not been coming and today has been 45 years. In the obscene math of Kenya time, tomorrow never comes, and today grants us neither the beauty of twilight nor the warmth of sunlight.

We survive by inviting maggots to feast on our dead and rotting flesh. Gorged with our offerings, the flies take siestas, knowing there is always more than enough. Always. We have become suppliers to the flies, and they now have discriminating palates.

In the club, the men with calluses on their golf-playing hands come and go.

\* \* \*

The old men report a strange sight: in the densely packed forest where trees compete for resources, scarred trees have a clear perimeter of at least ten meters. It is said that the other trees fear contact with the scarred ones. It is said that the unscarred trees have a pact with the wind, the birds, and the insects that their pollen will not touch the scarred one.

\* \* \*

Kenya has a harsh beauty. Our most appealing attractions are full of hard edges, uncompromising in their starkness. The sole acacia tree in the water-deprived savanna. It is an indifferent landscape, most gorgeous where it is most scarred.

I crave the beauty of the savanna.

The men come and go, talking of trade embargos.

\* \* \*

I have started collecting names for my scars, one for each person who has died. Should I run out of scars before I exhaust the names, I will visit a traditional scar-maker.

\* \* \*

I am told that the Bloody Mary has achieved new status as the drink for those who can. In the posh bars, you can get a Bloody Kamau, Bloody Otieno, Bloody Korir, and Bloody Musa.

We respect our women too much to name drinks after them

\* \* \*

Yesterday, I thought a new scar had formed. Apparently, even scabs have learned how to pass.

## Peace Starts With Me

Majengo-Pumwani, one of the oldest slums in Nairobi, has made residents of Nairobi proud. Neither politics nor the politicians could make Majengo fight before, during, or after the 2007 General Elections—not that Majengo residents are blind or have little reason to be bitter. In fact, although the elections are over, Pumwani still has no member of parliament, and the area is yet to elect a genuine and a transparent MP.

If you know the truth, it is said, the truth will set you free, and free indeed. We in Majengo-Pumwani have learned that it is true: When you know your rights, none can challenge you. The truth is, people in this informal settlement know their rights. Before the elections, they already had been educated by an NGO in the area called St. John's Community Centre. A lot of civic awareness campaigning had been done. The mobilization of the community took place not only through participation in political issues, but also through activity to halt human rights violations such as police harassment, child labour, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, bribery, and rape and defilement. This activity has made mwananchi realize that the gates of justice are open for all.

This experience has made residents of Majengo unite as one family. It is not possible for a politician or any other person to disunite or incite our society. We live as a family, and we are not ready to be exploited through so-called "dirty games."

Policemen in the area find it is not possible to harass the community. This has brought mutual understanding between us. In our neighbourhood, it's not a wonder to find youth and policemen in social places having a cup of tea together or watching football!

The area also has become more secure. This is because we are brothers and sisters of one family. We belong to the same social, economic, and environmental society. We have challenges just like other slums—poor housing, bad sanitation, lack of education, and unemployment, among others—but this has not led our youths to indulge in animal activities. Instead, we have tried to alleviate poverty by participating in various pursuits that will make us shine, despite the fact that we are poor.

We believe it is not possible to find a rich young man from a well-off family in the streets throwing stones. Instead, the poor are fighting the poor. Although we in Majengo-Pumwani are poor financially, we are very rich in our minds—and we will challenge "money users" by telling them we need peace.

*By Winnie Wangare*

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

Compiled by Linda Bore

Rachel Mamoss and the Heal the Nation Foundation team is still fundraising to enable them visit all the camps countrywide. Any support towards this initiative is welcome.

### Saturday 23rd February 2008

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. on Saturday 23rd February 2008.

All are invited to the National Youth violence Prevention Week from the 23rd February -1st March 2008. Many youth organisations are collaborating to make this event reach as many youth as possible. The activities planned for the 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.

### Tuesday 26th February 2008

The Leadership Institute of Kenya Kirichwa Road near Masaba Hospital is organising a 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 26th February 2008 at 5.00 p.m. Persons from various cultures and backgrounds in Kenya are invited.

All are invited to a meeting at the Webuye Anglican Church bringing together church leaders from all over Western province. The meeting starts at 10 a.m. and aims to bring together as many tribes as possible from the Province to discuss peace building within the region.

## Thoughts on Forgiveness: Part 1

By Gayle Lenore Macnab

These thoughts are meant to be used in the context of issues that go beyond simple personal offenses that confront us in our daily lives. These words reflect the ongoing struggle of those whose lives have been touched by severe trauma, criminal actions, abuse (sexual, emotional and/or physical), neglect or any harmful action against the individual that has left lasting and deeply wounding effects. This is by no means an exhaustive treatment of the issue of forgiveness.

### What Forgiveness Is Not

**Easy or simple.** Forgiveness is one of the most complicated and difficult of human transactions. If it were easy or simple, we would forgive readily. Forgiveness involves the deepest of emotions and extremely complicated relational issues.

**Saying that the offense was OK.** It will never be OK. Evil is never ok. Doing harm to another is never ok. It should always shock and offend.

**Letting it happen** again by putting yourself back into vulnerable situations. That is foolishness, not forgiveness.

**Feeling good about the past hurts or toward the offender.** We should never feel good about evil. To act or speak as though the past no longer has an ongoing effect may be more a reflection of denial than evidence of healing.

**The absence of all pain** about the offense. Denying pain will never make it go away. Coming to a place where the pain is gone may not happen in this lifetime, and no individual should be expected to act as though the wounds no longer hurt.

"He who nurses vengeance  
is not called wise"

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

### This weeks profile

**Mrs Ted M.A. Olang**  
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Mrs Ted M.A. Olang contested for Member of Parliament in her Constituency-Karachuonyo in the last concluded 2007 general elections. She has now joined the population of the IDPs in Kenya today after she was chased from her house in Karachuonyo. She was deeply affected by what happened to her personally and after some time she has come out as a concerned citizen for peace and has courageously vowed to join others who are looking into the needs of IDPs in camps in Kenya today such as their basic needs. She is skilled in Paralegal counselling and is ready to use this to better the lives of the many traumatized and hurt individuals in the IDP camps and elsewhere in Kenya.

Compiled by Fraciah Ngamau



CCP members sing the Kenya National Anthem

**Saying that I can no longer talk about it.** Coming to terms with what has happened and being able to move on may require a great deal of talking about it. Victims of serious harm must be allowed to take the time they need to move to a better place. Counseling, compassionate care, and wise support are part of this process. To completely forgive, the victim must face the absolute reality of all that happened. Being able to talk openly and freely, as often as the victim feels necessary, is a valuable and necessary part of the healing journey.

**Letting the offender(s) off the hook,** absolving them of any responsibility, or protecting them from the legal, moral, social, and spiritual consequences of their actions. Forgiveness does not negate the use of the courts and/or penal systems that mandate consequences for criminal actions.

**Revenge** or getting even. The score cannot ever be made even. The solution is not to up the ante and bring destruction or harm to the life of the offender. As appealing as this may seem to the hurting person, in the end it brings no satisfaction or healing. It may bring a sense of temporary relief and vindication, but the real problem—the harms done—still have not been addressed. Instead, more harm has been done.

**Super spirituality.** Academic and intellectual understanding and agreement with Biblical truth is not forgiveness. We do not need to hide under a false confession of restored relationship when it is not timely or even wise.

**Saying that it doesn't matter anymore.** It will, and should, always matter. It has changed the life of the victim forever. To say that it doesn't matter anymore is to minimize the harm done and to negate the reality of the victim's story.

**Making things fair.** That is not always possible. Some things cannot be restored or fixed. Logic would say that it is not fair that the wounded party should have to take responsibility for the healing process when they did not cause the harm. The cry of "It's not fair" is a reasonable protest. The problem is that very few people would ever get past the hurts if they waited for the wrongdoer to take responsibility and to make amends. As potentially healing as that may be, the truth is that it seldom happens. The victim must choose to value themselves enough (and be tired enough of the cycle of negativity) to let go of the need for and insistence upon fairness. They must choose the unfair and step out into a journey they should never have had to take.

**Dependent on the offender's request for forgiveness.** The offender cannot be forced or coerced into this position. For this to have any

meaning or substance, the offender must first clearly acknowledge the true nature of their wrongdoing. They must admit and understand the harm they have done and the ongoing effects of those harms in the life of their victim. They must be willing to accept the consequences of their actions: morally, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and legally. None of this can be done by the victim. To wait for or demand that this must come before forgiveness can happen will only delay the healing process.

**A simple choice or academic decision.** It is much more a statement of intent that will need to be reassessed and reaffirmed in the life of the wounded person as they carry on with life and healing. The intent is only the beginning.

**Forgetting.** History is history. What has happened cannot be made as though it did not. We hope and expect to remember the good things in life. It is not reasonable to suggest that we should, or even possess the ability, to forget what is not good. If we really could forget, who, what, or why would we need to forgive?

**Saying it really was not so bad. It is not about minimizing, rationalizing or excusing.** What happened is and always will be terrible and deeply wounding.

**Being able to put what happened into polite and palatable words** so that we don't offend others. Unfortunately, what happened is often very offensive and needs to be dealt with honestly and straightforwardly.

**Excusing the offender(s).** Nothing in the offender's past or present can ever be an excuse for causing harm to others. It is possible to have compassion for the wounded-ness of the offender without letting that get in the way of justice.

**About shaming the offender.** If the consequences stop at the shame, there can be no healing and going on. The offender cannot fully comprehend and face what they have done if they are crippled by condemnation and shame. The shame and guilt may be a beginning, but if there is any place for, or hope of, true repentance, then there must be a place for the offender to deal with their true guilt.

**A guarantee of reconciliation.** Forgiveness is not a shortcut to reconciliation, nor does it mean reconciliation is always possible. Sometimes, for safety and wisdom's sake, a return to a previous relationship is not possible or advisable.

**A means to establishing blame.** The goal needs to be focused on establishing responsibility; determining consequences; changing behaviors, thoughts, and action; and, as far as is possible, moving on toward growth and healing.

**Impossible.** There is no doubt that real forgiveness is an extremely complicated, difficult, and painful process that cannot be taken lightly. It is a spiritual process that goes beyond what is fair, beyond what feels good, beyond what is comfortable, and beyond what feels possible. Many words may bring partial definition to what forgiveness is and what it is not, but ultimately it is a very inward, private heart transaction.

**Part 2 of "Thoughts on Forgiveness" will be published in *Amani Sasa* 004.**

## A Funny Valentine

By Eric Guantai

In the early morning of 14th February this year, I was busy trying to help one of our colleagues, a friend who had been arrested by traffic policemen, to get released. While at the police station, I meet a student who had been arrested together with my friend. He looked worried because none of his friends or relatives knew he was there. We talked for a few minutes before he mentioned that he had a SIM card with him. I put the SIM in my phone and took two of his relatives' phone numbers. After our time together had elapsed and we had to leave, I made some calls for him. By the end of the day, both the student and my friend were out—an unusual Valentine's gift,

It is high time that we knew we have a role to play to ensure that our nation remains united and strong. It is high time we protected the achievements of our economy from both internal and external enemies. We need to know that we do have internal enemies among us, and the main one is called tribalism. Just as we are quick to deal with any outbreak of disease, we need to be quick to address this issue and find a lasting cure. This cure requires you and me to be involved—our external enemies we leave to our soldiers. It has taken us so long to get to where we are—Kenya, our beautiful nation. If we allow tribalism to triumph, it will take a second to ruin what we have built and an eternity to bring it back. Forgiveness and healing will start with you and me. Let's be the first to practice it. Don't wait for that day when our politicians may find an opportunity to bring together the affected parties.

Fear still exists in all of us, but extreme fear is dangerous. This is a call for all to work together as a team to bring back the trust that was there. We need to create a climate in which all of the affected parties say what they are holding in their hearts. Not only love will take root, but also peace of the mind and of the heart. In this way we will be able to take control of depression and other related diseases.

This nation need be prayed over. It must be preyed upon no more. It needs a (belated) Valentine's gift like no other. It is our responsibility, yours and mine. The time is now. The place is where you are now.



Members at a CCP forum.