

Header: RECONCILIATION EFFORTS

Mureithi's *ICYIZERE: hope*: Reconciliation, Rehumanization, and Collective
Remembrance/Rebuilding of Sacred and Safe Space

Eric Aoki, Ph.D.
Communication Studies
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1783
Main office: 970.491.6140
Eric.Aoki@colostate.edu

Kyle M. Jonas, M.A.
Communication Studies
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1783
(MA Degree: May 2011)
kmjonas@gmail.com

NOTE: Eric Aoki, Ph.D. (University of Washington, 1997) is an Associate Professor in the department of Communication Studies at Colorado State University. Kyle M. Jonas, M.A. (Colorado State University, 2011) completed his M.A degree in May 2011; although Kyle is not presently affiliated with Colorado State University, portions of this paper were originally developed by him for a course paper in Eric's graduate seminar and later presented at the Western States Communication Association, 2011. The paper has since been written as a new essay and argument. Both authors contributed equally to this essay. Inquiries can be directed to: Eric.Aoki@colostate.edu

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Abstract

We assess Patrick Mureithi's (2009) documentary, *ICYIZERE: hope*, as a document of collective memory (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, 2010, p. 6). Focusing on the power of memory in/of place, we argue that the reconciliation workshop represented in the film constructs a newly sacred ground/safe space for healing. This sacred/safe space is produced through (1) negotiations of (dialectical) tensions between past and present and individual and collective memory and (2) (re)presentations of rehumanization within the workshop that allow participants to (re)interpret the Other. We analyze rehumanization processes in the documentary via identity widening theory (Ellis, 2006) and empathetic human interactions.

KEY TERMS: Collective Memory, Rwanda, Reconciliation, Other, Icyizere

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INTRODUCTION

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 devastated the country; the genocide left an indelible mark on human history, globally, and more specifically with individuals who were directly affected by the genocide—individuals who continue to live within their homeland of Rwanda. Today, workshops in Rwanda are striving to reconcile the catastrophic rift between Hutus and Tutsis. *ICYIZERE: hope* (2009) is a documentary by Patrick Mureithi that has recorded the reconciliation efforts of such workshops. But, many questions arise: how does one negotiate a cultural space of atrocity while working to move forward upon the same land where genocide occurred? How does one negotiate individual and collective memories of genocide to work toward healing? And how do two groups with deeply and historically rooted violence towards each other come together to not only coexist, but also to cooperatively work towards reconciliation?

ICYIZERE: hope is a documentary of a reconciliation workshop filmed in Gisenyi, Rwanda in 2008. The documentary focuses on four individuals: John and Mama Aline- both victims; Jean Baptiste- a perpetrator; and Solange- a facilitator. These four individuals participate in a larger workshop group of ten survivors and ten perpetrators interacting with each other over three days. The workshop, called Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC), is facilitated by the African Great Lakes Initiative. The workshop is a form of persuasive discourse, and the facilitators (survivors of the genocide themselves) are trained to influence the participants to think, act, and move towards reconciliation. A communicative approach provides valuable insight into the reconciliation process, requiring that “conflict parties need to change,

and communication is the engine of such change” (Ellis, 2006, p. 150). Verbal and nonverbal interactions between survivors and perpetrators is essential in reestablishing trust, rebuilding relationships, working through conflict, and rehumanizing each other towards reconciliation.

In this project, we assess *ICYIZERE: hope* as a document of collective memory (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, 2010, p. 6). Broadly, we analyze how memory and rehumanization practices work together within this text to construct sacred ground/safe space for the workshop participants to engage in reconciliation. While we argue, generally, that a safe space for renewed healing and reconciliation is constructed *in situ*, we assert, more specifically, that the HROC workshop (recorded on film) opens up a space where individual and collective memory exists in dialectical tension as participants work through their grief, anger, remorse, fear, and confusion. Finally, we assert that the interplay between memory in/of place invokes a newly unifying space to (re)interpret the Other. Hence, we assess the communicative rehumanization processes in the documentary via identity widening theory (Ellis, 2006) and through representations grounded in empathetic human interactions (i.e., workshop activities that involve remorse, empathy, laughing, and crying).

By shifting toward a broader conceptualization of Rwandan identity, the documentary workshop offers a challenging yet engaged affective mode of interaction with the initially designated Other *in situ*. Through affective interaction, the perpetrators and survivors navigate a collective memory of place that complicates understandings of the location or space as more than solely a site of atrocity and violence, but also as material and symbolic grounds for individual and collective reconciliation as Rwandans. Before discussing the work accomplished in the HROC workshops, we first provide an entry into the film’s landscapes of collective memory by briefly theorizing two imperative places/spaces: 1) the documentary text as a representational

space where individual and collective memory are negotiated and where the sharing of memory *in situ* (i.e., within the HROC workshop) becomes an active catalyst for transformation and reconciliation, and 2) the country of Rwanda and its localities as simultaneously invoked as a sacred and secular (or everyday) safe space where genocidal atrocity and individual/group healing is substantiated (i.e., within the space of the HROC workshop).

Collective Memory and Sacred /Safe Space

We use several assumptions of collective (or public) memory as designated by Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010); these scholars assert that in addition to the assumption that “remembering takes place in groups,” other “nominally consensual assumptions” of collective memory include that it is “activated by concerns, issues, or anxieties of the present;” narrates a shared identity that is a “construction that forwards at least momentarily definitive articulation of the group” (in this case, Rwandan identity as imperative to the reconciliation effort); is “animated by affect;” “posits public memory as partial, partisan, and thus frequently contested;” relies “on material and/or symbolic supports—language, ritual performances, communication technologies, objects, and places—that work in various ways to consummate individuals’ attachment to the group;” and finally, that “public memory has a history” (pp. 6-10). Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010) highlight how, particularly, affect is the most underdeveloped of the assumptions, yet how affect demonstrates promise of insight by addressing trauma as a particular event—in this case, the Rwandan genocide. Additionally, the authors note the complexity in how present day collective memory and history become, in Sturken’s (1997) view, “entangled” (p. 3).

Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010) also assert the importance of understanding the broad terrain of conceptualizing space and place; they note how “[s]ome of them [i.e., scholars in the field] reference physical locations; others serve as metaphors for the social imaginary,

subjectivities, identities, or epistemologies” (p. 23). They distinguish how “[p]articlar kinds of places are more closely associated with public memory than others, for example, museums, preservation sites, battlefields, memorials, and so forth,” yet acknowledge that each of these memory places “differ from one another in significant ways” (p. 25). As viewers to the documentary film, ICYIZERE, “the visitor [viewer] is not simply imagining connections to people of the past, but experiencing connections to people in the present” (p. 29). Through collective memory of both the national context of Rwanda and the *in situ* HROC workshop, “[m]emory places cultivate the being and participation together of strangers, but strangers who appear to have enough in common to be co-traversing the place,” be this co-traversing of place as participant-strangers within the film or as viewers looking into strangers in the film’s reconciliation workshop (p. 29). Regardless of position, the relations assessed for within the documentary as well as the text itself exists as a site of collective memory—where space and place exist as a set of “mutually constitutive relationships” (p. 23). In the mediated and viewing spaces, both participant in the film and the viewer are consistently negotiating the dialectical tension between individual and collective memory of a particular place, Rwanda, and all that has occurred historically as well as what is occurring presently (in the film’s workshop) to move toward efforts of reconciliation.

Finally, the places of nation, home, the HROC workshop center, and other localities are invoked onto the path of reconciliation in ICYIZERE, for these places become notable spaces of affect, survival, remembrance, and renewed hope. And, these places/spaces hold the potential to be both sacred and secular. Milholland (2010) points to sacred places as “built” environments or places of ceremonial remembrance (p. 109); yet, she recognizes that:

Arguably, a single statutory definition cannot capture the grand multiplicity of

perspectives on what is “sacred.” The concept of “sacred” is broad, abstract, and imbued with such deep personal spiritual meaning transcending the physical and the metaphysical, that the notion of creating a single definition of *sacred* extends beyond incommensurable and approaches impossible Different groups of people may see the same phenomenon as either sacred or secular. Sacredness of a place can derive from human actions of great significance [in this case, genocide], nonhuman actions of great significance, or from higher powers having revealed themselves to human beings. (p. 109)

In this project, we recognize the care and complexity needed in defining a place where genocide occurred as a sacred land, particularly as cultural outsiders to this national context of Rwanda. This point noted, it is clear that significant atrocities have occurred on this land and significant actions to work toward national reconciliation continue to occur—and, in this manner, we recognize both the sacred land upon which lives have been taken (and need to be remembered) with the newly re-defined safe space of the HROC workshop and the representation of reconciliation efforts detailed in the film. As we viewed *ICYIZERE*, it became clear to us that remembrance of those whose lives were taken under conditions of genocide elevate and imbue the place/space of Rwanda and its collective memory of localities (including film) as sacred. This sacred space honors the victims of the genocide as well as remembers those living as present-day survivors. In assessing the documentary it becomes clear that the newly constructed safe space within the events of the HROC workshop further implicate the sacred land of atrocity as a renewed space for reconciliation, healing, and hope. Perhaps as we use it here, sacred means that which is both a safer place (amidst prior atrocities collectively remembered) and a renewed place (a place where transformative reconciliation may occur).

In the remaining sections of this essay, we provide, first, conceptual foundations for key constructs in analyzing reconciliation (i.e., rehumanization via identity widening and forgiveness). We then articulate, through the film's framing and participant discourses, how identity widening theory (Ellis, 2006) and the representational activities rooted in empathetic human interaction (i.e., workshop activities that involve remorse, empathy, laughing, and crying) are re-humanizing catalysts for reconciliation to occur.

Review of Key Constructs: Reconciliation & Rehumanization

Reconciliation

Enright (2001) describes reconciliation as the “act of two people coming together following a separation” (p. 28). Communication scholars note that it requires a renewed trust between parties that had previously been broken (Ellis, 2006; Enright, 2001; Waldron & Kelley, 2008). Several scholars emphasize that reconciliation is a *relational process*, rather than a single act of restoration (Ellis, 2006; Staub, Pearlman, & Miller, 2003). This process is a reinterpretation of the conflicting relationship. Staub, Pearlman, & Miller (2003) describe the transformation as:

[a] changed psychological orientation toward the other. Reconciliation means the victims and perpetrators do not see the past as defining the future, as simply a continuation of the past. It means that they come to accept each other and to see the humanity of one another and the possibility of a constructive relationship.
(p. 288)

Ellis (2006) also takes a communicative approach to understanding reconciliation, describing it as a “communicative process” that “[calls] for overarching moral bonds that accept offenders into a moral community” (p. 180). The process of reconciliation is a multifaceted phenomenon

contextualized and influenced by several external factors, such as identity widening and forgiveness.

Identity Widening. In *ICYIZERE* identity widening becomes salient within the Rwandan reconciliation workshop. Ellis (2006) defines identity widening as “the act of extending and enlarging one’s identity so that it includes more groups, people, and ideas. It can be thought of as expanding concentric circles” that redraws ‘us versus them’ boundaries establishing a “more common identity” (p. 174). Gaertner and Dovidio (2000) describe identity widening as a recategorization process, where two separate groups can be redefined as one. Identity widening reframes the situation at hand (i.e., both Tutsis and Hutus are Rwandans, both are victims of genocide). Kelman (as cited in Ellis, 2006) “argues that the deepest form of permanent change from conflict toward peace is through identity change” (p. 174). Ellis (2006) suggests that by constructing more inclusive identity boundaries, the groups in conflict can more easily “internalize some new attitudes” (p. 175). *ICYIZERE* shows that identity widening is used throughout the HROC workshops as a significant element in the reconciliation process.

Forgiveness. Like reconciliation, forgiveness is a relational process (Enright, 2001; McCullough, Pargament, & Thoreson, 2000; Waldron and Kelley, 2008). But while reconciliation is the goal of bringing two parties back together, forgiveness is seen as a step toward reconciliation. There are two aspects of forgiveness important for this study. First, Gobodo-Madikela and Van der Merwe (2009) describes it as “a new way of thinking about one’s trauma and about the emotions it evokes” (p. 15). Though forgiveness does not necessarily remove trauma and pain, it allows one to manage his/her emotions to a point of reinterpreting the perpetrator as a good person who once committed evil deeds. Forgiveness helps turn negative emotions towards the perpetrator into “more positive ones” (Rizkalla, Wethim, and Hodgson,

2008, p. 1595). Second, Gobodo-Medikela and Van der Merwe (2009) explain that repentance “clarifies the perpetrator wants to be forgiven” (p. 16). Remorse empowers the victim to a position to either grant or deny forgiveness. Though expressing remorse does not guarantee forgiveness, it greatly enhances the chances that forgiveness will take place (see Bies & Ripp, 1996; Enright, 2001; Prejan, 1993; Wiesenthal, 1996).

Rehumanization

In *ICYIZERE*, reconciliation between individuals is achieved through participants’ ability to re-humanize each other. While dehumanization divides and subordinates people by denying their humanness, rehumanization is a process which re-identifies a previously devalued individual as uniquely human again. However, rehumanization must take place for both victim *and* perpetrator. Perpetrators put up walls and may psychologically distance themselves from the past and victims in order to avoid the intense guilt felt by their shameful acts (Staub et al., 2003, p. 288). Gobodo-Madikela and Van der Merwe (2009) refer to this as the “paradox of remorse”; whereby the perpetrator’s intense regret and desperation to “restore the loss suffered by the victim . . . produce the paradoxical experience of the perpetrator as a wounded self” (p. 21). She goes on to argue that rehumanization occurs when perpetrators and survivors come together and witness each other’s pain as a result of the genocide. When the survivor sees the perpetrator experiencing deep regret and remorse, they are better able to identify with that person and accept him/her back into a similar moral universe (p. 23). Finally, Oelofsen (2009) states, “empathy is what enables us to recognize another person’s pain, even in the midst of tragedy Empathy deepens our *humanity*” by allowing two parties to identify with each other, a crucial step in the rehumanization process towards reconciliation (emphasis added p. 20).

Method

In this essay, we analyze how participant discourse and interaction in *ICYIZERE* rehumanize individuals within the reconciliation process. We analyze two forms of discourse, the first is, participant discourse as language. The language of the participants is important to analyze because people compare and construct new realities through their discourses with Others (Fairclough, 1992). Gee (1996) argues that discourses are “ways of being” in which we relate to each other and make sense of reality (p. viii). Our secondary analysis is the film’s discourse; that is, how the film was made. The documentary itself is both informational and persuasive discourse (see Smith, 1988, p. 259). It is informative because it attempts to present the reality and facts of the events that took place during the workshop. It is persuasive because, even if it is a representation of reality, it is still a (re)presentation. The camera angles, editing, music, and framing were done in such a way to send a particular message “about the power of, and the need for, forgiveness” (Mureithi, 2009). Both participant discourse and film discourse work together in showing how reconciliation at the workshop is achieved.

With regard to analysis, identity widening and empathetic human interaction are thematic categories developed through “thematic saturation” of viewing the film several times (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 191). *ICYIZERE* shows rehumanization occurring on two levels. First, identity widening provides individuals a new unified reinterpretation of each other. Second, rehumanization is grounded in empathetic human interaction (i.e., activities that involved remorse, empathy, laughing, crying). Finally, as the participants move through the three days of HROC workshop, both abstract activities and practical interactions are used to rehumanize participants in the efforts toward reconciliation. These activities and interactions occur *in situ*, during workshop, and construct a newly sacred and safe space of collective memory among

participants that is both material and symbolic of a newfound hope.

Analysis: Thematic Categories within *ICYIZERE*

Identity Widening

Identity negotiation is a predominant theme throughout the workshop that is an important step to reconciliation. During the genocide, Hutus and Tutsis were divided by violence and hatred. The workshop recognized that in order to bring these two groups back together both Hutus and Tutsis would have to redefine who they are as a people. The documentary shows this redefinition happening through cultural identity widening. HROC redefined boundaries of participants' identities to be more inclusive, allowing individuals to work towards common goals despite differences. *ICYIZERE* shows identity widening occurring on two levels: the genocide is reinterpreted to affect everyone, and "victims" and "perpetrators" are now being grouped as one.

The film shows that facilitators use collective memory to reinterpret the genocide not by pitting Hutus against Tutsis, but rather Rwandans against Rwandans. For example, when a male participant expressed trouble forgiving his friend for betraying him, Solange responded that "the problem is common for all of us. This is what *Rwanda* experienced. We find it very hard to comprehend the evil done to us by our *own*" (emphasis added, Mureithi, 2009). Solange does not label the Hutus as evil murderers and Tutsis as victims, but identifies both killers and victims as Rwandans. This scene illustrates how the dialectical tension of individual and collective memory intersects the establishing of a safe/sacred space for reconciliation. Upon entering the workshop, the survivors' individual memories of the genocide still view the Hutu participants as unfamiliar (and untrustworthy) perpetrators. However, the HROC facilitators craft the workshop discourse to reinterpret the genocide (in a collective, public context) as a collective experience. In doing so, the facilitators work towards establishing a safe space by identifying a central commonality.

Another example of identity widening occurs when Solange speaks to the camera about the overall effect of the genocide; she states: “Many are traumatized by their own experiences . . . Everyone has his own grief” (Mureithi, 2009). Her words are carefully chosen to include all Rwandans, not just Hutus or Tutsis. The facilitators’ discourse describing the genocide as a collective experience is eventually adopted by the participants themselves. This is evidenced when Mama Aline uses identity widening and states: “In the rain, a fool thinks he is wetter than others. The genocide has affected *everyone*” (emphasis added, Mureithi, 2009). Through identity widening, victims and perpetrators find common ground to collectively face trauma. This use of identity widening shows how the power of memory and reframing one’s past can lead to new ways of reinterpreting the present.

Other scenes of the documentary show identity widening that occur outside the workshop. For example, near the beginning of the film the viewer is presented shots of cars on busy streets, and people out in public life, while discourse from a radio station (the RTLM previously known for its propaganda that spread Hutu ideology and encouraged the killing of Tutsis) is now airing discourses that use unifying words like “Rwandans” and “family” amidst the visual shots of civic life. Additionally, during a scene of the genocide memorial march, a man leads people as he speaks into a microphone: “it wasn’t right for a Rwandan to slaughter another Rwandan and dehumanize him without remorse People were being killed everywhere in this country. The leadership killed the people they were supposed to protect to the extent that they even killed their own” (Mureithi, 2009). Like Solange, this man used inclusive language so as not to reinforce the division between Hutus and Tutsis, but rather work towards establishing a safe space where both Hutus and Tutsis could remember the past and work towards the future. The rebuilding of Rwandan society, like the genocide, is interpreted as a

collective experience.

As mentioned above, reinterpreting the genocide as a collective experience worked towards grouping the Hutus and Tutsis together into one group: Rwandans. However, the facilitators also used identity widening outside the reinterpretation of the genocide. Identity widening on present identities was employed when the male facilitator drew three expanding concentric circles. In the middle he wrote an individual's name. The larger second circle represented the family. The third and largest circle represented nation (see Figure 1). He then asked: "Does poverty affect the individual, the family, or the entire nation?" By drawing expanding concentric circles, the facilitator attempted to situate the participants in a larger societal whole, showing the interconnectedness of all participants. Identity widening worked towards building a safe space within the workshop because participants were not categorized as enemies, but rather as Rwandans who have common goals towards moving past their personal traumas (individual memories of the genocide) and towards reconciliation.

The second level of identity widening is seen when both perpetrators and survivors express fear. Jean Baptiste explains this fear to the camera when he recounts his release from prison:

My heart was full of joy and happiness, coupled with fear. Why fear? We suspected that the release was a plan to kill us. You are scared of yourself in front of them. Surely you are frightened The first time I saw a survivor after jail? I felt scared! I felt I couldn't approach him. I killed his own, now I am in front of him! He can kill me! (Mureithi, 2009)

Another male survivor shares with the circle that "much trauma is caused by witnessing death and meeting a killer in the street" (Mureithi, 2009). Both perpetrator and survivor are scared of

each other even years after the genocide. When both sides shared this feeling, they recategorized themselves not as survivor and perpetrator, but two sides who were equally fearful of the other. Fear of post genocidal encounters became a shared experience for each side to relate to the other, and sharing such vulnerabilities may be indicative of the security they have co-established (with the help of the facilitators) within the workshop environment.

The perception that perpetrators and survivors share the same values is another aspect of identity widening that has elements of rehumanization. Remorse can serve to allow perpetrators back into the moral community. When perpetrators feel regret about their previous actions and label them as immoral, they are using the same moral judgments as the survivors. A perceived shared ethics can establish common ground for productive peace building, which was witnessed when Jean Baptiste shared his interpretation of the tree of hope with the circle:

A person with sympathy can also forgive, meaning he is the tree of hope.

We are not searching amongst animals, but in human beings, especially leaders and parents who have children. A parent without love is a tree of mistrust. As the parent loves the child, the child loves others. (Mureithi, 2009)

Jean Baptiste expresses the same values as the survivor: sympathy, forgiveness, hope, love, family. These are not the values of a murderer, but of an empathetic and caring individual of the community. By asserting such values, he can be recategorized as a good person and included back into the Rwandan family. He recognizes their humanity, reversing the dehumanization process by recognizing all human life elevated above animals. He also uses inclusive language to assert that he is not different than they are (i.e., “We are not searching amongst *animals*, but in human *beings*”). Jean Baptiste’s comments show that his adherence to a moral community can establish important common values for creating a safe place/space in which all participants can

agree to live by.

Empathetic Human Interaction through Activities

While identity widening is used to reinterpret Hutu and Tutsi identities with cooperative goals, empathetic human interaction is used to practically show the humanness of participants. The empathetic human interaction used rehumanizing elements to establish the workshop as a safe place/space for healing because it (re)opened a relatability that had previously been taken away through the dehumanization of the genocide. Both survivors and perpetrators participated in several activities throughout the three-day workshop. The rehumanizing activities we focus on are the “It Can Fly” game, the sharing circle, and the trust walk.

On the first day, participants played a game called “It Can Fly.” During the game, they stood in a circle and drummed on their legs. Solange would call out a word, and participants would raise both hands if that word could fly. Failing to correctly identify the words would result in ‘being out.’ The church was filled with laughter, pointing, smiling, and joking. Laughter, similar to pain, is a rehumanizing element. When two groups share in amusement and joy, they recognize uniquely human characteristics of each other which reverse the dehumanization that took place during of the genocide. The camera angles gave the audience a unique glimpse into the rehumanization process occurring. During the game, the camera was positioned on the inside of the circle. The laughing and smiles were seen from the point of view of other participants in the circle rather than an outside observer. When participants playfully point at others from across the circle, it is as if they are pointing right past the camera, or the audience member. This camera angle gives an intimate view of what is occurring in the circle, as if the audience is in the middle of the rehumanizing energy that is constructing a safe space by positively welcoming laughter, smiles, and fun. The camera then films the participants who are out and watching the game.

Before cutting to the next scene, an arm can briefly be seen in the background going around the shoulders of another. Though the two cannot be identified as survivor and perpetrator, the shot still captures the unity that participants are experiencing in that space.

Shared pain, like shared joy, can also be an empathetic way of humanly connecting with each other. Participants participated in a sharing circle on several occasions throughout the workshop where they shared memories, stories, and present-day personal trauma with others. Participants were asked to “think deeply and share honestly” and write down three things or people they lost during the genocide (Mureithi, 2009). The silence was finally broken by the sounds of weeping from different areas of the circle. This is the first scene in the documentary when pain and tears are witnessed in the circle. Camera shots focused on the reactions of the participants as some covered their faces and wiped the tears from their eyes. Other shots were close ups of heavy and concerned faces, such as perpetrator Jean Baptiste, as they stared at the floor. The shots strategically show the emotional responses to each other’s trauma. The scene shows how both their mannerisms and stories are an attempt to share in each other’s pain, experiencing the trauma together.

During another sharing circle activity, the male facilitator asks the group, “What is trauma?” Jean is the first to respond with: “One might have witnessed massacres, or have been forced to kill” (Mureithi, 2009). He takes the initiative to show the survivors that he too has been traumatized by the massacres, invoking remorse as a means for creating a safe space towards potential reconciliation. The next scene is of Jean talking to the camera about the trauma he experienced for killing others:

You feel you can’t look at his dead body. His image follows you on the street.

Your life is drastically affected. Even as a witness, your life is devastated. You

are not at peace. You are haunted. The sight of the killing follows and pains you. (Mureithi, 2009)

He displays deep concern and regret for his part in the genocide and explains how his life is haunted by past memories. This scene illustrates Gobodo-Madikela and Van der Merwe's (2009) paradox of remorse where the perpetrator is so burdened by his own pain and guilt that he becomes a victim. As a perpetrator, Jean shows his willingness to cooperate by attending the workshop and being the first to testify to experiencing trauma. The camera shows the rehumanization process happening by showing the faces of other participants as they listen to Jean's response and identify with him. The documentary not only captures remorse in his stories, but shows how Jean's memories serve a dialectical purpose in painfully reminding him of the past while motivating him towards the collective need for reconciliation in the present-day workshop.

While dehumanization denies the individual uniquely human characteristics, rehumanization is recognizing those characteristics. In *ICYIZERE*, the sharing circle plays on past memories to re-recognize the distinctly human characteristics of crying, pain, and empathy of both perpetrators and survivors. When both sides witness each other's pain together, they reverse the dehumanization that separated them during the genocide.

The trust walk was done on the third and final day. Survivors and perpetrators were paired up as one blindfolded the other. During this activity, one led the blindfolded other out of the church and around the building. This activity was an attempt to reestablish the trust that was lost during the genocide. Now that the participants had experienced uniquely human characteristics together (pain, empathy, crying, joy, laughter, smiles), it was time to put their trust back into each other as humans. Camera shots captured people laughing, smiling, and

tentatively trusting each other. Shots focused on the actions that were needed to successfully complete this task, such as arms embracing the other around the waist, guided hand contact, and hand holding. The camera focused on the hesitant steps of the participants as they walked down slopes and the steps leading back into the building, emphasizing the connectedness of perpetrator and survivor as they cautiously took trusted steps together. Participants later shared the difficulties in the trust walk, and learned the interdependencies that exist between them on the larger level as well. Mama Aline shares, “If I had misled him, he would not have supported me properly” (Mureithi, 2009). The trust walk not only reinforced the workshop as a safe/sacred place for healing, but also symbolized the trust needed to walk together in rebuilding the Rwandan community.

On the first day of the workshop, Jean Baptiste, hesitant and fearful, expressed his remorse and desire for forgiveness in stating: “There has to be a *safe environment* where the survivor would take the first step [emphasis added].” The trust walk was done on the last day, allowing the workshop to end with survivors and perpetrators taking literal steps toward a renewed trust between each other, completing the three day transformation from a space filled with tension to a space filled with healing and hope. Both joyful and painful activities allowed participants to share their emotions with each other. These activities allowed empathetic human interaction to occur between participants, allowing them to once again recognize the uniquely human characteristics of each other.

Reconciliation: Newly Constructed Sacred/Safe Space

One of the final scenes in the documentary is filmed eight months later in an attempt to see if and how reconciliation was sustained after the workshop. The scene follows Mama Aline as she visited Jean Baptiste, whose new friendship was a result of the workshop. Their

conversation takes place at Jean Baptiste's house around the table:

Jean Baptiste (JB) tells Mama Aline (MA) about a Hutu who asked him: "Why do you love Tutsis so much? Because I'm scared of Mama Aline. What can be done to reconcile me with her?"

MA: "I'm ready to forgive him."

JB: [reveals the perpetrator's name]

MA: "He was one of my dad's killers. He even denied it! Just tell him I'm ready to forgive him."

JB: "I told him we learned a lot in the last workshop we had. If you like, we can invite you to the next workshop. After the workshop, Mama Aline has changed. We talk openly. No more problems between us."

MA: "But if he wants to reconcile, tell him to come and we'll go to the court. I'll say I have nothing against him anymore. That's the way Rwandans should live. Sincerely, if he told you he wants to do that, I am at peace." (Mureithi, 2009)

This scene establishes the changed and widened identities of the workshop and how reconciliation was achieved by these two participants. First, the friendship between Mama Aline and Jean Baptiste shows how the workshop reconciled the two despite their past. Second, Mama Aline is willing to forgive this particular Hutu, but not unconditionally. She expresses that reconciliation cannot happen until the perpetrator shows remorse. He must show that he shares the same values as she and all Rwandans do. Only then can he be accepted back into the moral community and live the "way Rwandans should live" (Mureithi, 2009). *ICYIZERE*'s ending scene is Mama Aline and Jean walking away from the camera as they discuss how they can reconcile with this man, leaving the audience with a better understanding of reconciliation efforts and successes as well as how participants continue to strive for peace.

Throughout the documentary, the viewer looks into the HROC reconciliation workshop held in Gisenyi, Rwanda. When the two of us first walked into the documentary, we thought about the atrocities caused by genocide, about a cultural place that had historically suffered such a strong wave of human killings, and about a place impacted by histories of colonization and significant ethnic tensions. In thinking through the impact of genocide in Rwanda, one sees the importance of remembrance of the victims and the impact of all who survive and continue to live with their individual and pronounced collective memory of this time of atrocity, both nationally and globally. In mentioning Rwanda to people in the country from where we both hail, the United States, and with too many years of limited media and education about Rwanda, it has become too easy to essentialize the country of Rwanda and its people in particular ways, in ways typically associated with genocide and its devastation. And, yet, these catalysts of collective memory are in fact essential to the process of remembrance and for the process of learning and growing anew.

The documentary, *ICYIZERE*, is a memory text of communicative insight that houses recorded and edited moments of participants engaging in a workshop towards reconciliation efforts, post-genocide. In this mediated space of the HROC workshop, we assert that even in its representational form, the workshop facilitators and the participants construct a newfound safe space. In this newly constructed space humanness can be realized and gestures of humanity re-located, perhaps renewed, both in the transformation of participant discourse and in their engagement with each other. Finally, in this newly constructed safer space, material outcomes of reconciliation emerge despite initial conflict lines of genocidal, demarcated identities as Hutus and Tutsis.

As researchers interested in understanding better the role of communication in matters of

rehumanization and reconciliation, navigating the terrain of the documentary, ICYIZERE, opened up and substantiated for us the power, persuasive, and communicative dimensions of participants moving through the reconciliation workshop. We remain aware of the distinction between (re)presentations and outcomes of reconciliation and sustaining reconciliation. As viewers, we are able to glance into the communicative dimensions used throughout the workshop; we are also given insight into the participant's negotiation of individual and collective memory. The documentary viewer's position is one of imagining connections into the past while also negotiating connections to people [(re)presented] in the present (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, 2010). As we glanced into this terrain of individual and collective memory negotiation, it became increasingly apparent to us that we were watching a group of individuals working through the activation of deeply embedded tragedy and loss while collectively moving through memory "activated by concerns, issues, or anxieties of the present" [i.e., the need for healing and reconciliation] (p. 6). In our analysis we note two communicative dimensions of identity widening and empathetic human action as two themes that substantiate this progress.

Identity widening and empathetic human action emerged as the new communicative seeds in the efforts of Rwandan reconciliation. These themes detail how participants in the documentary moved from ethnic segregation to stronger dimensions of unity in the three day workshop. By shifting toward a broader conceptualization of Rwandan identity, the perpetrators and survivors navigate memory of place/space, which makes more complex the understanding of location as more than a site of atrocity and violence but also as material and symbolic ground for individual and collective reconciliation as Rwandans.

As the documentary workshop evidences, the national space of atrocity will forever reside in the minds and hearts of many, yet strides toward reconciliation, as represented in the

film, continue to grow under newly planted seeds of trust and hope. With these seeds of human commitment to engage one another *in situ*, a workshop colloquial/secular space of the everyday begins to temper prior memories of atrocity that happened to participants, their families, and neighbors in their (home)land. The possibilities of hope are clearly articulated by one member of the workshop when he states: “The path is through education so that people can know the truth. Especially those who didn’t attend this workshop. For us to be the tree of hope, we should be special envoys” (Mureithi, 2009). In this way, the everyday space of the workshop becomes a *newly defined sacred space* of renewal, hope, and collaboration—a *safer space* defined for both the participants and even by us, the viewer, as we watch material outcomes of reconciliation in the final moments of the documentary. And, in these final moments of footage, Jean Baptiste and Mama Aline cast liberated strides into the open and peaceful landscape of Rwandan earth in their own village, humanistic strides that continue on with a humbled yet engaged laughter with each other—two post-genocide Rwandans—who have chosen to engage in new terrains of human wonder and wander.

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Figure 1: Identity Widening

[Design adapted from the workshop activity in the film, *ICYIZERE: hope*]

