

7/6/17

Today at the Ntarama Genocide Memorial we met Kate. Kate is a native Rwandan who believes it is her duty to continue sharing about the genocide in hopes that it will bring continued healing and restoration to her country. Even though she was a small child at the time of the genocide -only 2 years of age- the pain and tragedy of the hellish event still haunt her as if it happened yesterday. As she was sharing her story, she told us that 6 of her brothers and sisters ,as well as her father, were killed. You could hear the anger in her voice and see the pain in her eyes as she relived her nightmare by sharing with us.

When we asked Kate how she could continue to share her painful story, she said it is very difficult. "I still struggle to forgive," she said, "I don't understand how someone can let the evil one in and kill their neighbor." Even though she shared about her struggle to forgive, Kate expressed a desire to you see her country fully reconciled. She said that the country still has a long way to go because many people still live with the pain of the genocide each and every day.

As we were wrapping up our conversation, Kate challenged us with a question. "How will you as a teacher explain the genocide to your students, and will they even understand?" None of us knew how to answer. How can we convey the weight of such a hellish event that we don't even fully understand ourselves? We humbly replied and assured her that we would do our very best to honor her and her story.



7/17/17

There's so much I've seen and experienced today that I'm finding it difficult to know where to start with this journal entry. First, we went to visit the main National Memorial site in Kigali. This buried outside of this beautiful and tastefully done memorial are over a fourth of all of the genocide victims. It is hard to comprehend the contrasting beauty of the rose gardens and waterfall paths with the large mass graves.

The museum did not shy away for the ugly truth about the genocide. On display were various pieces of evidence that showed the progressive contagion of genocide ideology that poisoned the hearts and minds of many average citizens. About $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way through the museum, I felt as if whatever emotional barriers I had created crumbled in on me. The words of Theodore Sindikubwabo, an interim government worker, were like a sledgehammer that broke down my walls of emotional separation and indifference. To rally up genocide workers he announced over the radio, "those who prefer watching others work go away. Those in charge of putting them away do it quickly. Let jokes and fun give way to work." How far would one have to go to say killing off their neighbors is an enjoyable task? Statements like this left me nauseous and to the point of numbness.

I think the Lord knew I could not bear to focus on the pain and tragedy any longer, because just at moment I began to feel as if I could be on this trip another minute longer, a group of schoolchildren came into the museum. They looked at me curiously because I was the only white person in the museum (The others had made their way outside to the mass graves.) I smiled and said hello, and that one small gesture was enough to spark a friendship. A small group of the students (about 3 to 4) walked with me through the remaining exhibits. They asked me many questions and tried to teach me some Rwandan. Two girls in particular became my little shadows. Their names were Lilianne and Angel. Angel is a very bright young girl with good English. She dreams of coming to the US someday to study medicine. Lilianne is a little younger so her English was not as good as Angel's, but she was every bit as lovely. These beautiful Rwandan girls practiced amazing hospitality by holding my things when I need to take notes and by helping me understand different words on some of the memorial signs. Their kindness restored my hope and eagerness in the trip.

7/18/17

Last night I was as I was trying to sleep I remembered another powerful moment from yesterday's visit with my new friends Angel and Lilianna. At one point during our walk through the museum we arrived to room filled with pictures of Rwandans whose bodies still have not been found. As we stood looking at the thousands of pictures posted, Angel turned and looked me in the eyes. With a fierce curiosity, she asked me, " And how will you teach your students about the genocide?" It was the same question Kate, our guide at the Ntarama Church Memorial, asked me, but this time it was more powerful. It was as if all of the souls bound to the walls of this room were crying out loud in urgency for Rwanda's story to be told in order to prevent genocide ideologies from poisoning other nations. This powerful, ground-shaking moment caused me to pause and reflect on my personal and national responsibility in global restoration and unity.