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My African Journey: Psychology, Photography, and Social Advocacy

Eberhard Riedel

At home and abroad we face the seemingly intractable problem of fundamentalist ideology, racism, and tribal violence tearing apart the human fabric. Here I propose that paying attention to innate psychological processes can make a difference. I work with individuals and communities suffering the posttraumatic consequences of war and violence in crisis areas of eastern Congo, northern Uganda, South Sudan, and western Kenya. I have observed that unresolved posttraumatic issues lead to intergenerational transmission of trauma, which, in turn, feeds future cycles of war, violence, and discrimination. In the spirit of prevention, it is essential that the international community prioritize attention to the psychological perspectives involved in human rights issues. Here I develop elements of a holistic systems approach to dealing with large-scale posttraumatic crises afflicting communities and the culture at large. I pay special attention to cultural interfaces and what C. G. Jung called the *cultural dimension* of the psyche. In fieldwork I blend digital photography and psychotherapeutic approaches to transcend personal and cultural layers of reference and rekindle the struggle of giving birth to one's future. In a Cameras without Borders workshop a survivor of sexual violence in the eastern Congo said, "The camera is pregnant." Such metaphors function to shatter limitations of the traumatized mind. Dissociation is the hallmark of psychological trauma as well as of the fundamentalist condition. I view developing a capacity for curiosity and mutuality not only as central to the treatment of trauma but also as an antidote to the ills and sclerosis of a fundamentalist mindset, which is the source of much human suffering. Curiosity inspires action, and mutuality invites caring about social justice and peace.

This article is dedicated to the memory of James Hillman (1926–2011). It is based on a paper presented at the conference of the Inter-Regional Society of Jungian Analysts in Boulder, CO, on April 20, 2012.

INTRODUCTION

How might we contribute to healing the soul of the world, the *anima mundi* (cf. Hillman, 1982/1992)? At all times we stand with one foot in a personal and the other in a collective-cultural realm—and *social healing* requires that we hold *both* realms in purview. Therefore, let us focus on psychological and cultural *interfaces*, as between the personal and communal realms, our own or that of other cultures. Doing so may invoke uncomfortable feelings, friction between “us” and “them,” tension and discord—we want to catch these uncomfortable moments because they can tell us something. Allowing what I call *interface emotions* to harden into rigid or fundamentalist attitudes is a frequent source of warfare and tribal violence.

Reflecting on these questions, I reread Jung’s (1961) account of his Africa trip to Kenya and Uganda in 1925/26.¹ What Jung thought would be a scientific exploration of “primitive man” became an “intensely personal” journey. Jung writes: “I enjoyed the ‘divine peace’ of a still primeval country. . . . Thousands of miles lay between me and Europe, mother of all demons” (p. 264). This was after World War I, but before the ascent of Hitler and Stalin, their death camps and Gulags, and in 1939 the start of World War II.

Jung may have held romantic notions about colonialism; certainly “divine peace”—if it ever existed—departed the African continent a long time ago. Yet despite adversity and brutality, the *nucleus* in the cradle of humankind carries enduring vitality.

My Cameras Without Borders project in Africa (Riedel, 2008–2012) is intimately connected with my life’s history. Born in Germany in 1939, I grew up with an awareness of the terror of Nazi death camps and the chaos of war.² After September 11, 2001, I was reminded once again of my childhood experiences—had nothing changed? At home and abroad the virus of racism, fundamentalism, and tribalism, and the terror and violence this virus spawns, is still tearing apart the human fabric. I felt the urge to move beyond the confines of my psychoanalytical consulting room, and so, in 2004, I started fieldwork in Africa as a photographer and psychologist. I went to listen and learn at the grassroots level, face to face with Africa.

What follows are stories and discussions based on fieldwork and interviews with well over a thousand individuals (1) in northern Uganda and southern South Sudan, where people are suffering from the consequences of more than twenty years of war and violence inflicted by Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebels; (2) in the cross-border areas of Uganda, Kenya, and South Sudan, where people are haunted by ongoing tribal conflicts; and (3) in eastern Congo, where “perverse” war and violence are still raging in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide of 1994. An anatomy of the collective trauma and genocide in eastern Congo is discussed elsewhere (Riedel, 2013).

A few months after South Sudan gained independence in 2011, a man there said to me, “The guns are quiet—now the war is taking place in my mind.” The man is suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Yet in many parts of South Sudan and eastern Congo a perverse “hot” war is ongoing, and violence rages both internally and externally—I say *perverse* because most victims are innocent men, women, and children. Many individuals I encounter are survivors of torture and violence, violated in their basic human rights, robbed of their voices, raped physically and/or emotionally, their humanity disregarded—the worst of trauma.

Besides the millions who lost their lives through war, another serious consequence of war is that *emotional links are shattered*. Indigenous people are expelled from their traditional lands; people flee their villages and end up in the slums of big towns; hundreds of thousands end up in refugee camps and internally displaced people’s camps; and on and on. Though the conflict analysis in different areas of East Africa involves distinct tribal, ideological, political, and economic components, at its deepest level “war against humanity” is soul murder. Always, when emotional *connectivity* with self and others is broken, the result is loss of soul.

I view psychology and photography as tools for solving problems. I insist that any serious peace-building effort must include attending to the post-traumatic physical and emotional wounds of individuals and communities exposed to the ravages of war and devastating violence. Like any humanizing effort, this requires mutuality and demands that we develop our capacity for attentive witnessing (e.g., see Osband, this issue).

After intensive comparative fieldwork in eastern Congo, northern Uganda, South Sudan, and western Kenya, concrete plans are beginning to be realized. First, faculty members at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, enthusiastically took up my suggestion to create a regional East African psychological trauma center that is *interdisciplinary*, incorporating psychology, fine and performing arts, and film. It will train professionals from, and serve communities in, crisis areas of Uganda, South Sudan, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, and eastern Congo. Second, the massive trauma I encountered in the eastern Congo impelled me to develop a *systems approach* to treating psychological trauma. Work to implement this approach has begun in collaboration with professionals and volunteers associated with the Great Lakes Foundation for Peace and Justice in Bukavu, South-Kivu Province, with goals ranging from establishing a network of emergency health and mental health centers in the rural areas to reducing the frequency of violent incidents through educational peace-building efforts guided by a culturally sensitive empowerment model. Working collaboratively and building local infrastructure are essential to making a contribution of lasting impact to psychosocial healing and rebuilding civil society in eastern Africa.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

The challenge of fieldwork in these difficult environments in East Africa is one of holding the tension between exigencies of *action* and psychological *reflection*. What are the psychological issues we are addressing? What *is* psychological trauma? Imagine taking a glass bottle and throwing it on the floor—it will shatter into many pieces, the harder the blow the more and smaller the pieces. By analogy, emotional blows shatter the human mind—the human mind dissociates; links get broken. So, psychologically speaking, emotional trauma is a state of dissociation or fragmentation of the mind (cf. Kalsched, 1996). For example, I talked with a former child-soldier (Figure 1), whose mind has been shattered by unbelievable trauma; she said, “I was nine years old when I was abducted [in northern Uganda in 1994].” Then LRA rebels held her in captivity and forced her to be a child-soldier in northern Uganda, southern Sudan, and northeastern Congo for *fifteen* years before she was able to escape in June 2009. I met her one year later. Such trauma and dissociation also occur in the collective, in the culture of a people. I know this from my native Germany; the Nazi years were like a wall of concrete that cut off people from the rest of their history, good and bad (cf. Riedel, 2009).

A shattered bottle cannot hold water and a dissociated mind cannot think. The symptoms are many. Often people suffering from emotional trauma are anxious; experience the most horrendous nightmares; are prone

to engage in violent and brutal behaviors; develop psychosomatic illness; engage in addictive behaviors (e.g., alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual obsessions); have difficulties relating even to their families and friends; are vulnerable to predator people and propaganda; and transmit their trauma to the next generation. How to break the endless cycle of war and violence—that is the question. To do so requires a capacity to *think* about what has happened—but the traumatized mind is overwhelmed by powerful affect, is shell-shocked and emotionally imprisoned.³

My work . . . has convinced me that without attention to the emotional injuries of survivors of war and unimaginable violence, humanitarian assistance does *not* provide sufficient context for reconciliation and lasting peace.

matized mind is overwhelmed by powerful affect, is shell-shocked and emotionally imprisoned.³

The challenges are to empower and provide psychosocial support to large numbers of individuals and whole communities that are suffering the posttraumatic consequences of war, violence, and marginalization. By *empower* I mean to provide a supportiveness that honors and helps people build their capacity to develop local solutions—in essence, helping people to help themselves. However, there are situations, particularly in the face of serious human rights violations, when outside help is necessary. One example is the children. Everywhere I hear the same story: Here is a child in eastern Congo (Figure 2); stitched on her dress is “Christened for Beauty” but imprinted on her psyche is “Terror.” Locked out, she has no access to education, yet we know that peace starts at the local level with education. These children are waiting.

My work, face to face with Africa, has convinced me that without attention to the emotional injuries (PTSD) of survivors of war and unimaginable violence, humanitarian assistance does *not* provide sufficient context for reconciliation and lasting peace. This view is neither shared nor practiced by 99% of the humanitarian aid industries in areas I visited. Most of their work seems short-term, creating unhealthy dependencies and false hope rather than healing and empowerment. This political question needs addressing if we donors are not to remain part of the problem. Martin Luther King, Jr., observed, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny” (King, 1986, p. 85).

Concerning psychological trauma, a key observation is that *the traumatized psyche is unable to reflect or imagine and thus experiences itself as isolated from the rest of humanity* (cf. Riedel, 2009; also Figure 1 and cover photo). This loss of inner and outer connectedness underlies the symptoms of PTSD—and *that* is what we want to pay attention to. I begin tending the wounds of psychological trauma by reawakening *curiosity* in culturally sensitive ways.⁴ I *model* curiosity—often just by showing up, starting a conversation, and then listening. Someone in South Sudan said to me: “Oh, a white man is traveling here, so something must be different.” I believe in the wisdom of the people—healing starts with regaining a sense of self, one’s voice, being seen. I have found that the *arts* are powerful tools in this process. Artistic engagement dares people to start grieving the tremendous losses they have suffered and breaks down the barriers that keep them shell-shocked and emotionally imprisoned.

How might we create reflective space to help trauma survivors *think* about what has happened? In 1916, in the midst of World War I, Jung posited a psychological process that he termed the “transcendent function of the psyche”—*transcendent* because it *links* different parts of the psyche (Jung, 1916/1958/1969). But what brings the transcendent function into action? Following Jung’s general tenet that the psyche abhors being stuck, we might

answer: The transcendent function is a development forced on the psyche by the pressure of being stuck in one-sidedness. In other words, *the transcendent function develops to deal with stuckness*. Almost half a century later the psychologist Bion (1962) said, “Thinking is the development forced on the psyche by the pressure of thoughts” (p. 111); he suggests that “thinking develops in order to cope with thoughts” and not the other way around. I believe Jung’s and Bion’s ideas are related. Here is an example.

As a young man married to my late wife I entered a phase when I felt stuck—alternating between “either stay married and feel miserable or divorce and . . . well, feel miserable.” Neither path felt right. (You may remember Dante’s image of finding oneself in a dark wood.) Wrestling with my dilemma, a dream occurred in which *I walked down a glacier, but then could not move on because my rope was stuck in a crevasse—after much effort it got unstuck, and I felt great relief* (I remember that feeling to this day). Thus, long before I knew about Jung or Bion, I became aware of the transcendent function as a *process* in my psyche.

Such innate psychological processes make a difference. I could not think about my emotional experience because it was primarily sensory (hence the state of stuckness).⁵ Then the disturbing sensory experience transformed into dream-thoughts—that is, a symbolic representation (rope stuck in the crevasse)—and it thereby became accessible to thinking. Now, and this is important, the freedom that comes with “Oh, I can think about this” is experienced as *joy*—it connects with a larger world, call it the cultural (symbolic) layer of the psyche. Now I am no longer alone—the connection with the cultural layer links me to something larger. My distress (or whatever it is) does not need to be healed by my partner (or another). To the contrary, the glacier ice covering the relationship can melt, and normal human relationship in the mundane world has the potential to be reborn.

For the trauma survivor the process of transmuting sensory experiences into dream-thoughts is blocked. Psychological trauma undermines thinking, undermines the transcendent function, and hence the normal or mundane world remains frozen, buried under a mass of arctic ice, even under the tropical sun of Africa. You sense this dissociation in the photographs of *Lost Youth—Former Child Soldier* (Figure 1) and *Thinking Back—Genocide Survivor* (cover photo): Both individuals are overwhelmed by shadows from their past. Developing curiosity and a capacity for play are essential steps in unfreezing innate healing and symbolic processes. Similarly, addressing large-scale psychological trauma in communities by encouraging “artistic engagement” facilitates reconnection with a larger world by nourishing aspects of the cultural (or symbolic) layer of the psyche.⁶

The point here is not whether the model is correct or not—it is myth; engaging in such myth-building develops a sensibility to relational knowing.

The “real” or the “uncanny” hits you as a *numinous experience* during the process of relating to self or other—and forges a connection.

What about the inner world of survivors of *extreme* psychological trauma? I am thinking here of my experiences in Congo, Uganda, and South Sudan—for example, the female and male survivors of torture and rape, and the children who were kidnapped and inducted into brutal warfare as child-

There is a close link between image and affect, which I employ to engage people in storytelling and to rekindle curiosity.

soldiers or sex slaves, always under the threat of death. Such acts of terror deliberately and intentionally destroy the primary empathic bond and create an *abyss* between the sufferer and human community (cf. Connolly, 2011, p. 608). This self-alienation seems to be the intention of what I called *perverse warfare*. Such horrors break the protective shield of the psyche—remember the image of the shattered bottle. As one eyewitness said, “Now the war takes place in my mind.” Thus tormented, the survivor is no longer at home in the normal, everyday world but condemned to live in the *trauma world*. Because the traumatized psyche is unable to reflect and imagine, the capacity for the formation of dream-thoughts representing traumatic experiences is lost.⁷ This collapse of the imaginative capacity and loss of temporality leave a horrifying *void* in the psyche. This void *is* the trauma world. It may be sensed as a threatening “black hole,” a dark night of the soul, threatening to devour everything—or its opposite, a dangerous volcano evacuating violent, burning discharges, perverse acting out and terror.

THE PREGNANT CAMERA

There is a close link between image and affect, which I employ to engage people in storytelling and to rekindle curiosity (Figures 3 and 4).⁸ I involve survivors of trauma in image making: First, I display my photographs on the screen of my digital camera and invite subjects to talk about what they see, and on return visits I take prints back to them. Second, I teach the basics of photography to individuals who have suffered trauma or are marginalized and then encourage them to tell their stories through images. Typically I work with groups of eight, loaning each person a digital point-and-shoot camera. I want people both in front of and behind the camera. Indigenous people understand the ritual side of this process—they want to be part of the action.

At the end of the day I print three or four photographs for each workshop participant, right where we work, and all *participate* in the magic of a color photograph emerging from a small, battery-driven printer. Then together we *learn* as we read the photographs.

This group process makes these photographic workshops psychotherapeutic by providing a medium in which evocative images slowly open participants to powerful affects associated with their emotional wounds. Words then emerge that narrate what truly matters in the struggle for liberation from the prison that is trauma. So far, well over 500 youth and adult victims of trauma have participated in my workshops and have taken their learning back to their communities.

Concerning the ritual side of relating, I like to learn as much as possible about indigenous and traditional healing methods, folklore, and art. I find it important to start from people's own narratives. I had an opportunity to witness and record a *Nano i gweno* ceremony (reading the intestines of a chicken) of the Acholi tribe in northern Uganda. When I introduced myself to the native healer, he exclaimed, "OK, you are here to learn how the Acholi protect themselves." And it flashed through my mind: Yes, this is how they build *resilience*. The next day he participated in my *Cameras without Borders* healing ritual. All cultures employ such projective instruments.

Here is what I do with photography in the field (Figures 3 and 4). For example, with pictures taken and selected by workshop participants, I ask, "What story is this picture telling you?" Then I ask the next person the same question, with the same picture, but a different story emerges. This activity shows such projective processes in action. Another question I typically ask is, "What did you experience when you took this picture out in the community?" When I don't have much time with a group, I use the workshop method to obtain diagnostic information. I get more information in this manner than in hours of psychiatric interviews, and the narratives elicited are filled with affect, pain, and tears. With survivors of crime and violence I invite some group members to reenact what happened to them and others to photograph what they witness during the role-play, creating a form of psychodrama. This has been quite successful with survivors of sexual violence as well as with former child-soldiers. Always I let participants come up with ideas of how they want to render "something bad that happened to me" and "something good that happened to me."

For example, in eastern Congo, it would be physically unsafe to revisit the places where the crimes actually happened and playacting provides a safe alternative. Playacting serves to express affect in images, and witnessing and viewing the printed photographs invite participants to process affect. That is why I call my approach *Cameras without Borders: Photography for Healing and Peace* (Riedel, 2008–2012). The process is about restoring a capacity for being curious. The goal is to help people regain their

voice, feel seen, and to see themselves in new ways (e.g., “I am somebody, I made this picture, I am able to learn”). That step is the starting point. As Winnicott (1971) observed, we need transitional space in which to play, and vice versa: Playing restores transitional space, which is an integral part of healing trauma. Even a temporary respite can reduce anxiety in people whose lives have been shattered by insecurity and trauma, and it can provide, however brief, an experience of another reality *besides* the

“Sitting with” and “Listening with the heart” are in the service of creating moments of attunement that can be remembered by the trauma survivor and myself.

trauma world they inhabit. In one of my workshops, a survivor of sexual violence exclaimed, “The picture in the camera is like a *pregnancy*,” and thereby transcended the limitations of her shattered mind. Then imaginatively thinking about what might be gestating in the camera, she rekindled *the struggle of giving birth to her future*.

In a nutshell, in my fieldwork I blend digital technology with old healing methods. My process is iterative: I observe—I do—I see what’s happening (outcome)—and then I return to the beginning of the loop. I pay careful attention to my uncomfortable feelings (the felt sense, something does not feel quite right, what is going on here?) and my dreams, especially during fieldwork.

There is no formal consulting room in fieldwork. I try to find places where people feel protected—for example, under an old tree or in a room in someone’s hut or cabin, like this man’s hut in northern Uganda (Figure 5). He alone survived; his two children were abducted and his wife murdered by LRA rebels. Regardless which monsters emerge and threaten to intimidate us—the deafening noises of a tropical thunderstorm in Congo or of huge empty trucks bouncing from pothole to pothole along a dusty road in northern Uganda—I must *sit with the person and listen from my heart*. As listener, I have to be able to empathize with the reality of the trauma without emotionally freezing and thus losing my capacity for imagination and reflection.⁹ “Sitting with” and “listening with the heart” are in the service of creating moments of attunement that can be remembered by the trauma survivor and myself. Such fleeting moments can induce restorative action by the transcendent function, which itself is a fleeting symbolic process. I employ photographic images as *catalysts* to restart such processes; one could view them as *dyadic transitional objects*. They invite the survivor’s search for a deep, nonverbal connection with another mind. A narrative reconstruction of



FIGURE 1. *Lost Youth—Former Child-Soldier*, Northern Uganda, 2010. © Eberhard Riedel

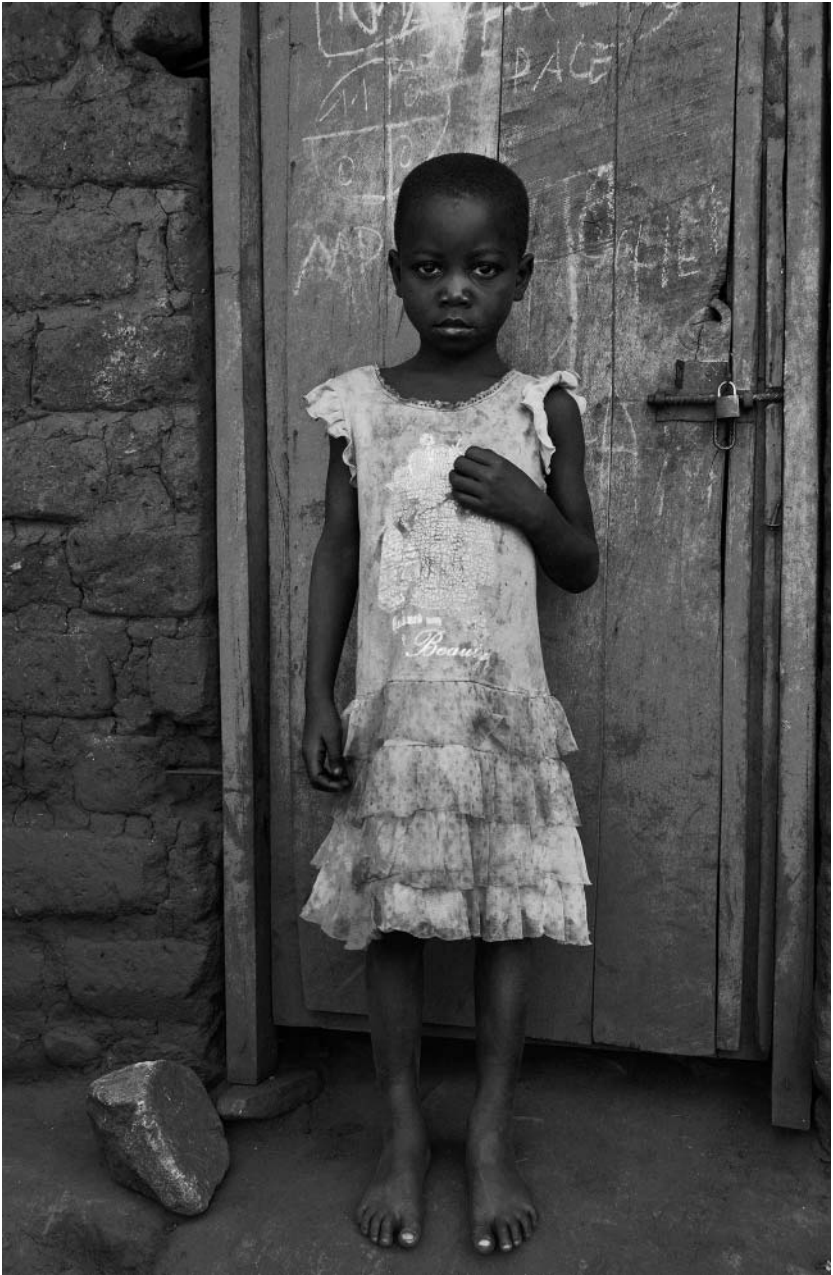


FIGURE 2. *Locked Out*, Eastern Congo, 2011.
© Eberhard Riedel



FIGURE 3. *Awakening Curiosity*, Western Uganda, 2009.
(Photo by Yohana Jubujubu, an 11-year-old Batua Pygmy child.)

© Eberhard Riedel



FIGURE 4. *The Camera is Pregnant*, Eastern Congo, 2011. © Eberhard Riedel

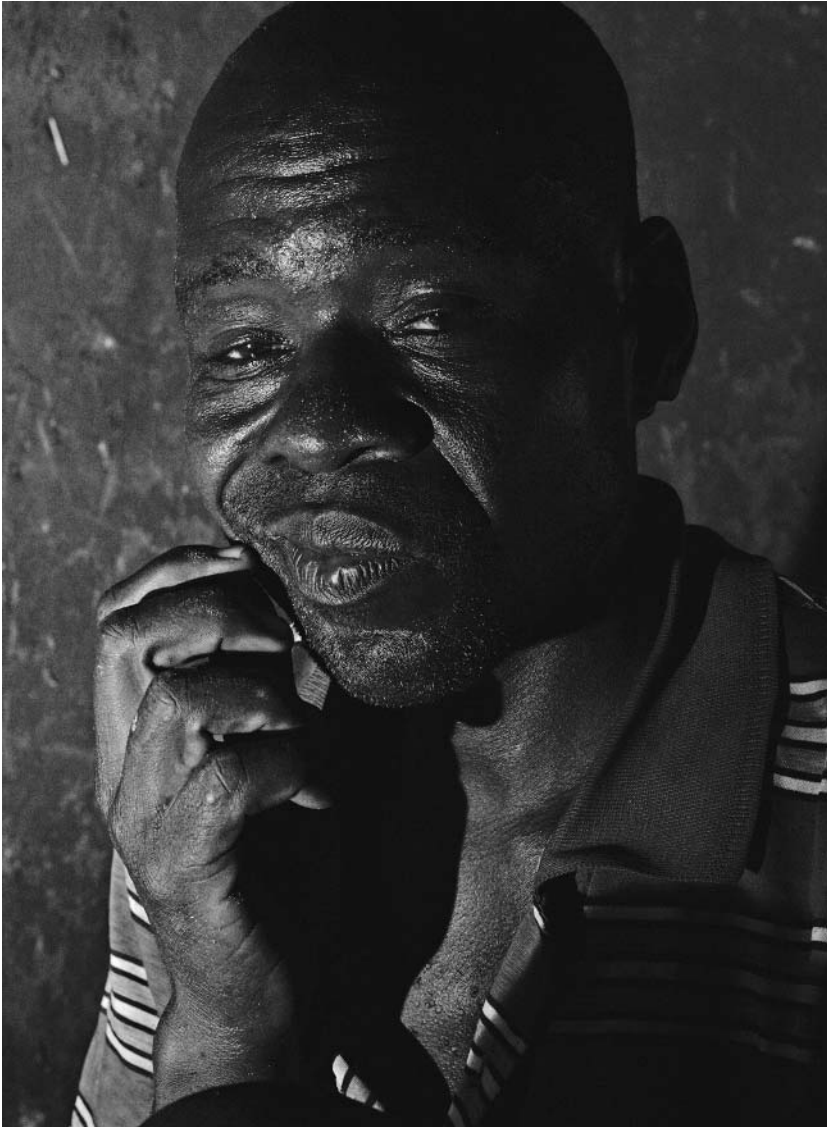


FIGURE 5. *Survivor's Guilt—Awee IDP Camp, Northern Uganda, 2011.* © Eberhard Riedel

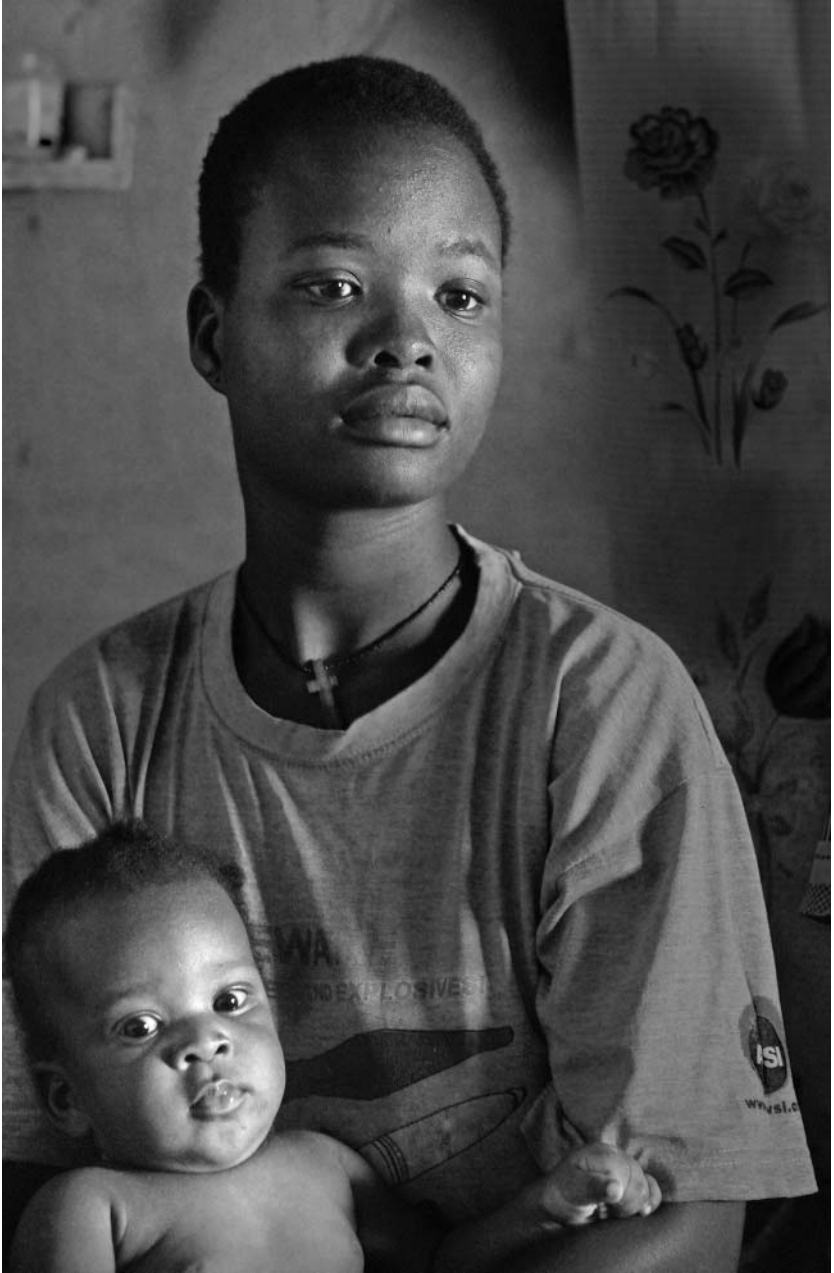


FIGURE 6. *Wounded Mother—Former Child Soldier*, Northern Uganda, 2010. © Eberhard Riedel

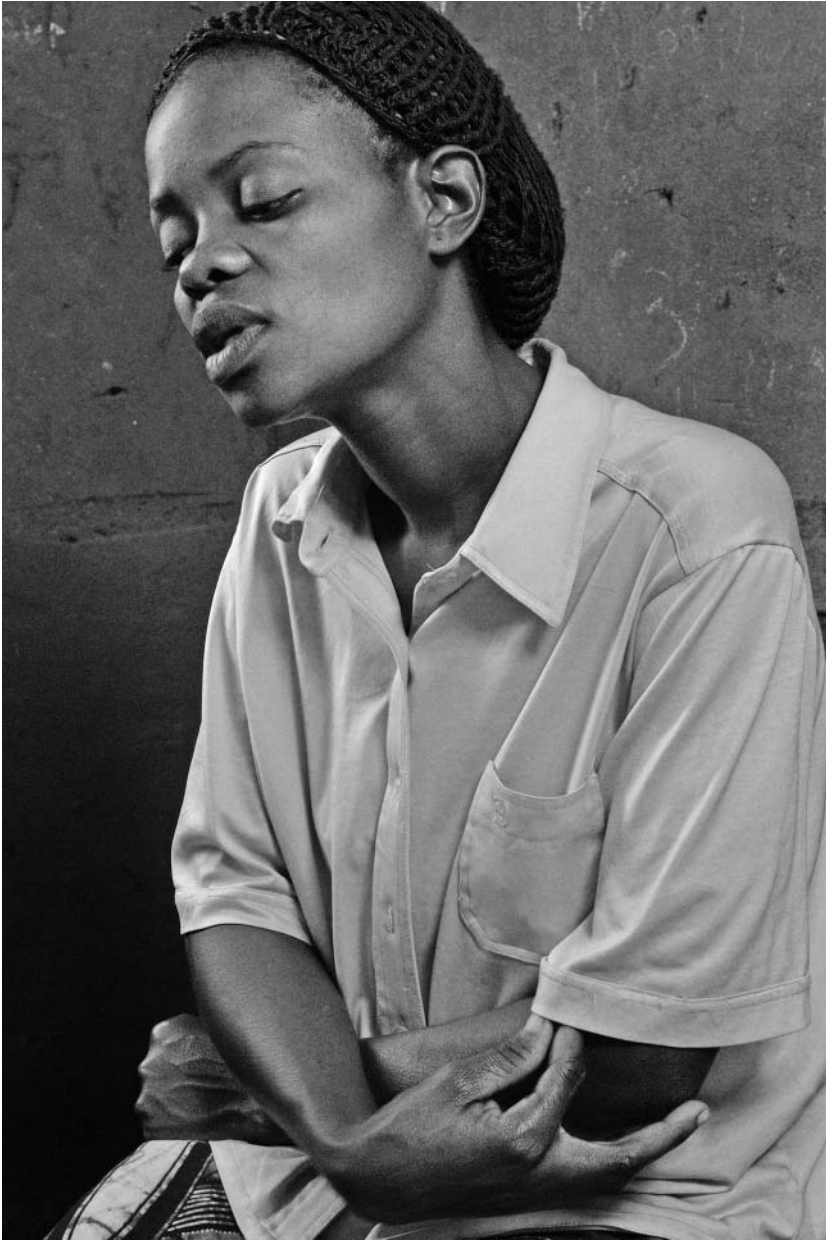


FIGURE 7. *Remembering—Congo 2011*, Eastern Congo, 2011. © Eberhard Riedel



FIGURE 8. *Appealing for Peace in Eastern Congo*, Eastern Congo, 2011. © Eberhard Riedel



FIGURE 9. *Survivors—Amuru IDP Camp, Northern Uganda, 2011.* © Eberhard Riedel

the traumatic event needs to take place to create separation from the trauma world. Curiosity needs to be sparked; after all, the capacity to be curious, to be amazed, is connected to reflective consciousness. This is how I employ the photographic process as a *speculum* (Latin for *mirror*) to look, see, and explore, at the same time *modeling* for the survivor to do likewise (cf. Jacoboni, 2008). Curiosity in self and others inspires action.

Figures 7 and 8 are other examples of portraits I made in Uganda and Congo. At first glance the images are quite beautiful; they are “painted” in the romantic tradition. Taking a second look, we sense that something is not quite right: In *Wounded Mother—Former Child-Soldier* (Figure 6) we notice that the mother’s gaze is disconnected from the baby on her lap; she neither gazes at us or at her baby. In *Remembering—Congo 2011* (Figure 7), we notice the woman’s pained body posture and anxious hands. We feel uncomfortable, feel an urge to move to the next photograph, but it is important that we pay attention to our uncomfortable feelings. These are examples of the “real”—we sense it, feel it. The real is communicated as shocks to the imagination, thereby transcending limitations of the mind. Artistically speaking, there is discordance between romantic form and painful content. Psychologically speaking, paying attention to our uncomfortable feelings, grieving the terrible losses and trauma, thinking about what has happened to us connects us to creative layers of the psyche where healing and renewal originate. Then uncomfortable tensions become “psychoactive” and can serve as midwife in a relational process of healing.

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Doctors and helpers are only human; not all wounds of trauma can be healed. For example, since the Rwandan genocide in 1994 the people of eastern Congo have suffered the brunt of a perverse war against humanity.¹⁰ In their conversations with me, many women emphasized that their stories represent the experiences of thousands and thousands of other women and girls in their communities (Figure 8). In eastern Congo, a young woman told me that she was brutally attacked and violated by several soldiers on three separate occasions, resulting in two pregnancies. She still suffers from painful internal injuries, and in her village she and her “children of violence” are shunned and marginalized. A middle-aged Congolese woman said that when she and her husband worked their field, Hutu FDLR (Force Démocratique pour la Libération de Rwanda) militia attacked, tied her husband to a tree, and then three soldiers sexually brutalized her. Two

weeks later Hutu FDLR soldiers came to her home; she was in bed unable to move because of her earlier injuries, and now five soldiers sexually attacked her and stole “all things from the house.” She confided in me, “My heart is full of shame.” She was one of sixteen seriously injured women for whom I was able to arrange admission to Panzi Gynecological Hospital in Bukavu—the only hospital in South-Kivu Province with gynecologists on staff. The abuses and posttraumatic suffering, physical and emotional, are of *epidemic* proportions; every day in the rural parts of the eastern Congo militia gangs abduct children and sexually victimize women (and men), whether they are young or old, pregnant or disabled. There is no medical treatment for the tens of thousands of injured girls and women; many have died of physical injuries or infections, including HIV/AIDS. This tragedy is a *humanitarian crisis* and a human and women’s rights issue—*widely ignored by the international community* (cf. Riedel, 2013).

Many Congolese women and men, feeling disempowered and abandoned by their government, saw my visit as a sign of hope and asked me to appeal on their behalf to the international community for help: These Congolese women and men are calling for peace, are calling for emergency medical assistance, are calling for help in removing foreign militia criminals from their land. Several women said that they would rather die from hunger than return to the fields where they were brutally sexually attacked by militias. Tragically, I met women who, seeing their children starve, broke their vow only to be attacked and violated again or taken prisoner as sex-slaves.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF TRAUMA

Transmission of trauma from one generation to the next is a core factor in the propagation of destructive violence. For example, the African Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka (1999) explored how memory is a burden as it carries the record of past injustice, which, if not processed, spawns the next cycle of pain and suffering. I observe how groups of people, much like individuals, when possessed by a memory of ghosts or demons that wounded them, not only bear *that* heavy psychological burden but also tend to project split-off demons onto others, while remaining susceptible to further psychic infection. Hence in promoting children’s rights issues, we must pay considerable attention to dealing with the intergenerational transmission of trauma. Sadly, the opposite seems to be true—I did not find awareness about this issue anywhere I went (cf. Figure 2 and back cover image). Rather, in the three regions in which I worked, thousands and thousands of children live under the most horrific conditions with access to neither school nor health care. When I think about education I have in mind programs that respect indigenous

cultures, value mutuality, and support the sustainability of human well-being in its many forms. Everywhere I went, I observed psychological processes at work that cause intergenerational transmission of trauma and its negative consequences. I believe it is essential that the international community prioritize attention to the psychological perspectives involved in human rights issues.

WORKING WITH TRAUMATIZED COMMUNITIES

COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

When I work with communities suffering trauma related to war and violence, I often employ ideas derived from Jung's analytical psychology, as it offers a culturally sensitive approach. In his model of the psyche, Jung complemented the conscious versus unconscious dimension with the personal versus collective dimension of the psyche and placed its cultural aspects into the quadrant of "collective consciousness" (e.g., Stein, 1998). *Collective trauma* cuts off a people from their culture, which then ceases to be available as a vessel for *communitas*. This is particularly important to hold in mind when working in tribal cultures in which collective factors outweigh individual ones. When such communities suffer war-related trauma and injuries, it is imperative to address issues of *collective trauma* and *intergenerational transmission* of trauma. Not doing so has serious negative psychosocial and economic consequences, as is only too obvious in the crisis areas of East Africa.

Being confronted with massive trauma on a large scale, I quickly learned that I needed to work *holistically*, which means working with survivors and also their families, communities, and the social and political structure at large. Why? Because the human fabric is broken, the pieces don't work together anymore, fragmentation and dissociation rule—which are typical symptoms of the wound of trauma at the collective level. Here are some observations from the Congo indicative of this wound¹¹: Most women I met who survived horrific sexual violence were then abandoned by their husbands and families. Now they find themselves alone raising children, their own and many orphans. Why is that happening? Moreover, most of the former child-soldiers with whom I worked were abducted as children and then spent their school years in the bush. The survivors now struggle not only with their physical and emotional wounds but also with reintegration into a society that shuns and rejects them. What dynamics are at work? In addition, several insightful trauma survivors, men and women, whom I met, stated that personal and social healing could happen only after the militia criminals are

removed from the bush. Why is that not happening? Later I will address collective issues in the tribal areas.

Being confronted with such massive collective trauma, I asked myself how the treatment approaches developed in and for the psychotherapeutic consulting room might be *modified* to work with large numbers of people, whole communities, and the culture at large. How might one help change the emotional outlook of groups of people who are stuck in their respective trauma worlds? How might I receive entry into communities emotionally devastated by massive, deliberately inflicted violence? How might I respond to these communities' feelings of terror and depersonalization, depression and shame, or worse *indifference* even to survival?¹² How might I feel sitting with groups of perpetrators who evacuate trauma or anxiety by violent and perverse acting out (such as destructive sexual violence or senseless acts of revenge)? How might I feel sitting with officials who are indifferent to, or look the other way when these hideous crimes are committed? I did not come to Africa with a plan—these questions slowly evolved, learning from each other at the grassroots level. I am grateful to the many villagers whom I had the good fortune to meet and to the local professionals and volunteers for their assistance, without which this work could not be done.¹³

The night before I met Mr. A in his tiny village nestled in the eastern foothills of the Lolibai Mountains of South Sudan (not far from the town of Torit), a dream involved me in intensive grief work. There is *grief* that is not personal but collective—I resist accepting “man’s inhuman indifference to man” (Lanzmann, 2012, p. 378) as a fact of life. Yet extreme emotional trauma can cut off communities from being able to do the work of grieving.

Mr. A is a thirty-year-old Imobond (a subgroup of the Lango tribe of South Sudan). Hidden across a high mountain divide west of his village was located the headquarters of Joseph Kony’s LRA. For over two decades, LRA rebels militarily dominated the whole northern part of Uganda and southern Sudan as far north as Juba. The LRA rebels were, and are, supported by the Khartoum government of North Sudan and are still active in western South Sudan, Central African Republic, and northeastern Congo. What LRA rebels inflict on the population is not ordinary warfare but intentional sadistic torture: killing by slowly dismembering; forcing mothers to witness the murder of their babies, or children to witness the raping and killing of their parents; forcing survivors to carry along dismembered bodies of the not-yet dead; and marching children into captivity to become child-soldiers and killing the weak ones along the way.

This is what happened to the people in Mr. A’s village. Still carrying the feeling tone of *grief* from my dream, I ask Mr. A about *their* traditional rituals for mourning the dead, *their* ceremonies of remembrance. I

learn that since the days of horror seven years ago, no ceremonies have been conducted, that the musical instruments, which the villagers were able to hide and thus save, have not been touched. When we speak about their children's education (they have no access to schools), similarly I learn that parents and elders stopped telling and teaching the tribe's traditional stories, music, and dance. This deadness shows how torture and extreme emotional trauma imprison people and cut them off from their culture, their rituals, and ceremonies—the very rituals of mourning and grief that could rekindle curiosity and self-respect.¹⁴

CULTURAL INTERFACES

As I reflect on where my fieldwork is taking me, I see it is areas of *cultural interfaces* and *intangible conflicts*, intangible because of a tangle of multiple cultural interfaces. Tending issues across interfaces opens up possibilities to effect change in communities, because when the pressure builds and tensions become unbearable, interfaces can become *liminal zones*, psychological, ethical, social, or political. My presence introduces a new interface in which I pay careful attention to model mutuality and learning from each other. I engage in interface photography. Psychologically speaking, my subjects' transference onto me is split. It is partly onto me and partly onto the camera; e.g., "If I had a camera, I would be powerful too." The fact that I put cameras into people's hands and entrust them with a *transitional object* is important for the success of the work.

While in Africa, as I wrestled with questions of how to approach such interface issues, a dream occurred that reminded me of work concerning phase transitions and critical points that I had done some thirty-five years ago as a theoretical physicist. At these transition points long-range correlations and strong fluctuations occur prior to the system's changing from one phase (or state) into another. I knew at once that I needed to focus on such long-range correlations associated with transition phenomena. Cultural interfaces *are* such in-between places, whether spatial or temporal: They can be borders or contact zones between different cultures, but also thresholds between the past and an uncertain future, or in-flux situations where things normally taken

Being with people and listening with an "inner ear" may constitute the *interpersonal* process dimension of the transcendent function.

for granted change or shift (like central values and axioms of the culture). In states of great intensity or urgency, which Victor Turner (1967/1987) called *liminal stages*, such situations create thresholds of unpredictability and possibility. In Jungian language these are moments of high *numinosity* characterized by the presence of large affective energies, positive or negative.

Concerning psychological interfaces, Jung (1973) observed: “In the deepest sense we all dream . . . out of what lies between us and the other” (p. 172). Borderlands are numinous places where creation occurs. This is how I came to trust the *relational* aspects of peace work: Being with people and listening with an “inner ear” may constitute the *interpersonal* process dimension of the transcendent function and thus create potential for genuine change—*change that is not imposed but homegrown*. As with individual trauma survivors, now with communities, I model behaviors that help to expand their capacity to be *present* and listen *inwardly* to what truly matters. In long meetings with people in rural and tribal areas I have come to appreciate their thoughtful demeanor, remarkable relational skills, and courage to address their fears.

NORTHERN UGANDA

Photographs can mediate visceral emotional experiences that convey a story and shock the imagination (Figure 9). Rebuilding civil society in the desolate areas of northern Uganda and South Sudan, haunted by decades of war, is about the renewal of the human spirit. As I was documenting destruction in the Amuru IDP Camp and trading center in northern Uganda (Figure 9), the man on the right walked up to me and wanted to participate. In the culture of the Acholi tribe his hand gesture indicates suffering pain and grief. The young man in the back doorway had observed me the previous day and begged for a chance to work with me. The third man’s refuge is psychosis. Who knows what happened to his psyche during more than twenty years of war and atrocities inflicted by the LRA? Furthermore, being stuck in these internally displaced people (IDP) camps without land for gardening is a sentence to hunger in regions where sub-subsistence farming is the rule.

During the decades of acute crisis and warfare in northern Uganda, from 1986–2006, international organizations and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) provided food aid and other humanitarian assistance—all this is gone now. But people are still stuck in these IDP camps all over northern Uganda and South Sudan with no place to go, either physically or emotionally. Many are sick with HIV/AIDS and other diseases; many cannot afford to send their children to school. One woman told me that she cares for eighteen children, fifteen orphans from family members who lost their lives in the war,

and three children of her own. Listening to people's dreams, I mostly found images of disease, horror, and suffocation. This is the environment these children inhabit and through which psychological trauma is transmitted to them. Yes, these are typical aftermath stories—mostly shrugged off by local politicians and world opinion—yet they are worrisome in themselves and because they breed the seeds for the next cycle of violence. People attack the targets of their negative projections. But there are healthier people in the camps who show amazing resilience; they find little plots for growing food or may start an outdoor beauty salon.

TRIBAL ISSUES

In taking photographs I respond to shock—my uncomfortable feelings, the felt sense that something is not what it seems. It's everywhere. Two years ago (2010) in Karamoja—the tribal lands of northeastern Uganda, bordering Kenya and South Sudan—I came upon a pastoral African landscape and suddenly found myself asking: Why is the cattle kraal at the center of the village? Why do multiple high fences fortify it? At the time of Jung's visit to Africa in 1925/26, these were closed territories because the tribes resisted colonization. Now different kinds of conflicts occur in which hundreds of people get killed and communities are stuck in fear. The tribes conduct raids and cattle rustling with an eye-for-an-eye sense of justice, a deterioration of respect for human life after decades of war and the influx of firearms, after years of serious drought and famine, and mismanaged humanitarian aid.

I worked with a group of women of the Pokot tribe in southeastern Uganda, 70% of whom were widows. I found similar rates of widowhood in other communities I visited in the cross-border areas of Uganda, Kenya, and South Sudan. One woman, recently widowed, asked, "How do we change the minds of our men?" such that they refrain from cattle raids. This is an archetypal question. For example, the German playwright Bertholt Brecht (1939/2007), in *Mother Courage and Her Children*, written in 1939 just before World War II, implores the viewer to see that war trauma is not the result of fate but caused by humans blinded by ideology.

A few days earlier, near Orwa in the Kenyan Rift Valley, I met another group of Pokot people who had just survived a raid by members of the Turkana tribe to the north. In these arid zones water is a most precious commodity. The Turkana people are a nomadic tribe concentrated in northwest Kenya. Numerous tribes, including the Dodoth, Gia, Ik, Pokot, and Turkana, all live in this cross-border area of Uganda, Kenya, and South Sudan (cf. see photographs in Riedel, 2008–2012). A step toward addressing psychological and cultural traumata in this cross-border area is fostering intertribal dialogue. Some promising collaborations between local peacemakers and

Cameras without Borders are emerging, and we are now planning to bring together adults and children from different tribes in photography camps. For years the Ugandan Army had engaged in a brutal disarmament campaign against the Gia that left thousands dead, villages burned, and livestock severely decimated. First it was the British, now the Ugandan Army subjugating these people—a tragic cultural interface. A young Gia told me, “Without animals we have no culture; the Turkana still have what we lost.” So, at this point the Gia see in the Turkana (of Kenya) hope for renewal of their pastoral lifestyle—yet another cultural interface to pay attention to.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This brings me back to the opening question, tending to the health of the collective, the *anima mundi*. Why work for social healing and peace? For me the answer came from within: “*Knowing things entails responsibilities.*”

My process is simple: I learn from fieldwork experiences in an iterative fashion. I engage people suffering from PTSD in artistic activities so that they can begin grieving their losses and breaking down barriers that keep them emotionally imprisoned. The idea expands to transcending psychological trauma in communities and the culture at large, because artistic activity creates life-enhancing experiences and states of liminality also in groups. When people reconnect, relate with something larger, particularly their cultural values, I often hear them exclaim, for example, “I cannot give up—this struggle is about something bigger than me.” Empowering people in this way helps them to help themselves and then each other.

Rebuilding civil society requires long-term commitment *and* building local infrastructure. Yet Western humanitarian aid industries, though effective in short-term crisis intervention, tend to undercut African communities and governments in developing their own human and economic resources. All too often this pattern perpetuates old colonialist attitudes rather than building relationships and empowering communities. Changing this pattern is a political as well as humanitarian imperative.

I initiated and work on two regional pilot projects to help East-African communities dealing with PTSD epidemics: (1) with faculty at Makerere University to establish the Regional East-African Psychological Trauma Center to train professionals and serve communities in the three conflict areas; and (2) with professional staff and volunteers of the Great Lakes Foundation for Peace and Justice in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo, to develop a network of emergency health and mental health clinics in rural areas of the eastern Congo.

Projects like these nurture the human spirit and contribute to the restoration of human dignity and civil society.

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NOTES

1. Jung entered Kenya through the seaport Mombassa at the Indian Ocean, spent about two months with indigenous tribes near Mt. Elgon, then crossed into Uganda and followed the River Nile north through Uganda, Sudan, and Egypt to Cairo.
2. I immigrated to the United States as a scientist in 1969. After a career as a theoretical physicist in research and teaching at major universities, I began focusing on the arts and psychology in the late 1980s.
3. *Shell-shocked* is a term introduced after World War I for what is now referred to as PTSD.
4. I say, *reawakening curiosity*—not hope. Hope lies, and people end up re-traumatized; in contrast, curiosity invites reflection and action.
5. Bion posits that such original sensory experiences are our sole psychological connections to reality.
6. Key is that artistic activity creates life-enhancing insights and states of liminality in both individuals and groups. This idea applies to healing psychological trauma in communities and the culture. In practice I pay much attention to the *mythopoetic layer* of the psyche in addition to the psychological layer, which is an important interface to straddle in this work.
7. PTSD dreams are often repetitive reruns of trauma situations.
8. I recognized the value of photography as a tool for healing while visiting an isolated village in South Africa in 2004. As a psychoanalyst I had experience employing play and art therapy in treating children who had suffered psychological trauma. When I noticed that the children in the village were incredibly curious about everything I did with my camera, I knew at once, here is a tool to engage traumatized individuals and bridge cultural divides.
9. I feel helped holding transitional space by co-creating shared experiences through camera work.
10. Everywhere the major cause of pain and suffering lies in the violence human beings inflict on one another.

11. A more detailed discussion of these questions, including complex cultural, anthropological, and psychological factors, is beyond the scope of this article.
12. Philippe van Leeuw's (2009) film *The Day God Walked Away* portrays a Rwandan genocide survivor who becomes indifferent to survival. This process also applies to communities.
13. I gratefully acknowledge the hospitality of innumerable community leaders and tribal elders who welcome and generously share thoughts and concerns with me. I appreciate ongoing collaborations with professionals and volunteers who are dedicated to improving the lives of their people and are sharing their insights and expertise with me, including Pastor Bwimana Aembe and Lawyer Rod Eciba in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and social workers David Ocan in Gulu, Uganda, and Ismail Lomwar in Kotido, Uganda. I appreciate Mr. Philemon Tumwebaze who helps coordinate Camereras without Border activities in East Africa. I am grateful to faculty at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, for their efforts toward developing an Interdisciplinary East-African psychological trauma center at Makerere University, including Prof. Peter Baguma and Prof. Venny Nakazibwe. I thank Jeffrey Gettleman, East Africa Bureau Chief of the *New York Times*, for his in-depth reporting from eastern Africa and interest in the Camereras without Borders project.
14. Another example of how artistic engagement helps reawaken connection to indigenous culture and ameliorates the impact of the ravages of war and violence-related trauma is depicted in the film *War Dance* (Fine & Nix, 2007).

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