

# Community Peace Museums: Creating Spaces for Dialogue, Healing, and Reconciliation

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It may be difficult to understand how museums could support healing and reconciliation. This article is written in the belief that they have a role to play. As a practitioner working in the field of peacebuilding through cultural heritage since 2002, I have witnessed specific moments in which peace museums displayed an impressive power of healing and reconciliation by positioning themselves as places where dialogue can take place. The Community Peace Museums and Heritage Foundation (CPMHF) in Kenya is a good example. Through the support of MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) Kenya, the foundation has been providing space for dialogue, healing, and reconciliation. The involvement of MCC with community peace museums is a remarkable example of MCC promoting peace through interfaith and intercultural dialogue. It demonstrates an openness of mind in opposition to prejudice, narrow-mindedness, and intolerance.

Museums are spaces for dialogue and encounter. According to Walters (2017), dialogue emphasizes listening that is designed to allow meaning to emerge and to create awareness of both self and others. With the purpose of reclaiming peaceful coexistence, dialogue also fosters empathy and understanding of multiple perspectives and experiences. Additionally, it helps deepen relationships between different communities and creates opportunities for freedom

of expression and opinions on peace issues (Gachanga & Walters, 2015).

Museums are traditionally associated with objects and artefacts from the past. As Tarsitani (2009) observes, they are “tangible manifestations of human beliefs and cultures.” Museum collections tell us stories about precious aspects of our life, our family, the community, culture, and social norms. For example, Somjee (2011) notes, “if you have an object you have kept from wartime, it will tell the story of where you were during the war, where your family was, and what the war was about.” In that respect, Beckstead et al. (2011) point out that memory is not only “stored in brains” but also distributed through social artefacts and cultural tools. These cultural tools mark significant events and contribute to how the past is understood and how memory impacts both individual and society.

For societies experiencing conflict, genocide, repression, authoritarian rule, or other forms of political violence, museums are sites of persuasion. They influence people’s views toward their troubled historical pasts. They also shape debates on how to address human rights abuses and honour victims of political violence (Balcells et al., 2018). They help in building trust across communities and enable young people, even those with no direct experience of the conflict, to understand and remember a period of human rights abuses (Light et al., 2021).

Some countries, such as Rwanda, have constructed memorials and museums to assist in coming to terms with genocide. For instance, the Kigali Centre actively engages and utilizes the memory of the genocide to educate visitors on preventing future genocide. Hundreds of museums and memorials have also been established to memorialize the victims of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Some truth commissions, including those in Chile, Guatemala, South Africa, and Sierra Leone, have recommended memorialization initiatives to shape the attitudes and opinions of the society because of their assumed propensity to generate these beneficial outcomes.

### **Memorialization Initiatives in Kenya**

Kenya has a troubled past. A cursory glance at the map of Kenya reveals a country dotted with sites of massacres and killings. Between 1895 and 1963, Kenyans went through unspeakable, horrific, and gross violations of human rights under the British colonial administration. On an unprecedented scale, the colonial government employed violence on the local population to establish its authority.

Between 1963 and 1978, President Jomo Kenyatta led an independent government that was responsible for numerous atrocious violations of human rights. These included killings, torture, collective punishment, and denial of basic needs during the Shifta War (1963–1967), in addition to political assassination, arbitrary detention of political opponents and activists, and illegal and irregular acquisition of land by the highest government officials and their political allies. Following Kenyatta, between 1978 and 2002, President Daniel arap Moi presided over a government that was also responsible for repeated violations of human rights. These violations included massacres, unlawful detention, ill-treatment of political and human rights activists, illegal and irregular allocation of land and economic crimes, and grand corruption. More recently, between 2002 and 2008, President Mwai Kibaki's government was again responsible for violations of human rights. These included unlawful detentions, extrajudicial killings, economic crimes, and grand corruption. Table 1 gives a list of massacres in Kenya.

**Table 1. Massacres in Kenya**

Year	Massacre	Location	Perpetrator
1980	Bulla/Karatas/ Garissa Gubai	Garissa	Security operation
1981	Malka Mari	Mandera	Security operations
1984	Lotirir	West Pokot District	Security operations
1994	Wagalla	Wajir	Security operations
1998	Loteleleit	Turkana	Toposa of South Sudan
2001	Murkutwa	Marsabit	Armed Pokot raiders
2002	Kariobangi	Nairobi	Mungiki
2005	Turbi	Marsabit	Raiders revenge killings

The trauma resulting from these killings and gross violations of human rights rippled through the community. However, the Kenyan government is reluctant to acknowledge the killings and suffering due to the involvement of powerful political actors. Bloomfield et al. (2003) suggest the desire for vengeance often springs from a feeling that justice has previously been denied, and past crimes have been silenced.

The year 2002 marked a turning point in this state-orchestrated amnesia. What followed was an upsurge in public memorization and debate about nationhood that was accentuated by the commissioning of a series of sites, monuments, and sculptures of significant national figures. These symbolic gestures pointed to the government's commitment to addressing historical grievances and protecting and promoting the human rights of all Kenyans. The post-2002 period

also saw an upsurge in critical debate on how to remember the violence of the past and the proliferation of public expression of interest in the commemoration of historic events in Kenya. First, the Nyayo House Torture Chambers, operated by former President Daniel arap Moi's government, were opened to the public in February 2003. Located in a twenty-four-storey building in Nairobi, the intention for opening the chambers was to make them a national monument of shame.

Speaking during the opening ceremony, the justice minister expressed the government's commitment to ensuring that what happened in the torture chambers would never happen again: "We will take measures to have this torture chamber protected as a national monument of shame, as we have committed to protect and promote the human rights of all Kenyans" (The Newsroom, 2003). Victims tearfully described their experiences in the torture chambers. Some confessed that they were forced to drink their urine to survive. At a more recent event one of the survivors, Christopher Sylvanus Oduor, vividly recalled his experience: "All my interrogation session began with stripping naked, doing a round of push-ups before lying on my back in a crucifix position where one officer would stand on my right hand and the other on the left" (Odenyo, 2017). Other survivors have also shared their harrowing experiences of interrogation, such as that of Waweru Kariuki:

While in the cells, I heard a woman and children crying. I did not know where the sounds were coming from. Later, the interrogator came to my cell and told me that my wife was there with my children and had confessed. The interrogator had a gun that he used to intimidate me. He told me either to confess or be shot. I later learnt that all the noises were simulated and piped into the cells as a form of psychological torture. (Nation Media Group, 2021)

The opening of Nyayo House was followed by another symbolic move in September 2003. President Kibaki, the third president of Kenya (2002–2013), lifted the thirty-year ban on the Mau Mau movement which spearheaded the uprising against the British in Kenya in 1950. Three related events subsequently took place: the launch of a veterans' claim against Britain in June 2009 for compensation for human rights abuses while in detention; the Kenyan government's decision to support this suit in 2010; and the promulgation of the new constitution on August 4, 2010. In its Preamble, the new constitution recognizes those who struggled to bring freedom and justice to Kenya.

On March 30, 2007, the "Taskforce for Countrywide Data Collection on Criteria and Modalities of Honoring Heroes and

Heroines” was launched. The taskforce aimed to establish uniform criteria for identifying the “great and good of Kenya’s past” (Coombes, 2011). The government commissioned a series of sculptures beginning with independence leader Dedan Kimathi on February 18, 2007. During the process, President Kibaki emphasized his government’s commitment to address historical grievances and seek measures of redressing those grievances so that Kenya can become stronger and more cohesive.

A decade later, on September 12, 2015, a memorial to honour all those who suffered during the struggle for independence was erected at Uhuru Park’s Freedom Corner in Nairobi. The unveiling offered a soul-searching moment for Kenyans to reflect on the process of nationhood, with the monument standing as a symbol of reconciliation between the British government, the people of the Mau Mau movement, and all those who suffered during the Emergency Period (1952–1960). Speaking during the commissioning of the monument Dr. Gitu Kahengeri, the leader of the Mau Mau War Veterans Association (MMWVA), beseeched Kenyans to unite in fighting tribalism while recognizing that all Kenyan communities fought for freedom. “We fought as a nation and not as a particular community,” he said. “We must fight tribalism for our country to move forward” (Nyamori, 2015). The former prime minister of the Kibaki government, Raila Odinga, argued that the memorial should mark the beginning of an honest search for freedom heroes from all communities. Kenya’s attorney general at the time, Prof. Githu Muigai, expressed the government’s commitment to addressing human rights violations committed since independence.

### **Community Peace Museums of Kenya**

As the official turn toward memorialization and historical reckoning was gaining momentum in the early 2000s, another smaller memory movement emerged. Unlike official memorialization initiatives, which adopted a top-down approach, the Community Peace Museums and Heritage Foundation (CPMHF) emphasized a bottom-up model. As Walters (2017) points out, the top-down approach is characterized by external interventions from agencies associated with government and international efforts. The bottom-up approach reflects grassroots efforts and emphasizes the value of local traditions, healing, and peacebuilding between different communities and peoples.

The CPMHF began as a pastoral community development programme in 1994 and was sponsored by the Mennonite Central

Committee (MCC). Initially known as the Material Culture Project, it focused on the collection and documentation of artefacts. It grew to become part of a loose network of communities throughout Kenya known as the Community Peace Museums Program (CPMP). These museums were initiated by Dr. Sultan Somjee, a Kenyan-born anthropologist of Asian background and member of the Ismaili religion. Educated in Canada, Somjee became the head of the Department of Ethnography at the National Museum of Kenya in 1994. His appointment took place amid a background of African conflicts, from the Great Lakes region (including the 1994 Rwanda genocide) to conflict in Somalia and ongoing tensions and conflict in Eastern Africa and within Kenya. As an ethnographer, Somjee had spent twenty years doing fieldwork on Indigenous cultures and traditions in a number of local communities where he and several assistants “began to explore what material culture was used by their elders in peace building and reconciliation” (Gachanga, 2008). The concept of community museums appealed to some members of different groups because it ensured a “people-grounded” approach growing from below: “We thought of community museums as participatory places not only to exhibit *Utu* [humanistic values] but also to involve the community in making and utilizing the space to discuss the violence that had gripped Eastern Africa” (Gachanga, 2008).

Somjee focused on material culture, and when MCC asked for his help in developing a travelling exhibit for their religious communities across North America he saw an opportunity to use that same material culture for peace initiatives in Kenya. By collecting objects and training youth on how to use the items for education, Somjee sought to push back against the misrepresentation of minorities during periods of conflict. He and his assistants wanted to give agency to different groups in these largely oral societies and to work with them to retrieve peace traditions, which past colonial and post-independence governments had largely erased. In 1998, Somjee presented the concept of a peace museum in Kenya at the 3rd International Conference of Museums for Peace in Osaka and Kyoto, Japan, and entered into a global dialogue about such sites.

The CPMHF has peace museums in twelve sites across Kenya. Each museum collects regional material culture and oral history that participants consider to be closely connected with peacebuilding and sustaining community values. The museums prepare community participatory exhibitions and make presentations to schools and colleges in Kenya. Most importantly, the community peace museums demonstrate that there are existing and effective Indigenous mechanisms for the management of conflict in East Africa. Today, these peace sites and initiatives continue to exist despite years of

scarce or absent funding, and in the face of intergroup tensions, conflict, and structural violence. Despite the lack of resources, the work of the CPMHF is highly valued in the communities in which these peace initiatives are implemented, as the examples below suggest. And it may be precisely because these are bottom-up, grassroots initiatives with little institutional support and so little influence of national or international politics that these sites are effective in reinstating Indigenous peace practices and opening the dialogue about past violence and conflict. We now turn to examine the peace and memory work done at three sites.

### *Lari Memorial Peace Museum and Massacre Commemoration*

The Lari Memorial Peace Museum located in Kiambu County in central Kenya is about thirty miles from Nairobi. The museum commemorates the night of March 26, 1953, when Mau Mau fighters attacked the village of Lari, killing almost a hundred people deemed to be loyalists, including children and the elderly, in what immediately became known as the Lari Massacre (Baker, 1954). Lari had experienced deepening social divisions between a large population of displaced people who had been evicted from nearby lands and a group of learned elite who organized themselves into the Home Guard to protect against Mau Mau insurgents (Baker, 1954; Elkins, 2005; Anderson, 2005; Maloba, 1993). On the evening of March 26, Mau Mau attacked the homestead of Chief Luka, a loyalist and a beneficiary of a vast land concession from the colonial government. They burnt loyalists' huts and hacked to death those who tried to escape the fires. Hundreds of Lari residents were killed that night. The British used the attack to demonstrate the viciousness of the Mau Mau and the massacre was followed by a violent reprisal attack from the Home Guards, police, Kenya Police Reservists (KPR), loyalists, and European settlers. Over four hundred Mau Mau were killed by security forces (Anderson, 2005; Elkins, 2005).

The effects of the massacre continue to be felt by the Lari community, which has yet to come to terms with the violence. Members are divided and embittered and accuse one another of past betrayals and occupations of their land. Some have even opposed intermarriage between the two sides—the loyalists and those who supported the Mau Mau—even though they are from the same ethnic group and live in the same area (Gachanga, 2017).

In 2001, fifty years after the massacre took place, the CPMP, through the support of the MCC Kenya, started working with the people of Lari who had been affected by the conflict. The CPMP aimed to help the community come to terms with the violence and

work toward reconciliation. To begin to address the situation, elders in the community conducted a healing of the earth ceremony. They also donated their photographs of people killed, newspaper cuttings about the massacre, and peace material culture such as colonial pass cards (*kipande*), tax receipts, and colonial correspondence to the museum. They developed a list of names of people killed or maimed during the massacre. The pictures and names are of people well known by the community and some are still alive. The museum details the brutality of war and promotes an awareness of how war destroys peace values.

The museum also seeks to restore the community's image, which they believe was distorted by the colonialists. Community members, including the survivors of the massacre, question why coverage of Lari tends to focus on past violence while leaving out their subsequent efforts to heal the wounds of the civil war and restore peace. The survivors argue that they have not had the chance to share their own narratives about the massacre. They argue that the written history ignores traditional healing and reconciliation processes that followed the massacre.

### *Kariobangi Peace Garden*

In May 2002, twenty-eight young men were slashed to death in Kariobangi, an informal settlement in Nairobi. This was triggered by the murder of a member of a vigilante group known as the Taliban while on patrol on the roads of Kariobangi. After realizing what had taken place, a group of Taliban set out on a revenge mission. They apprehended three suspects and killed them that very night. These three young men happened to belong to an outlawed religious sect known as the Mungiki. Mungiki advocate for a return to Indigenous ways of life to fight against the yoke of mental slavery, which its members claim was introduced by Christianity and colonialism. They are known for beheading anyone who stands in their way as well as practicing female genital mutilation. Two days after the killing of the three men, a group of up to three hundred youths believed to be Mungiki adherents carried out a revenge attack targeting Taliban members. They swept through the settlement wielding pangas, picks and axes and cutting down anyone who failed to answer their vernacular greetings. They mutilated bodies, beheading one, and in some cases, cutting off their genitalia. The killing spree lasted about half an hour (PeaceNet-Kenya, 2002).

On September 14, 2002, the people of Kariobangi, through the support of MCC Kenya, planted a peace tree garden in a public ceremony. For the past two decades, community members have taken



care of the small garden, which serves as a place for meetings where people come to talk and sort out their differences. It has also become a centre of collective memory where the people of Kariobangi meet to share their experiences of the massacre and a place for informal dialogue for people living in the slums.

### *“Journeys of Peace” Travelling Exhibition*

In 2014, CPMHF, in collaboration with the Swedish NGO Cultural Heritage without Borders, organized a twelve-month travelling exhibition on African peace cultures called “Journeys of Peace,” which went to eight locations in Kenya. This included an exhibition in Lari. In the Eastern province, the travelling exhibit also visited Embu, Tharaka, and Machakos. There are two museums in this region with hundreds of artefacts exhibited. These include a *thia*, an iron tool that was used by elders in making community beehives that provided the peace honey beer. There is also a *nvuva*, a container that was used to ferment and store peace honey beer that the elders sipped during reconciliation. There is also a *njungwa*, a traditional stool used by elders during peace meetings. Also exhibited are a *muguki*, a long blunt spear that the elders held to show authority and respect during peace ceremonies, and a *kigira*, a fly whisk used during blessing rituals. Other items displayed are a *ngathi*, a dancing skirt worn when closing a successful reconciliation talk, and a *kiuga*, a ritual calabash used in serving food during peace ceremonies. In Nairobi, the exhibition visited Kariobangi. In Rift Valley the exhibition visited Kapedo, a site that has been a centre of conflicts between the Pokot and Tugen communities. In western Kenya, the exhibition visited the Abasuba Community Peace Museum, and in northern Kenya it visited Samburu.

### **Sites of Persuasion**

The memorial sites at Lari and Kariobangi and the “Journeys of Peace” exhibit convey histories acknowledging Kenya’s violent past along with the right of community members to speak about what happened and how it affected their lives. The former conflict sites have begun to acknowledge and pay tribute to victims and survivors. From providing opportunities to learn about traditional methods of peacekeeping to coming together in an open space filled with trees, these examples demonstrate the capacity of groups of people to seek out ways to settle past differences and to move toward coexistence and reconciliation. These are sites of conflict transformation where

communities often remain centres of ethnic tensions and resentments and residents may harbour ideas of revenge. However, speaking about their grievances provides community members with a way to potentially alleviate hostilities toward one another. In doing so, through the travelling peace exhibit and the Lari and Kariobangi sites, Kenyan community members are attempting to prevent the past from becoming the seed of renewed conflict. This marks a contrast with other post-conflict countries which, as Bloomfield et al. (2003) note, often choose to ignore the past completely for fear of endangering a fragile peace.

The symbolic, open community acknowledgement of trauma at Lari and Kariobangi and during the “Journeys of Peace” exhibit reinforces their persuasive messages. In all three spaces, community came together to acknowledge the pain and suffering they have gone through due to conflict. For instance, during the first commemoration of the Lari massacre on March 26, 2001, some survivors of the massacre shed tears as they narrated how the massacre was carried out, how they lost their loved ones, and how members of the community betrayed each other. Douglas Kariuki, a former colonial loyalist, expressed regret for fighting and killing their brothers during the Mau Mau war:

It is sad that I am here since I am one of those who witnessed and also [was] involved in the massacre. At that time we were on the side of the white man and we fought for him. . . . We fought our fellow Africans and killed them with weapons we were offered by the white man. We have so much pain in our hearts because we did so much we cannot forget. My request to peace museums is to help our children come together and forget.

On June 1, 2002, the victims of the Kariobangi massacre held a healing ceremony at Kariobangi’s Catholic church. The survivors of conflicts shared their own experiences of violence and healing. They also described how they went about reconstructing their lives and the community after very serious divisions and suffering, such as during the time of the colonial occupation and the Mau Mau struggle for independence. They shared their stories and feelings about their experiences of the night of violence and its aftermath. They also spoke about the role of peace symbols and traditions and how they experienced this heritage as a path to reconciliation with others. One elder named Onjiko, who had lost his son during the Kariobangi massacre, opened up and shared his story:

When I reached the hospital, I saw the young man; my child had been laid there. He was twenty-one years old. I asked him, "Son, how did this happen?" He said to me, "I even don't know father." He died.

Another elder, also a Mau Mau war veteran, rekindled traditional proverbs, songs, and dances that built a spirit of reconciliation: "We shall not feed the hyena twice. This means we shall not shed any more blood."

Victims' stories were also presented during the ceremony through the dramatization of a poem inspired by various experiences of the survivors. The poem was written by Anthony Waweru Kimani, a survivor of the ethnic clashes that occurred in 1993 in Molo, in the Rift Valley. He managed to escape because his mother dressed him in his sister's clothes and called him Wanjiku, a girl's name. Boys and men were targeted during the clashes. This young man's story touched many hearts. It read in part:

Without tradition  
 Youth, your fury misled  
 You wounded me not to make porridge  
 Porridge for my children  
 Children who will support your back  
 When old age will bring you to your waist  
 Kariobangi, mpendwa wangu (Kariobangi my love)  
 You too will heal  
 And celebrate the day  
 Flowers will bloom again  
 And then the bees will make honey

The poem helped survivors in overcoming their fears and sense of isolation, while discovering the beauty of reconciliation, described in the words of the poet:

Our brothers  
 Earth is your bed  
 Sleep till night is over  
 Your lives shine again  
 Green in trees of peace  
 Standing torches  
 Torches of Kariobangi  
 Shining men, women and children  
 Violence brings violence  
 Peace brings peace

As a symbol of reconciliation, the survivors from different ethnic groups exchanged peace trees with those believed to be the perpetrators of the massacre. Those who lost their family members took

peace trees with them to plant at the gravesites of the deceased as symbols of forgiveness.

During the “Journeys of Peace” travelling exhibition, leaders from both the Pokot and Tugen communities and local administrators shared their experiences of conflicts and expressed regret about the extent to which the conflict led to under-development. Participants also shared narratives of peacemaking. For instance, elders described how Pokot women would remove their *leketiet* (leather belt) and ritually throw it in front of warriors in combat. Violence would stop immediately, reflecting the taboo of fighting when mothers throw the belt on the ground because it symbolizes a mother’s womb and is considered sacred in many African cultures (Gachanga & Walters, 2015).

In an interview conducted by the exhibition project team in Pokot, local administrators said that prior to the exhibition there was distrust between the Pokot and Tugen communities. At its conclusion relations had improved significantly. They could speak openly about how conflict affects everyone and the role they could play in future peacebuilding. One local administrator summed it up by simply observing that “peace is achievable.” Inspired by this transformation, local leaders subsequently requested the organizers stage another exhibition in Tugen land at a site where conflicts routinely occurred.

In other areas where the exhibition travelled participants openly discussed social justice and human rights. For example, at the Akamba Peace Museum participants raised issues of local female couples who experience discrimination in their co-parenting and raising of children. In the past these “*maweto* mothers” were well respected and allowed to inherit property. Recently, these women have been marginalized and even attacked for their lifestyle and many rights have been removed. The exhibition focused on reclaiming the *maweto* traditions through songs, dances, and other activities, thereby challenging negative images and highlighting the discrimination experienced by the women. Other issues discussed through “Journeys of Peace” included the practice of female genital mutilation, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and the social problems associated with drugs and alcohol (Gachanga & Walters, 2015). The dialogue sessions were community-led. Outside facilitators were only observers.

### What Messages Do These Kenyan Sites Convey?

The Lari Peace Museum and Kariobangi Peace Garden urge visitors to reject violence. That message is generally directed toward members of the community, though the sites are open to outside visitors. For instance, the Lari Peace Museum, in collaboration with other peace museums in Kenya, carries out peace education work and outreach programs with school children and other local residents. High school teachers and university lecturers also bring their students to the sites to learn about the toll of violence and possibilities for reconciliation and peace. In one of the museum exit surveys I conducted at Lari in August 2015 after taking my university students there, respondents revealed the power of the museum in transforming attitudes and beliefs about peace. One of the questions in the survey required students to indicate what they learnt after visiting the museum. Some of the responses included:

“Peace museum can be a good agent of peace making.”

“Development in any community is possible with peaceful co-existence.”

“Colonialism was bad. It is the cause of all the conflicts we are experiencing in Africa today.”

“Inhumane nature of colonization.”

Another question asked students to describe what they would do with the new knowledge they acquired at the museum. Their comments revealed that they were motivated to take action and to be actively engaged in peacebuilding in the community. Some responses included:

“When I go back to my country, I will establish a peace museum.”

“I will learn more about my community’s peace culture.”

“I will tell others about what I have learnt.”

“I am eager to go back to my community and try to discover our cultures and traditional practices.”

“I will bring a friend to the museum to learn what I have learnt today.”

There are artefacts on display at the Lari museums and peace trees planted on the museum’s compound, which enhance the spirit of healing and reconciliation. Table 2 show some of the artefacts at the community peace museums in Kenya and their roles in conflict transformation, and table 3 describes the significance of African peace trees.

The Kariobangi Peace Garden also uses survivor testimonies to help visitors understand how the suffering and death continue to affect the community. The survivors and family members of the

victims as well as other community members are actively involved in educating the community on healing, reconciliation, and peace. However, they do not limit themselves to retelling their sorrow, fear, and anger. They also share stories and lessons about the power of human solidarity and the need for co-existence. The message is further reinforced by the presence of peace trees planted in the garden. The trees embody the ancient African tradition of good governance, justice, reconciliation, and peace. Visitors to the site learn that almost every ethnic community in Kenya has a sacred peace tree. Their roots spread and unite all people. Through their roots they suck evil acts or sins (such as blood-shedding, curses, etc.), thereby cleansing the earth and bringing fresh air and fragrance to the community. The visitors are also shown the various peace trees in the garden and encouraged to feel their texture and smell them. From their spiritual to their physical qualities, peace trees play an important role in the reconciliation process.

**Table 2. Peace artefacts**

Object	Community most known for object	Use in conflict transformation
<i>Leketiet</i> (soft belt made from cows' skin and cowrie shells)	Pokot	Worn by women after giving birth to assist strengthening and toning the stomach muscles. The belt is placed between fighters to prevent further violence and the warriors are obliged to respect the mother's womb that carried them and gave them life (Somjee, 2014).
<i>Sotet ak seretek</i> (milk gourd tied with grass)	Keiyo	Used as a sign of forgiveness. An offender gives the gourd to the wronged person seeking forgiveness. If the offended person takes the gourd, then it is a sign that he is ready to forgive.
<i>Katunge</i> (beaded ornament)	Kamba	Worn by women during peace ceremonies.
<i>Kaingi</i> (tobacco container)	Kamba	Used to initiate dialogue among elders, and when people were at war, elders would exchange tobacco containers as signs of reconciliation.
<i>Njungwa</i> (traditional stool)	Gikuyu	Used by elders during peace meetings and a symbol of authority and leadership.

<i>Kithembe</i> (cylindrical wooden container)	Kamba	Used to carry ceremonial honey to be used during peace ceremonies.
<i>Nvura</i> (traditional gourd)	Embu	Used to ferment and store peace honey beer that the elders sipped during reconciliation.
<i>Kigira</i> (flywhisk)	Tharaka	Used during blessing rituals.
<i>Shikhuli</i> (bell)	Luhya	Musical accompaniment used during peace making dances

**Table 3. African peace trees**

Local name	Botanical name	Community most known for tree	Uses
Mugumo	<i>Ficus thoningii</i>	Gikuyu	Is among the most sacred trees and constitutes the traditional shrine for various communities in Kenya. It symbolizes an image of the greatness of God. Used as a prayer tree. Leaves used in blessing ceremonies.
Mukenia	<i>Lantana triforia</i>	Gikuyu	Used in blessing rituals to signify peace, health and happiness.
Osegi	<i>Cordia ovalis</i>	Maasai	Sacred staff used by elders during ceremonies. It is derived from its wood.
Gayeer	<i>Cordia sinensis</i>	Rendille	Used during reconciliation ceremonies.
Mulahanyo	<i>Grewia tenax</i> )	Rendille	Used during reconciliation ceremonies.
Sinedet	<i>Periploca linearifolia</i> )	Keiyo	It is a climber used during reconciliation ceremonies. The final act of sealing reconciliation after procedures of ending a war or conflict is when elders tie vines of sinedet ( <i>periploca linearifolia</i> ) on the right wrists of the two groups.
Ogalo tree	<i>Piliostigma thoningii</i> )	Luo	Protracted conflicts were reconciled under the Ogalo tree.
Ojuok	<i>Euphobia tiriculi</i>	Luo	In the case of inter-ethnic clashes, reconciliation was sealed by planting a ritual fence of the Ojuok tree.

## Conclusion

This paper highlights efforts by communities and the state to come to terms with pain, humiliation, and collective trauma, which ripples through communities where violence has taken place. One theme is acknowledging the wrong that has been done. This is an important first step in the process of healing and reconciliation. The community needs to see and hear what they already know and retell their sorrow, fear, and anger. This provides space for the survivors to regain the respect and dignity they lost during the conflict. Second, putting onto public display the community's collective trauma through memorial sites or statues provides an opportunity for present and future generations to learn from their history. These displays reconstruct people's pride and make reconciliation public and transparent. Unfortunately, the tempo, energy, and commitment displayed during the Kibaki administration to publicly commemorate historic events in Kenya seem to be dying out. This trend evokes Karega-Munene's assertion (2011) about Kenya's political memories: they have been shaped self-interest, feelings of entitlement, and the drive for raw political power. In light of the government's unreliable commitment to acknowledging past conflicts and commemorating its victims, the role of small groups of peace sites and initiatives takes on an even more important role within Kenyan society. Acknowledgement of pain and suffering through community-initiated public projects and memorial sites is the path to the future. MCC's involvement with the community peace museums is a remarkable example of an attempt by MCC to promote peace through interfaith and intercultural dialogue. It shows an openness of mind as opposed to prejudice, narrow-mindedness, and intolerance. This should be encouraged.

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