

Reflections for Nonviolence Seminar, Haron Njoroge

I was born in rural parts of Kenya, Rift Valley province, Nakuru district, Molo constituency. In the past years, Molo has been in the headlines not for the good reasons but for the tribal clashes that have been occurring in the area since 1992 and the following election years like 1997, 2005, 2006 and the mother of all clashes in the year 2007/2008. My family and friends from my community and I have suffered a lot due to this conflict/war. During this period, many people lost their lives, property. Infrastructure like hospitals, schools, bridges were destroyed. There has been an increase in number of orphans, increase in gang raping cases that cause new HIV/aids infections.

In the year 1992, when I was just five years or so, is when we (I, my family and neighbours from my community) were evicted, killed and others sustained major or minor injuries. After we were evicted from our home village of Sundu River, we moved to live with our relatives in Molo town. The house was so small that some of us would spend the night in the corridors. When it came to food we used to have only one meal and sometimes survived with only one glass of water. During that time we were not attending schools and many essential services were not offered because many people were evicted from their areas of work.

All other clashes that followed were not different, the outcomes were the same. All this suffering changed my life completely, causing hate and thirst for revenge. In the year 2011 that is when I met Maryknoll Sisters who introduced me to their program "Conversation for Social Change" which is a six months program. I thought of it like any other peace meeting I have attended, just to learn later the program was useful and had changed my life completely. I was able to forgive who ever wronged me during all those clashes, even the one who killed my father. Also I was able to criticize those who were proposing for revenge. Since then I was able to rebuild my life; the money I used to buy weapons, mobilization of youths etc (invest in war) can now help me support my family.

Having been brought up as a Catholic, I would like to suggest that the church put more effort in the following areas to make sure people live in harmony:

I) Politics:- The time has come for the church to engage itself in politics and give the Christian community a political direction. Many conflicts in Africa are caused by political differences and I believe in a political conflict we must have a political solution.

II) Creation of peace network: -This will help share peace messages and information, also it will help contain rumors in warring countries. As most of us know, most war information and planning is done on social media. For example, many criminal groups are using social media to recruit their members. We the church should occupy the social media platform to reduce their area of operations in social media.

III) Inter community/faith projects: To overcome destruction of property and to make sure people from different communities/faith interact often. Also, communities will be able to share information on planning of war and this will help to prevent the war before it happens (both

communities own the project so they will be able to protect the property and share information).

IV) Culture exchange: The church should be able to support negative cultures that help in conflict resolutions, this will also help different communities understand each other culture.

V) Inner healing: The church has to organize for inner healing session that will help the Christian community to overcome their inner wounds. If you are not at peace with yourself, how can you be in peace with others.

VI) Youth empowerment program: Many youths have no income so it is easy for criminal gangs to recruit them, This is done by giving this desperate youth a promise of greener and big financial offers.

> Thanks for inviting me, I am looking forward to share more during the meeting.