Chapter 48
Transforming the Narrative of Violence in Kenya to a Narrative of Nonviolence

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines nonviolence as conflict resolution method in Kenya, and postulates that the advantages presented by nonviolence stand to help society overcome the trappings presented by violence. The author explores the idea of violence as laid out in the narrative and structure of the Kenyan society, the plausible reasons that gives rise to violence as a way of agitation for perceived rights and freedoms, and resolving conflicts.This chapter has focused on the history of Kenya with respect to the aspirations that existed during the time of clamor for independence and how the inability to make those dreams a reality curtailed the dreams, hopes, and aspirations of many who fought for independence and therefore creating a disenfranchised population, and above all, planting seeds of violence. This chapter observes that economic empowerment is a necessary tool to inculcate the theme of nonviolence in society. The author suggests using activities such as soccer and other related sports to create ambassadors and warriors for nonviolence.

INTRODUCTION

Barash (2000) elucidates that Peace can never be fully achieved; Peace can only be approached. Barash adds that Peace can barely be glimpsed or grasped; it merely is a mirage, unattainable. Whereas peace has been viewed as a mirage, there are processes and efforts society should be encouraged to utilize in pursuit of Peace. Doing so will place citizens of any given society on a strong pedestal where relationships will not be ruined but harnessed; trust defines people's interactions; and people are not be afraid to pursue better terms for their lives. This chapter will examine violent social change and build a case for pursuing it's alternative, nonviolent social change, in resolving, mitigating, and transforming social conflict. The chapter draws its strength by first appreciating the demands of nonviolence and at the same time examining the outcomes that violence perpetuates.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the idea and effects of nonviolence in Kenya and to make a case for why nonviolence is the better strategy to resolve conflicts. The importance of this chapter is to introduce a new body of evidence that demonstrates soccer, as one of the popular sports in Kenya, can effectively aid in conflict transformation in a society healing from a conflict.

A BRIEF KENYAN HISTORY

Kenya is an anchor country in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa known for its lead role in promoting regional stability (Vasudevan, 2008), signifying Kenya's efforts at fostering positive peace within the Sub-Saharan region. The strategies Kenya has utilized to achieve the positive peace revolve around nonviolence, and include use of shuttle diplomacy, negotiation, mediation, among other approaches that build as opposed to destroying. The author presents violent protest as a pursuit to resolution of a conflict anchored in process that hurts, harms, ridicules, destroys, denigrates, and offends.

Regrettably, social ills continue to plague Kenya, in some cases, resulting in citizens pursuing solutions premised on the notion of violence. When citizens lack confidence in legal institutuons set up to provide a framework that promotes what is just and fair in the eyes of the reasonable, there is a likehood that citizens will may opt for violence as an alternative to resolving underlying conflict.

The institutional failure to provide direction on matters dealing with implementation of justice has to a larger extent contributed to the prevalence of corruption in Kenya. The assumption the author makes is that corruption is directly related to poor governance. The 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Kenya as the 139th most corrupt country in the world. The top-ranked country in the index is viewed as least corrupt whereas the country occupying the lower rung of the ladder is assessed as most corrupt.

The author makes the case for why corruption has thrived in Kenya, arguing that it is primarily because of lack of institutional accountability. Mbai (2003) articulates that accountability has led to a decline in the standard of provision of public services and economic growth in Kenya (2003). Building on the work of Laleye (1993), Mbai defines "Public Accountability" as the erection of sanctions and procedures by which public officials may be held to account for their actions. Furthermore, Mbai abhors the lack of accountability and inability to prosecute those culpable in spite of existing legal instruments and established watchdog institutions for regulating and monitoring the ethical behavior of its public officials.

When Kenya attained independence from British colonial rule in 1963, there were certain rights that the prevailing constitution guaranteed including freedom of speech, movement, and expression. The quest to attain these freedoms ostensibly inspired the frontiers of Kenya's independence to sacrifice family time and life for the sake of liberating the country from colonial rule.

By the time Kenya attained independence, there was optimism the country would adopt pluralist politics as one of the ways to guard against dictatorship by the ruling party. This check and balance was realized by existence of two political parties: Kenya African National Union (KANU), and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). KANU party, under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta, formed a government. KADU party became the official opposition party. The Kenyan dream would, however, begin to falter when the country transitioned to a unitary system of government. In addition, constitutional amendments between 1964 and 1968 resulted in concentration of state powers in the executive, especially around the presidency (Mbai, 2003; Wamai, 2014). This perpetuation of authoritarianism denied citizens the rights and freedoms which had inspired the independence movement.

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