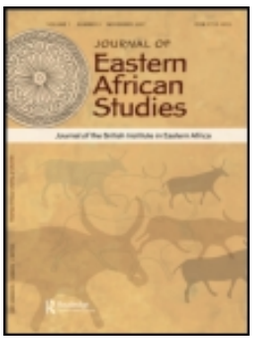

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Inscribing memory, healing a nation: post-election violence and the search for truth and justice in *Kenya Burning*

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The violence in the wake of the Kenya general elections in December 2007 found one of its most profoundly haunting, provocative and creative expressions in a photographic text called *Kenya Burning*. This article renders a reading of photographs in *Kenya Burning* in an attempt to lay bare the complex sphere of multiple narratives that speak to the issues of what ails Kenya. We argue that as an artistic piece of work, the picture-text represents the ways in which the photographers as artists have constructed representations of the realities of Kenya's socio-political life around and up to the eruption of the post-election violence. In engaging with these pictures, we unveil the complex history of Kenya's multi-party politics and the burden of ignored or forgotten narratives. We navigate a terrain of sordid pictures capturing death, destruction and mayhem, pictures that attest to the truth that the memory of the collective populace cannot be "shut down" just for political expediency. The article's conclusion signals the ways in which versions and subversions around the pictures embrace a spirit of remembering and shared collective experience that speaks volumes to the place of the creative arts in confronting violence and building bridges between divergent communities in Eastern Africa.

Keywords: Kenya; elections; violence; historical memory; ethnicity; multi-party politics

Introduction

> When you are riding in a train and the train gets derailed, you are well advised to look backwards at the twisted rails to find out how you got to where you are, and then look ahead to find out how you now get to where you want to go. For Kenyans today, it is a question of doing just that . . . you must fix and adjust the rails towards the direction of peace, justice and prosperity.[1]

These words, spoken by the former Secretary General of the United Nations, turned chief mediator, Kofi Annan, at the height of the 2007/08 post-election violence, capture the spirit leading to the creation of the text *Kenya Burning*.[2] This text is a factual narrative in pictorial form. The curators who put together the text were driven by a sense of urgency and a need to capture many images that had been left out of the mainstream media, as well as some that had become iconic images of this period in Kenya's history. The photographs in the 156-page visual text are

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interspersed with commentaries and testimonials from witnesses of the post-election violence, rendering the work a complex piece of narrative.

Every nation has a collective and public memory. One that is propagated by the state through institutions such as national museums and archives and another that springs unsolicited from the public and in forms as varied as personal biographies and popular songs.[3] Public memory of this kind is not always in tandem with the state's version of the past. Non-fiction narratives, such as the collection of photographs and personal accounts of the now infamous post-election crisis in Kenya, form a site of memory and a creative space with its own unique energies. In coming to terms with the events of the 2007/08 post-election violence that rocked the country and shook the citizens to their very core, the powers-that-be tried to have the last word on how the country should deal with the aftermath of the violence and deaths.

In characteristic fashion, some in the newly constituted coalition government sought a quick-fix solution to the questions that the conflict had laid bare, and proposed a commission of inquiry. Two commissions were established – the Independent Review Commission, also known as the Kriegler Commission, which looked into the conduct of the 2007 elections, and the Justice Waki led Commission of Inquiry on Post Election Violence, both of which inscribed themselves as the official and last word on how many died; how many were raped, by whom, and where; and from what ethnic community the evictions and destruction of property had started. But both the Kriegler and the Waki reports had to contend with what the public remembered as cycles of violence that had reared their heads every five years since the introduction of multi-party politics in 1992 and provided a preamble that attested to the fact that the 2007/08 election-related violence was not new. This violence took its worst form soon after the December 2007 presidential results were announced, in which Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner. Fighting, mayhem, looting, burning of residential and commercial businesses, maiming, and killing of perceived political opponents erupted in major centres throughout the country and continued unabated for close to one month. Peace only came to the country after mediation talks, led by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, forced the two opposing parties, led by Raila Odinga and Mwai Kibaki, to call a truce and form a coalition government.[4] When supporters of both Raila and Kibaki finally laid down their bows, arrows, clubs, machetes, and guns, the sound of wailing and anguish was replaced by a deafening eerie silence; approximately 1000 people lay dead and at least 600,000 others had been displaced. The urgent reform issues that the coalition government pledged to address were outlined in Agenda items One to Four by the Annan-led panel of eminent persons.[5] Agenda Two was to address the humanitarian crisis and promote reconciliation and healing. Agenda Four was to address the causes of the violence. Nearly three years on now, and with Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps still littering the landscape of Naivasha, Mau Summit, and parts of Nyanza, the Kenyan public is justified in feeling that the coalition government has either conveniently forgotten or is less enthusiastic about implementing both Agenda Two and Agenda Four.

From the foregoing, it seems as though the political class was anxious to sweep the post-election violence under the carpet and sanitize Kenya as the haven of peace within the Horn of Africa, where armed ethnic conflicts, among other forms of violence, abound. Such "dismemory" lends urgency to *Kenya Burning* and emphasizes the importance of the exhibition taking place as an act of collective

remembering that gels national identity[6] and of the story of the pictures being told, both within the text and in the subsequent circulation in other spaces such as the internet. "Never Forget" was the rallying cry for the exhibition. This plea attests to the truth that the memory of the collective populace cannot be "shut down" for political expediency.[7] For indeed, forgetting and erasure are a part of the state project of remembrance in which "regulation of what is remembered . . . is a valuable tool for maintaining and legitimating political power".[8] It is this spirit of remembering and of a shared collective experience that gives impetus to this article.

The still images are engulfed in an aura of silence, a loud silence that shouts with stories begging to be told. In the following sections, we attempt to weave in the untold narratives that *Kenya Burning* is keen should never be forgotten. The four sections of the text each form the key pillars around which the collective narrative of a burning Kenya is constructed. Each section has within it opposing pillars that reflect the many divergent voices, interests and classes as manifested in the socio-political landscape of Kenya prior to and just after the 2007 general elections. The article therefore unveils the narrative of a burning Kenya, so aptly and literally captured in the work's title. These sections tease out a certain kind of narrative strategy anchored in violence and two main elements. One element is a first-person narrative point of view; the other, an underlying linear structure captured in pictorial form beginning with election campaigns, voting, announcement of the soon-to-be contested presidential results, the subsequent violence, destruction and death, peace negotiations by the team of eminent persons and their power-sharing deal, and life in the camps of IDPs.

A polarized country and the ethnicization of politics

Kenya Burning's opening template is from a 30-year-old man living in Huruma Estate, Nairobi:

> I cast my vote on the 27th and went to join friends for a drink. My wife was pregnant and had voted earlier and gone back to the house. In the bar we entertained ourselves by trying to predict who would win. Everything was normal.[9]

This view of normalcy was widely held by the general Kenyan public during the election campaigns, as captured in the images in Figures 1 and 2. However, the aura of peace, calm and normalcy was a false one, and a far cry from the reality on the ground. The narrator's discernment that all was normal in the lead-up to the general elections points to the "short memory" that the populace have. In South Nyanza, administration policemen were killed a few days before the ballot. In Kuresoi, the forced eviction of "non-indegenes" had started as early as September 2007. And in Kibera, a young man sporting a Party of National Unity (PNU) t-shirt was killed by an angry mob just hours before the ballot day. This short memory underscores the individual's keenness for self-preservation amid the cycle of violence that plays itself out every election year. People rarely want to delve into the reasons why violence occurs every election year in Kenya.

The self-denial of the unusual nature of this election is reflected in Figures 1 and 2. These pictures represent the then two main rival parties: the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and the PNU. Each of these pictures has a distinct narrative that counters the narrative of the other and, by extension, the respective party and its

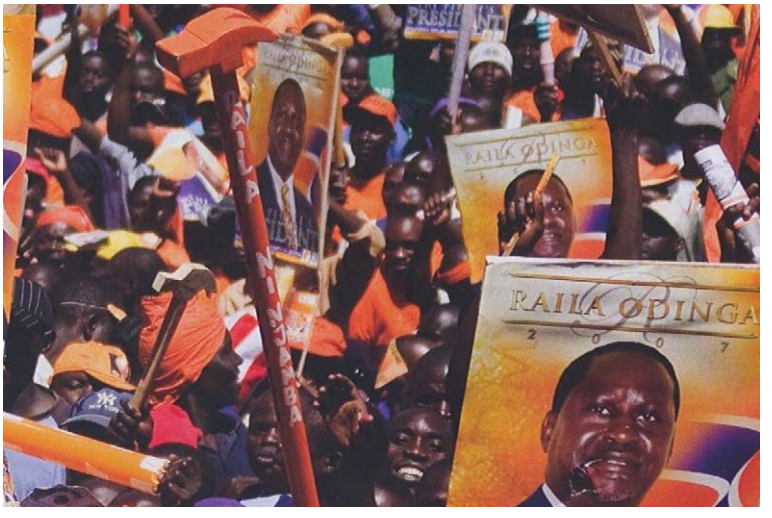

Figure 1. Supporters of ODM candidate Raila Odinga, Nairobi.

Figure 2. PNU presidential candidate Mwai Kibaki's campaign, Nairobi.

supporters. The narratives around these two political parties have their roots in the 2005 national referendum on a proposed new constitution. The issue of devolution – whether to have a federal system of government or a unitary state – sums up the crux of the referendum that was held in November 2005. For reasons of clarity and addressing widespread voter illiteracy, the ballot papers were typically cast using the symbols of a banana and an orange, rather than text, to indicate a preferred position. Those who opposed the constitution were assigned the symbol of an orange, as the "no" vote, while the supporters were allocated the banana as a means of representation for the "yes" vote. The "no" voters carried the day. Buoyed by their victory, the ODM was formed, drawing from its rank and file former senior government officials who had earlier on been given the sack for voting down the

government-supported constitution. The ODM party's name resonates, and indeed was inspired by, the Ukraine's Orange Revolution which in 2004 led a successful protest following the results of the country's presidential elections, culminating in repeat polls and a win for their preferred candidate.

Therefore, one begins to envision the unfolding narrative where the orange becomes a metaphor against the status quo. The orange colour symbolizes change, a revolution, even rebellion against the political rulers of the day. As the crowds in Figure 1 jostle for space, the Orange Democratic Movement, just like the symbolic colour orange, positions itself as a new beginning for political leadership in Kenya. Little wonder that its Kiswahili slogan, "*kazi ianze*" (let the work begin) was readily embraced by its supporters. Juxtaposed against Figure 1 is the PNU in Figure 2, whose supporters are pro-government. The "yes" vote, though defeated during the referendum, coalesced its supporters around the PNU. Their rallying cry "*kazi iendelee*" (let the work continue) pointed to the wish of those within the party to let the status quo remain. As captured in the enthusiastic show of hands in Figure 2, PNU's appeal, that the country and way of governance should continue as it was, resonated with an equally wide populace. Within the foregoing context, the pictures give us the opportunity to read the country's versions and subversions of a stage that has been well set for a volatile general election. Again, the symbolism around the two contending parties in 2007 exacerbated on-going tensions and set the stage for violent confrontation as a solution to political disagreements. With its roots in the US governance discourse and as a space and metonymic reference to the US Department of Defense, the use of the term "Pentagon" for the select leadership of ODM easily translated as a war command for aggrieved Kenyans to either expect or pursue violent options.[10]

The narrative version of the general elections as exhibited in the two pictures symbolizes a country split almost down the middle in terms of presidential preference. We argue here that this division was neither ideological nor hinged on political party ideals. Rather, it was the culmination of deep-seated suspicions and fears that invariably took an ethnic tinge. The ethnicization of politics in Kenya was a familiar occurrence long before the 2007 general elections.[11] In fact, the issue came into glaring light in 1992, when multi-party politics was introduced. Kenya's return to pluralism gave way to ethnicized political parties, and in many cases the fate of election contenders for civic and parliamentary seats was from then on, by and large, perceived to be linked to ethnic sensibilities.

During the early 1990s debates on political pluralism, proponents of the one-party system argued that the multi-party system would bring about tribal violence. The then president, Daniel Arap Moi, was particularly fond of this argument. As the debate got more heated, defenders of the status quo, especially from the vote-rich and economically prosperous Rift Valley Province, demanded the return of *majimbo*, a federal system of governance first proposed at the end of colonialism and which pitted the ruling party Kenya African National Union (KANU) against the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). In Kenya, the idea of federal government has always been narrowly interpreted as ethnic exclusion and an opportunity to expel all other ethnic groups and leave the "indigenous" people in place. John Lonsdale's take on "political tribalism" readily comes to mind. His definition of the term as "the use of ethnic identities in political competition with other groups"[12] fits in with the PNU and ODM mobilization along ethnic lines. In the competition for electoral votes, the nerve-racking campaigns took various ethnic leanings and threats of a return to

majimbo. Therefore, for the narrator to claim that "things were normal" demonstrates how deeply entrenched negative ethnicity has become in the psyche of many Kenyans, to the extent that the highly charged ethnicized political campaigns pass off as "normal".

Following the announcement of Mwai Kibaki as the winner of the presidential elections, ethnic violence found its worst and most violent expression in the dawn of the new year, 2008. In ODM strongholds ethnic expulsion targeted those who were deemed to have voted PNU. Conversely, perceived PNU die-hards acting in retaliation for the driving out of their kinsmen from the expansive Rift Valley Province "expelled" those amongst them whom they thought voted ODM. The picture of dead bodies in Naivasha (Figure 3) was one of the most chilling manifestations of such revenge attacks.

> I was born in Baringo. I'm a Kikuyu, but I learnt Kalenjin before my mother tongue. Most of my friends are Kalenjin. But today, I don't want to see any one of them. I really hate myself for saying that. I cannot go back to Central Province. The language they speak there is totally different from the Kikuyu I speak here. When I speak my Kikuyu there, they start laughing at me. And when I go to Baringo, where I grew up, they look at me as a foreigner. If I don't belong in the Rift Valley, where else can I fit? I am married to a Luhya![13]

In tracing his roots and the genesis of his mixed ethnicity, the narrator quoted above hints at the inconclusiveness of the tale: the story has not yet ended. He still has to deal with his hatred for the Kalenjins, his resentment of the Kikuyus from his ancestral roots of Central Province, and his unresolved identity crisis made worse by his choice of an inter-ethnic marriage. What does this mean in the face of forging a Kenyan identity? In the short excerpt, a basic function of art is fulfilled: telling the story. Using the violence as a point of reference, the narrator reaches deep into his past, to his birth and the genesis of his multiple identities: "I'm a Kikuyu, but I learnt Kalenjin before my mother tongue." But the violence has only dramatized rather than resolved his complex identity. And his memory of all these layers of

Figure 3. Burnt bodies, Naivasha.

becoming does not end with a celebration of being in the present but with a questioning of both individual and national identity in Kenya.

Phrases such as "never again" and "lest we forget" are often used in the same breath when discussing *Kenya Burning*. The text is a representation of the festering wound that was Kenya even before the 2007 general elections. Ironically, the same sense of rot and malaise is barely covered at present, festering under a deceptive tranquillity that still engulfs Kenya's political landscape. The continued reading, interpreting and acting on this text is all the more urgent because of this false normalcy.

The ambivalence of ethnicized rape and violent births

The photographs in *Kenya Burning* lay bare a complex sphere of multiple narratives that speak to the issues of what ails Kenya. As an artistic piece of work, the picture-text represents the ways in which the photographers as artists have constructed representations of the realities of Kenya's socio-political life around and up to the eruption of the post-election violence. The pictures as a meta-text engage with the complex history of Kenya's multi-party politics and the burden of ignored or forgotten narratives around issues of land and constitution-making that remain contentious. In our analysis of the pictures, what we do is not so much analyse the photographs, but describe the story behind the picture, the events underlying the physicality of the photograph and its moment of taking. Thus, the argument is that *Kenya Burning* is a crucial addition to the much needed stories that point at Kenya's collective memory.

The photographs in the text are interspersed with testimonials from diverse individuals drawn from across the country, all of whom witnessed or experienced the violence in one way or another. One of the testimonies is from a Kikuyu woman who lives in Mathare, a large slum in the capital city of Nairobi:

> It's the Luo who attacked me and it's the Luo who saved me. I love them very much. I was to be beheaded after being raped, and they saved me.[14]

The picture of the girl weeping (Figure 4) and the excerpt remind us of what many scholars have said in relation to symbolism and the female body. We choose to

Figure 4. A young girl cries after escaping rape, Mathare Slums, Nairobi.

concur with Nathalie Etoke that the woman's body signifies a number of conflicting political projects and positions in postcolonial Africa.[15]

The picture represents the female body as a symbol of desire and political violence that is ethnicized. However, the ethnic equation is problematized by the words "it was Luos who attacked me, and Luos that saved me". In the attempted rape, the girl's aggressors must have wanted to reappropriate in her body her whole community, the enemy that the rival group wants to punish and humiliate. The picture of the weeping girl represents more than a character; she is an object for contestation of power, control and punishment. The female body is also where a seed is planted. The resultant pregnancy and birth of the baby becomes a permanent reminder of the power exerted on the target communities.[16] From the cycles of ethnicized violence since 1992, many communities in Burnt Forest, Londiani, Molo and Olenguruone continually grapple with the complexities of identities and relationships arising from these "violent births".

Our reading of the attempted rape and rescue by members of the same ethnic group demonstrates the ambivalence of the ethnic relations that are at play during violence. The fighting is not a simple affair of one ethnic group against another. In this incident, members of the same ethnic group react differently to the same body. The metaphor of male conquest in the case of rape assumes a new meaning in the girl's revelation that her rescuers were from the same community as her attackers – there are no winners in this conflict.

The attempted rape is appropriated as an act that did not happen to this one individual, but as an attempted violation of one community by another. This is because the girl does not just talk of a group of youths attacking her, but of a particular ethnic group. The helplessness, anger and fear that the tears of this one girl signify become the collective tears of most women, regardless of their ethnic identity, during this violent time. The fact that members of the same community are portrayed as acting differently in the same scenario points to the multiplicity of actions. In the same way, the idea of members of the state's security agencies violently raping women they are supposed to be protecting[17] speaks to the ugly reversals, ironies and sub-texts that underpin a fractured society politically. No action is monolithic. The group that spares this girl's life reminds us of the possibility of a national identity, of the enduring power of a shared identity and destiny amidst the chaos, violence and death of the days after the general election. Additionally, we note that even though none of the photographs or narrative texts in *Kenya Burning* document the forced circumcision of men that was part of the retaliatory violence in Nairobi and Naivasha, the rape of women documented here invites echoes of that other type of sexual violence which invariably remains muted and glossed over in accounts of Kenya's post-election violence. As with the rape of women, the forceful circumcision of men violated not just an individual but a community, inscribing the cultural superiority of the Kikuyu over the Luo and aggressively pushing for a monochromatic definition of Kenyan identity.

At this juncture we wish to borrow the argument advanced by Gana and Harting that "literary and cultural products (literature, film, graphics) do not merely illustrate but actively produce and intervene in the material and palpable workings of violence".[18] The photographs in *Kenya Burning* lend themselves to an interrogation and exploration of the circumstances and issues around the post-election violence. At face value, the pictures could have been about a "stolen election", as one of the warring factions insisted. Indeed, the photographs underpin the fact that the

general election had something to do with the violence, given the sequence in which the photographs appear, beginning from the campaigns by the two major political parties, the voting, and the announcement of the results. However, the interest here is more in the silences around these events, the time before and after the taking of the pictures. Indeed, the narrative is in these gaping spaces. As Appadurai notes, ethnic violence is deeply rooted in, among other things, the disillusions and chaotic environments created by our economic realities.[19] The argument thus carried forth is, therefore, not merely to analyse the photographs as a product of post-election violence, but to interrogate the multifarious nature of this violence and discover how it is a product of what Kenya is politically.

Official memories and suppressed individual memories

One of the most haunting pictures from the post-election violence was that of a burnt wheelchair at a church that was torched on the first day of January 2008 (Figure 5). This wheelchair was said to have been that of Margaret Wambui Njau, an elderly woman with physical disability, who together with several hundreds of others took refuge at the Kenya Assemblies of God (KAG) church on Kiambaa farm, Eldoret.[20] Situated in the North Rift, Eldoret was one of the epicentres of the post-election violence. The perceived sanctity of a church compound did not deter the victims' pursuers from surrounding the church and setting it ablaze. Despite forensic work undertaken at the Moi Referral Hospital in Eldoret, the number of casualties from this site of incendiary violence remain contentious. The Waki Report states that 28 people were burnt in that church fire.[21] Joseph Ngaruiya, whose small shamba neighboured that ill-fated church compound told us in a March 2008 interview that there were over 200 people in that church that day and that those who died were far more than the stated 38 repeated in newspaper accounts for weeks after the fire.[22]

Figure 5. Burnt wheelchair of elderly woman at Kiambaa Church, Eldoret.

Over 50 people, most of them women and children, suffered serious burns and many like Ngaruiya nursed machete wounds for many months thereafter.

The wheelchair was almost all that could be recognized in the smouldering remains of the fire, serving as a grim reminder of the fruits of intolerance that exist between the two warring communities of the Kalenjin and the Kikuyu. Still, even in the case of the Kiambaa fire one cannot draw hard and fast ethnic lines between the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin. Ngaruiya's wife is a Sabaot and she was very expectant as she hid inside the KAG church that fateful January day. As the couple fled with their children, Ngaruiya was cornered by some "warriors" and sustained serious injuries on his face, arms and legs. His wife made it to Eldoret town but the Kikuyu women did not welcome her at the camp that formed at the Sacred Heart Catholic Cathedral. So she left Bishop Korir's compound and went to Happy Church on Oginga Odinga Street where the pastor gave her a room and from where she nursed Ngaruiya who remained admitted at the District Hospital for a long time. Has anybody ever worked out the identities of all who perished in that church?[23] Does it matter? And now, four years since that fateful first day of January, many of the villagers who fled Kiambaa are reluctant to return to their homes. They claim that those who torched the church and some of their homes are still walking around scot-free.[24] Even Ngaruiya, who initially went back and set up a little grocery kiosk right next to the church, eventually left for Ruai, unable to deal with the daily reminders of January 2008. It is of essence that the picture of Mama Njau's empty wheelchair made it to the pages of *Kenya Burning* because it opens up a space for us to engage with some of the versions and subversions of the heinous act in Kiambaa.

There have been several revisionist attempts to replace the original version of people having been deliberately set on fire in the church, with a version about an accidental fire, devoid of human involvement. Indeed, Peris Simam, the Member of Parliament for Eldoret South constituency where Kiambaa is located, led these claims insisting that a gas cylinder exploded as the villagers taking refuge in the church compound went about cooking their mid-day meal.[25] Her claims triggered deep anger and public calls for an apology. That this new position of what happened on that day in Kiambaa would come from a section of the political elite demonstrates how controversial and contested collective memory as embedded in individual publics is. The politicians are aware of this, and hence fight to control or at least influence this space of remembering. Clearly, the local MP bought into the idea that all the victims were Kikuyus and all perpetrators were Kalenjin and so she rushes in to rewrite the script of what happened that day in such a way that "her people" will be absolved of the blame of aggression.

In the narratives around the testimonials found towards the end of *Kenya Burning*, we are faced with questions on representation. How does one tell the story of events that are so traumatic and horrific when the perpetrators of the atrocities have neither been arrested nor charged in a court of law, while, at the same time, the memories and pain of remembrance is barely a year old at the time of compiling the text?

We postulate that the crisis of ethnicity in Africa came to a head with the post-independence agenda of formulating nation-states against a background of what Kagwanja calls "balkanized and multi-ethnic units demarcated by arbitrary boundaries that cut across ethnic groups".[26] This ambivalent relationship between nation and ethnicity remains true of Kenya, whose peace and quest for "national stability"

close to 48 years after independence is periodically caught in a web of ethnic anxieties, tensions, suspicions, and sporadic outbreaks of ensuing violence.

And this question of ethnicity and nationhood is intrinsically tied to the question of citizenship and belonging. In a country made up of well over 62 ethnic communities, when does one become a citizen of a particular town, county or constituency? Is it a matter of place of birth; is it limited to property and ownership, to marriage and offspring, or to the language spoken, or the number of years that one has lived in a particular place? Not even Kenya's newly promulgated constitution resolves this matter except to give the bland assurance that every person has the right to live and work in any part of the country. But that assurance was similarly given in the independence constitution and it never stemmed hostility to perceived outsiders, killings, forced evictions and violent destruction of their property.[27]

The untold story of IDP camps

> I am 80 years old now. I have been living in the Rift Valley since 1944. If we fail to **forgive them, then what**? In life, there never really is a need to carry anger and hurt towards the other person in your heart. We have to forgive them, and we will.[28]

This quote was from one of the IDPs returning to his home after life in a camp such as the one pictured in Figure 6. In the text, the words "forgive them, then what" is bolded, and written in red. One can decipher the sense of foreboding the old man feels as he returns to what was once home, before he was violently uprooted following the election protests. That the act of whether to forgive or not appears to be laced in a threat, is captured in the uncertainty of the words "then what". The four words leave little to the imagination, and underscore the bloody consequences that await anyone who dares to confront, question or engage with the occurrences around the real causes of the post-election violence. The kind of forgiveness that the narrator is alluding to is one that is not tempered with justice. The phrase hints at retribution by the initiators of these atrocities should the victims so much as contemplate asking for the wheels of justice to roll. But also, his forgiveness is located somewhere in the future "we will", suggesting all of the anger and resentment that he harbours in the present – a palpable barrier to the work of reconciliation and national healing.

Figure 6. Internally Displaced People's camp at night, Nakuru.

A reading of the same phrase gives a glimpse into the beginnings of a reconstruction of the narrator's sense of individual memory. In order to live with a present devoid of violence and contemplate some semblance of a peaceful future, he must suppress any thoughts of seeking redress, and instead forge on. And herein lies the tragedy of Kenya – in the demeanour of the 80-year-old man, one deciphers the deliberate attempt to shut down an individual memory and create a collective one for the sake of survival. It is telling that this quote is the final one in the text. The text has come full circle, forcing us to recast the words in the opening chapter: "looking to the past to determine when and where the country got derailed".[29] It is the failure of Kenya to honestly "look to the past" that has given forth to the cycle of violence every five years. The narrator bears in his advanced age many years of suppressed memories that serve as a powerful reminder that collective memory is located in the individual, and that the individual gives voice to the collective memory.[30] That the text ends with a picture of an IDP camp serves two functions. The apparent one is that the image captures the reality that over one year after a compromise was reached and a coalition government was formed, Kenyans continued to languish in IDP camps. Indeed, and as we noted earlier, four years on and IDP camps remain a feature of the rural and peri-urban landscape in Kenya. The salient function of this picture, however, rests in the silence and darkness that the lonely image portends. The darkness says it all. No one can claim to see what lies ahead as either hopeful or just.

There is another text whose story is yet to be told. The untold story revolves around the connection between displacement and socio-economic perspectives and their corresponding dynamics, particularly with regard to land and ethnicity in Kenya. Taken in Kisumu at the height of the Annan-led mediation process, Figure 7 reminds us that part of the pressure for the negotiations at Serena to come up with a workable solution quickly came from daily street protests in various towns. What is captured in this photograph defies the popularly circulated myth that post-election protestors were youth, especially men.[31] We have named the woman protestor in this

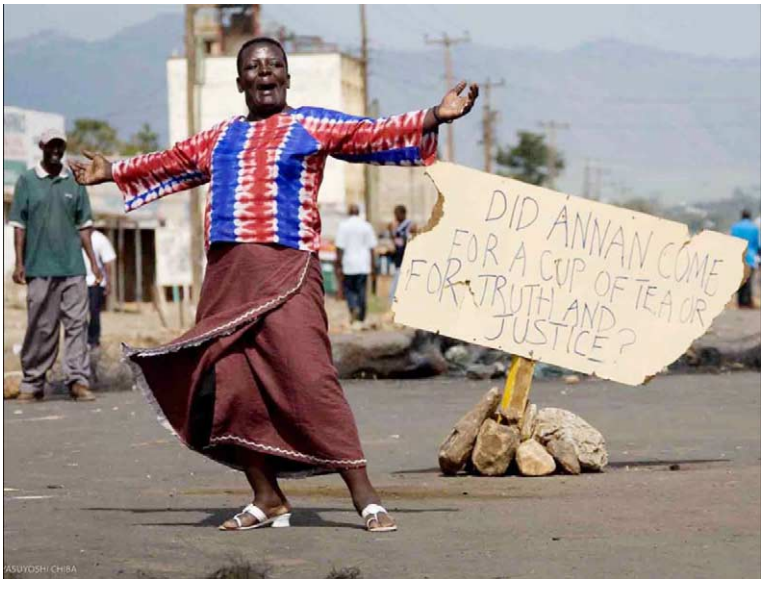

Figure 7. Woman expresses herself, Kisumu.

photograph "Min Asi" (Luo for Ashy's mother) to dramatize her typicality as an ordinary or *mwananchi* woman of limited education and minimal resources, propelled by nothing more than her fierce work ethic and independence of mind – the kind of person known in Kenyan parlance as "Wanjiku". What we see here is a fine example of photography. Thoroughly creative, it is a picture that truly speaks a thousand words. How does Chiba, the photographer, manage to convince us that it is indeed "Min Asi" who is uttering the words in the makeshift billboard? Chiba skilfully catches a moment of raw, uninhibited emotion. It is uncanny. Min Asi shouts and raises her arms in an angry gesture at just the moment the shutter goes off. Was she inspired by the words on that placard, or was she speaking about an entirely different matter, whose intensity just coincidentally matches the fury of the "stolen" election? Min Asi is the picture of an indignant nation, and she is very proud of the role she played. On the second day of the *Kenya Burning* exhibition in Kisumu she turned up at the hall, resplendent in this very outfit. She had heard from one of those who attended the exhibition on the first day that she featured in the hall in a star position and came to see for herself this "national" recognition of her part in the struggles.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to tear *Kenya Burning* from the comfort of bookshelves and the threat of forgetfulness, linking its symbolic representations to a past and present that Kenya must confront if it is to move forward and never again fall into the precipice of such ethnic violence as was witnessed in 2007/08. The images in *Kenya Burning* have now come to embody Kenya's collective memory of the elections of 2007, a memory symbolized by images of campaigns, murder and displacement – a memory that does not always concur with what was documented in the mainstream media and in the state's official records – the Kriegler Report and the Waki Report.

The text is a forceful reminder that "collective memory is located in the individual, that the individual gives voice to the collective memory".[32] We were interested in the many competing and overlapping factors that precipitated the violence captured in the text. The violence meted out generates new subjectivities that, among others, have been identified as the corpse, the rape victim and the IDP. We read these new subjectivities to be what Etienne Balibar calls "ultra-subjective violence", that is, violence whose goal is to make and eliminate disposable people. In this case, those perceived not to exhibit a particular political leaning are regarded as "outsiders", hence disposable through killing, rape or displacement.

Kenya Burning is a bold and even chilling piece of art. The text raises issues of mortality, a common destiny for the people, and the question of an ever-elusive singular Kenyan identity. The pictures that we have analysed reinforce rather than contradict the oft-contested whispers surrounding the nature of the violence and killings following the post-election violence. Through an analysis not so much of the pictures, but of the stories behind the pictures, we have demonstrated how and why violence has become a way of life in Kenya. Indeed, the IDP camps are a stark reminder that the root causes of the violence of the 2007 general elections have not been dealt with. The flawed election was merely the catalyst for the violence that erupted in the country. The pictures serve as a reminder that unless the contentious and emotive issues around land are dealt with substantively, the country will continue to be vulnerable to future cycles of fighting, bloodshed and mayhem.

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Notes

1. Mboya and Ogana, *Kenya Burning*, 5.
2. *Kenya Burning* was first exhibited at the Godown Arts Center in Nairobi from April 19 to May 10 2008.
3. See the Popular Memory Group, *Making Histories* and Werbner, *Memory and the Postcolony* for a distinction between official or state discourses of remembrance and memorialization, and the memory work that emanates unsolicited from the general public.
4. For a discussion on the mediation process see Lindenmayer and Kaye, 'A Choice for Peace?'
5. The four items on the roadmap to peace were listed as: "to undertake immediate action to stop violence and restore fundamental human rights and liberties; to take immediate measures to address the humanitarian crisis, promote reconciliation, healing and restoration; to overcome the political crisis; and to work on long term issues and solutions, such as land reform, poverty and inequity, unemployment (especially among the youth), consolidate national cohesion and unity, transparency and impunity" (Lindenmayer and Kaye, "A Choice for Peace?," 17).
6. Walder, "The Necessity of Error" and Thelen, "Memory and American History" argue that the establishment of shared memories, this insistence on shared experiences in the past, works to bind communities in the present.
7. Nora, "Between Memory and History," emphasizes that the task of revisiting the past is undertaken to serve expediencies in the present, and Moore, "Systematic Judicial and Extra-judicial Injustice," underlines that even where actors project their work towards accountability that will be detected by future generations, the fact is that they see in the future work of memory, a relevance that determines present actions.
8. Nyairo, "Zilizopendwa," 31.
9. Mboya and Ogana, *Kenya Burning*, 6–7.
10. The members of the ODM pentagon were: Raila Odinga, Musalia Mudavadi, William Ruto, Najib Balala, Joe Nyagah and Charity Ngilu.
11. See: Nyangira, "Ethnicity, Class and Politics"; Haugerud, *The Culture of Politics*; Throup and Hornsby, *Multi-party Politics*; Ajulu, "Kenya: One Step Forward, Three Steps Back"; Southall, "Re-forming the State?"; Klopp, "Pilfering the Public"; Klopp, "Can Moral Ethnicity Trump Political Tribalism?"; Kagwanja, "Politics of Marionettes"; Omolo, "Political Ethnicity."
12. Lonsdale, "Kenya, Ethnicity, Tribe and State," 268.
13. Mboya and Ogana, *Kenya Burning*, 150.
14. Ibid., 151.
15. Etoke, "Writing the Woman's Body," 41.
16. We are grateful to Prof. Kimani Njogu for this poignant observation.
17. Commision of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence, "Waki Report," chap. 11.
18. Gana and Harting, "Narrative Violence," 1.
19. Appadurai, "Dead Certainty," 225–47.
20. Samuel Siringi, "How Heroic Woman Died in Inferno," *Daily Nation*, January 21, 2008, p. 3.
21. "The death toll for this horrific incident was 17 burned alive in the church, 11 dying in or on the way to the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, and 54 others injured who were treated and discharged." The Waki Report, 46.
22. On Thursday May 14, 2009, 38 bodies were buried at the church compound in a ceremony attended by President Kibaki and shunned by all ODM MPs.
23. The same must be asked of the victims of gunshot wounds in Kisumu; *Kenya Burning*, 116–17, posts this mystery of unidentified corpses at the mortuary in Kisumu beside a list of names and several referred to as "unknown male adult."

24. Although several people were arrested for questioning and later a case filed in the Nakuru High Court – Criminal Case No. 34 of 2008, Republic v. Stephen Leting and three others – in which four people were charged with eight counts of murder, on April 30, 2009, the court found them innocent and freed them.
25. Kibiwott Koross, "Church Arson Victims Buried, at Last"; *Daily Nation*, May 15, 2009. http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/598478/-/u69rta/-/index.html.
26. Kagwanja, "Globalising Ethnicity, Localising Citizenship," 118.
27. See Gisemba's historical account and discounting of the argument that land was the reason behind the 2007/08 violence in "The Lie of the Land."
28. Mboya and Ogana, *Kenya Burning*, 132–3.
29. Ibid., 5.
30. Crane, "Writing the Individual."
31. See also *Kenya Burning*, 75, "Angry Woman Ready with Stones, Kisumu."
32. Crane, "Writing the Individual," 1381.

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