

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.

Kenyan Diaspora: A Role to Play?

by **Chris L. Kimojino** . He is Vice-Chair of the **VumaKenya Initiative**
(www.vumakenya.org). You can contact him at kimojinocl@gmail.com.

Greetings, my fellow Kenyans, from the U.S.A.

C. Maxwell Stanley, founder of the Stanley Foundation, has commented that “the problems we face are global in proportion, but solutions begin with individuals.” Although Stanley’s words don’t pertain specifically to Kenya’s current crisis, they motivate me and have energized many others in the Diaspora.

Ory Okolloh’s (of the kenyanpundit.com blog) call for accountability and evidence of perpetrators of the heinous crimes we have witnessed, and the creation of ushahidi.com, is one proof of this. Karimi Gituma’s desire to financially assist with the humanitarian crisis led him to create VumaKenya (vumakenya.org), an organization formed to unite Kenyans and global citizens to support and find solutions for our country during its post-election crisis. Shamim Okolloh’s call for a Global Prayer Vigil led to the creation of the Kenyan Peace Prayer Vigil in Washington, D.C., coordinated by Faith Muigai. Leo Faya, based on the West Coast of the U.S., is leveraging his resources to create a central hub for all the Kenya initiatives being run in the U.S.

These are just a few examples—and there are many, many more world wide—of individuals mobilizing people to act in the name of peace, justice, reconciliation, and alleviation of the humanitarian crisis in Kenya. All of these examples, including the work by Concerned

Citizens for Peace in both Kenya and the U.K., clearly show that the common mwananchi, regardless of religion, creed, tribe, class, etc., has an opportunity and an obligation to make a difference. The role of the Diaspora in providing a solution to the crisis facing our nation is big and can only get bigger.

If we unite and work together, we can begin to bring about change in Kenya—change we can believe in, as phrased by Barack Obama in his presidential campaign here. Change in life, as Obama puts it, begins and is effected from the bottom up and not the other way around. Top-down change most often equals the status quo. Politicians, this thinking goes, are not going to be the final or only source of the solution to our crises. Both Kenyans and friends of Kenya in the Diaspora, as well as Kenyans in Kenya, therefore have a huge role to play—beyond just blogging and arguing via email, in chat rooms, and at clubs and bars.

The key to getting Kenyans and friends of Kenya (please trust me, they are many) to leverage their resources (money, time, expertise, skills, networks, etc.) in service of the change movement is to have a well-organized and effectively run organization. Features of such an organization definitely include 100% transparency and effective communication within the group and with others. Communication in this case includes the traditional media as well as internet media such as email, fora such as facebook, mashada, and [kenyanpundit](http://kenyanpundit.com), other blogs, and websites.

Getting these started and ensuring their legitimacy—with no room for error or corruption of any sort—is always an enormous effort. If the team involved in any cause has little or no experience setting up such organizations, this work can be challenging and time consuming—especially when needs are urgent. Working together as a cohesive group in order to leverage our resources and experience will minimize the difficulties.

“So, long story short, I think there is no doubt about the role that members of the Diaspora have to play.”

Our different times zones and job/career/personal obligations may prevent timely feedback and response to emails/questions/suggestions, but these are all hurdles that we can overcome. We have enough expertise and experience to get things done. The fundraising concert VumaKenya organized in Boston on 2nd February proved to all involved that where there is will and some expertise, anything can be accomplished! (Faith also helps: We planned and hosted the concert in about 2 weeks; without faith, we would have given up along the way.)

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THE WATCHMAN

A Lesson from Our Athletes

By Eric Quantal

I am fond of watching athletics, whether short races such as the 100 meters, the 4x4 hurdles, or long races including the marathon. No wonder I suspend all that I am doing whenever such competitions take place and go to watch them. Kenya is blessed with so many sportsmen and women, some of whom have dominated their events for ages. Whenever a race is being planned, it absolutely must include athletes from Kenya. The anxiety, joy, and celebration that accompany our athletes' victories are quite overwhelming for Kenyans like me.

Sportsmen and women from Kenya are respected worldwide. Their success on the field is derived from the kind of training they go through and the advice they are given, the skills that they gain from the veterans (such as how to pass the baton) and the help that they receive from their doctors before a competition ever takes place. Oh, yes, and we can't forget the good weather conditions God has given us. All of these things contribute to the outstanding performance of our athletes.

We need to pick up a lesson from these sportsmen and women, who pass on the baton so well to the correct team mate and at a calculated speed—and all under great pressure. Our grandfathers and grandmothers fought the white man and gave the current generation a nation—Kenya!—united and with its own government. It is high time that we built this nation with the professionalism we are capable of and stop trying to scatter all of the achievements our parents and grandparents worked so hard for.

We need to pass the baton on to the youths of Kenya—who have refused to be called the leaders of tomorrow but assert that they are truly the leaders of today—a nation that has a strong economy, a nation united and with a loving, peaceful, caring society.

We need to give them a society that believes that the nation is more important than an individual and protects its environment, that encourages dialogue and negotiation as ways to solve differences, not one that threatens, with pangas held high, "mass action." A society that respects all human rights, respects all religions, obeys the rule of law, and has well-governed institutions.

We need to create a society that promotes coexistence with other communities and tries to build relationships with the security forces to flush out criminals, that puts its trust in those security forces and not in any other kind of armed groups.

If we all strive in this direction, and refuse to limit ourselves to the pursuit of only these few virtues, then at the end of the race, we will pass on the baton with ease and grace. We will pass on the gift of a loving, caring, united Kenya to our youths and to the next generations.

Outstanding Information of the Week

On Monday, 18th February, Concerned Citizens for Peace held its 8 a.m. meeting in the city centre for the first time. We all converged on the 14th floor of Bruce House, which we were fortunate enough to have been given free of charge, unlike our previous meeting venues. The new meeting place was central and accessible to all. No wonder the CCP meeting was full to capacity of concerned citizens of all walks of life, allowing harvest of ideas to be fully actualized.

by Fraciah Ngamau

"People should not follow stars"

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

This weeks profile

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi

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Dekha Ibrahim is the convenor of Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP). She holds this position as a way of enhancing citizens' participation in the peace process in Kenya. Within CCP, she is working to support communities to build confidence, trust, and healing. She helps to organize fundraising for peace initiatives within the communities and assists small groups by profiling them and adding value to what they are doing. Mrs. Abdi says that in all her efforts, she is only making her contribution as a Kenyan and doing service to the nation.

Mrs. Abdi is a global peacemaker from Northern Kenya. She has engaged in peace work and conflict resolution in many of the world's most divided countries. Her comprehensive methodology combines grassroots activism, gentle but uncompromising leadership, and spiritual motivation drawing on the teachings of Islam. She has won several awards including the Alternative Nobel Prize presented at the Swedish Parliament by the Right Livelihood Award Foundation.

This independent consultant with Camel Bell Ltd. is currently based in Mombasa. Mrs. Abdi also works as a consultant to government and civil-society organizations. She is a trustee of Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA) and of NOMADIC, a pastoralist organization based in Wajir. She is a founding member of the Wajir

Peace and Development Committee, the Coalition for Peace in Africa, and ACTION (Action for Conflict Transformation). She is a patron of Peace Direct, a U.K.-based peace charity, and is also on the Advisory Board of INCORE at the University of Ulster.

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi has worked as consultant trainer on peacebuilding and pastoralists' development with many local and international agencies in Cambodia, Jordan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, South Africa, Sierra Leone, the Netherlands, Israel, Palestine, Zimbabwe, the U.K., Uganda, Ghana, and Kenya. She is also an associate of Responding to Conflict and has previously worked as an RTC trainer and learning coordinator.

"The participation in a peace process is not about the mathematics of numbers and percentages in relation to who is in majority or minority. It is about plurality, diversity, participation and ownership of all affected by the conflict. . . ."—Dekha Ibrahim Abdi

Compiled by Dolphine Ndeda

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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 KSH 7 million. In the sugarcane subsector, more than 500 hectares of cane valued at KSH 50 million was burned. Tea subsector losses are estimated at KSH 2 billion.

In their statements, these farmers illustrate the resilience of their spirit. That same resilience has weathered droughts, floods, and locust invasions in the past—and hopes to weather this, too.

Note: This article appeared in 003 but the conclusion was omitted inadvertently. We apologize and have rerun the article in its entirety in this issue. –Eds.

What has CCP been up to?

CCP together with other CSO organisations including the Womens Coalition, National Civil Society Congress, Kenyans for Peace with Truth and Justice, PeaceNet and EVRI and the Kenyan National Council of NGOs on Wednesday issued a press-statement on the ongoing mediation, tasking all parties to the agreements of February 1st, 4th and 15th, to abide by the contents of the agreements and to reach a mediated settlement swiftly.

On Thursday 28th February 2008, CCP Issued a press-statement congratulating PNU and ODM leaders under the leadership of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Team for reaching an agreement. The media statement further urged the leaders to abide by and implement the agreements of 1st, 4th and 15th February 2008.

Upcoming Events and Highlights from

amani sasa daily

The National Youth violence Prevention Week is still ongoing, it started on the 23rd February and ends –1st March 2008 with a peace concert at KICC from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and a peace race from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Other events for today and tomorrow are also lined up. All are invited to attend.

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LIKA had their meeting last Tuesday 26th February and it was resolved that there is a need to move from talking to acting, the Ministry of Social Services should be consulted for professional advice on culture, Retirement benefits need to be reviewed for the benefit of the retirees as a priority. Other items discussed include the youth, money culture, tribalism, failure of democracy etc. The meetings continue every Tuesday at LIKA offices, on Kirichwa road near Masaba Hospital at 5 p.m.

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A number of websites detailing various peace efforts in Kenya have been launched go to: www.generationkenya.co.ke http://www.africanews.com/site/list_messages/15332, www.guardians-of-peace.blogspot.com, www.pyramidofpeace.net and www.peace-caravan.org

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The Kenya Veterans for Peace (KVP) is holding a workshop at Ukwala building, Haile Selassie Avenue. Sponsored by the Interreligious and International federation for world peace. it was officially opened by former Nairobi Mayor, Nathan Kahara, hon. Ng'eno from kipkelion and John Kibet from Ainamoi. The workshop seeks to have 200 former security personnel trained. KVP is appealing for counsellors and peace-building facilitators to assist during this workshop, which continues for the next three weeks.

Compiled by Linda Bore

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So, long story short, I think there is no doubt about the role that members of the Diaspora have to play. Some people will argue, discuss, blog endlessly about what happened. But it is up to us individuals, as Mahatma Gandhi put it, to “be the change you want to see in this world.” I look forward to working with you all in whatever capacity that may be.

One of the emails I read as we began this change work went something like

this: “I have told friends and family that we have seen the worst out of Kenyans, and we very well may see some worse things. But the bottom line is, we have also seen the best and are yet to see better things. We have traditionally been known as very resilient and peace-loving people. The last month and a half has proven to us that we have been provoked and undermined by the powers that be for so long that the build-up of tensions among different communities just could not be contained any longer. Somehow,

this is like a birth process, which is bloody and painful. But the final product is usually pleasant and tender.” Kenya is going to need “nurturing parents” in the form of good leaders and good citizens who step up to work for change, to lead Kenya to a new place. “A New Kenya Reborn” is VumaKenya’s slogan—that’s what is happening in Kenya!!

I am excited and optimistic about the future of Kenya. This future will only be achieved, however, if we as individuals, groups, and

young leaders continue to develop our capacity to do what we are trying to do with (to borrow from Obama again) the urgency of now: Cater for the humanitarian effort required and fill the gaps where the government is not delivering care for urgent needs. Victims of heinous crimes will need long-term psychological care. Children who have been orphaned by the crisis will need to be educated. Onyango and Njoroge, who used to be neighbors, will need to forgive each other. And in order for Njoroge to return to Kisumu, his

only known home, he may require capital to rebuild. . . .

Kenyans and friends of Kenya will be needed more than ever before. Getting Kenya back on track will require lots and lots of work. Whatever you and I can do as individuals, let us do it. We must not let our physical division from Kenya, as members of the Diaspora, be the reason that we are not contributing to the dire needs of our beloved nation. Our Kenya—may God bless her!

Thoughts on Forgiveness: Part 2

by Gayle Lenore Macnab

Part 1 of this article, "What Forgiveness Is Not," appeared in Amani Sasa 003. 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.

Blocks to Forgiveness

- **Shame and false guilt.** All too often victims feel they have done something to invite or deserve their mistreatment. They are further wounded by an overwhelming sense of shame and inferiority and self-doubt. They often believe that they are bad, dirty, useless, worthless, and a whole host of other soul-destroying feelings and attitudes. Guilt deals with what I have done in my thoughts and actions. Shame is about who I am. Guilt says, "I have done something wrong." Shame says, "I am something wrong."
- **Unresolved anger and rage.** Anger and rage that is not acknowledged and accepted for what it is cannot be released or transformed. The anger and rage often fester and grow, trapping and even paralyzing the holder of the anger.
- **Fear and terror.** These imprison our hearts, souls, and minds. Only when they are seen and acknowledged for exactly what they are can a person walk through the darkness to a different place.
- **Intense pain and grief.** It is not just the pain itself, but the isolation that so often comes with the depths of agony when the hurt is so enormous that it threatens to suffocate and destroy. It is the feeling of utter aloneness and despair that stifle any sense of future hope. The pain must be poured out for as long and as loud and as intensely as it is felt in the heart of the person suffering from it.
- **Bitterness.** Pain and fear and rage and grief left uncomforted, unheard, and unacknowledged turn the heart to darker and darker places and leave the person with no other place to go but deeper into the cycles of despair.
- **Judgementalism.** When another's choices have grievously harmed someone, the victims must rely on a greater judge to mete out a consequence that answers for the pain that has been caused and the injustice done. For the victim to decide on a suitable punishment and carry out the sentence would bring more harm to the already wounded person(s).
- **Partiality.** Victims of serious harms cannot and should not be expected to be impartial. It is reasonable and natural for them to be caught up in the confusion of wanting revenge, of anger and pain, and of trying to survive. As imperfect and fraught with problems as our judicial systems currently are, there is a degree of impartiality that comes into effect when a legal process is begun. Allowing this process to take its course removes an unreasonable and overwhelming responsibility from the victim. The decisions about consequences are taken out of their hands. Whether the results are fair, reasonable or expected, the victim does not have to make decisions that may only cause them more harm. Ideally, the removal of this responsibility will make room for the victim to focus on their own need to go on.
- **Misunderstanding and distorted thinking about self and the offender.** When a terrible wrong has been done, the resulting confusion, pain, fear, and so much more distort the ability to think rationally and to make decisions that are good and right. Wounded people wound others, and the cycle goes on and on. It may take a very long time for even a glimmer of understanding before the how and the why begin to make any sense. The questions and the struggle to come to terms with what has happened are always terribly difficult. [More on page 5](#) ▶

Sisters at Heart

By Wambui Mwangi

On Saturday, the 24th of February 2008, I went to a meeting of women in Kibera, Nairobi. It was in the open, in the field next to the Kibera D.O.'s office. Under a tree, next to a dusty soccer pitch on which a few energetic children were playing, sat some women listening to the meeting's moderator, Ms. Jane Anyango. They looked like birds of paradise, in the shade of the tree, all bright colours and wraps and headscarves and skirts—laughing faces upturned as they listened.

These women are amongst the hardest-hit victims of the recent post-election violence in Kenya; some of their houses have been burned, their small businesses have been disrupted, their sons are endangered, and their husbands are missing. They live where police bullets sometimes fly through walls and strike women dead as they stand ironing clothes, where a police presence might mean a son shot in running battles. These women meet under a tree, out in the open, because they have nowhere else to gather, no shelter in case it rains.

The ladies in Kibera meet anyway, because they are extremely tired of having their lives dictated to by and for people who do not care about them and who do not even know that they exist. Across the street, dusty matatus picked up passengers and scrambled for space, jostling and nudging their way to faster speeds and more passengers. The women didn't seem to notice: They were so wrapped up in their own affairs, and so determined to succeed, that they could ignore the outside world a few feet away from them.

They are going to change their lives by themselves, by telling their own stories and managing their own fates. They are tired of being talked for and being talked about, even if they do live in "Africa's Largest Slum." They are tired of being talked about as if they do not have wills, or ideals, or ambitions, or successes. One woman said to us, "People are always saying what poverty-stricken circumstances we live in, and how terrible everything is here. Do they not realize that I worked hard to have that tablecloth on my table, that it is the best that I can afford? I like my things—I worked for them. We don't want pity, we want work. We want our own things."

They were singing: As we walked up to them, they broke into a song of welcome and made space for us, under their tree. When we left, they invited us back for next week.

A few hours later and a whole world away, we walked up to another group of women, in Nairobi's green and manicured suburb of Loresho. These women were gathered on a friend's veranda, and gleaming cars lined the driveway and the courtyard beyond, like a praise-poem to Nairobi's middle class.

This group of women have everything the

Sisters at Heart cont from page 4...

Kibera women want, but they met anyway, too. They met because they are tired of being told what their identities are, whom they should love and hate and want to meet with or date because of ethnic differences. Some of them went to high school together, some met just the other day, some are friends of friends, or colleagues, or neighbors. Their children play and grow up together. They met to reaffirm their friendships and laugh away the silly barriers that the politicians want to erect between them.

These are professional women, highly accomplished and authoritative about it. Someone started to say, "Parting is such sweet sorrow . . ." and they all chimed in with the rest of the quote—in fact, with the rest of the whole bit from Romeo and Juliet—as if it were a perfectly normal thing to know. That's the kind of thing they do, chortling madly all the time, screaming with laughter at the absurdity of thinking of each other as Kikuyus or Kalenjins or Luos, when they had been together a-a-a-I-I-I that time, all those years ago, and all the long years since. When they were young and mischievous, they had been on a school trip to the Nairobi Show, and they had all abandoned their teacher and turned their watches back an hour so that they could argue her down when they came back late. "Atli Stop talking to my best friend because she's a Luo? Don't be stupid, please. . ."

They are having none of it, none of it at all. And as they sniggered and laughed and recalled their old nicknames for each other, the air around them lightened, and relaxed, and made space for everybody. In Loresho, it was a different kind of tree, and a different kind of world, but when we left, they invited us back for next week.

Sisters at heart, these women are, from Kibera to Loresho. Our country would be safe in their hands.

Dr. Wambui Mwangi is a professor of political science at the University of Toronto. Her blog, *Diary of a Mad Kenyan Woman*, is available at madkenyanwoman.blogspot.com and at generationkenya.co.ke.



Above: CCP member signs an appreciation message on souvenir to the Kenya Dialogue and Reconciliation team. ASANTE SANA.

Right: Members during the CCP forum held on the 29th of February, 2008



from page 4

- Demanding my right to hold on to my hatred for the terrible wrongs done. The anger never makes the wrong done go away, it does not help the wounded heart, and it becomes its own prison. Current popular and public opinion tends to bolster the victim's right to revengeful thoughts and feelings, but this ideology is shortsighted and inherently flawed. The results of this way of feeling and thinking invariably prove to be more harmful in the end.
- Clinging to the hope for a different past. The past cannot be changed. It must be accepted for exactly what it is before the healing process can begin. Forgiveness cannot change the past, but it can change the future.
- "Awfulizing" and "catastrophizing". There is no doubt that the harms done may be awful and even catastrophic. The wounded person must find the courage to rise above the belief that they have been damaged beyond repair by what has happened. To stay in this place is to remain a victim forever. These are painful and difficult choices that must be made, whether they seem fair or not. There is a difficult and fine balance between getting stuck or lost in self-pity and honestly appraising the harm done. Self-care can replace self-pity when the individual realizes that nothing done to them can diminish who they are.
- Withdrawal and solitude. Keeping silent about the deeply negative thoughts, feelings, and emotions that have come from cruel and evil actions is often the first choice for victims. Without wise, caring, and compassionate intervention and support, walking out of the cycles of despair is often impossible. Telling the truth about the wounds is often the beginning.
- Looking for revenge. Insisting on retaliation, humiliation, and public exposure of the offender may bring a sense of temporary satisfaction to the victim(s), but in the end this bittersweet victory brings precious little solace to the devastation in the heart and soul of the individual.

Part 3 of "Thoughts on Forgiveness" will be published in *Amani Sasa* 005.

AMANI SASA 004 Acknowledgment

The one thousand bright-red roses distributed to send a message of peace and love to the internally displaced people at the Mathare chief's camp as a "Valentine for Humanity" (see *Amani Sasa* 003) were donated by Oria and her lovely daughter Saba. Frank, Saba's husband, took photographs at the camp and was joined by Cynara and Vincent, who covered the event on video. All made the Valentine's Day at Mathare IDP camp a huge success.

Compiled by Fraciah Ngamau