

Name: *Mashirika Creative and Performing Arts Group & KIST drama club*

Country: *Rwanda*

Artistic Medium: *Theatre*

Source:

Ananda Breed

Performance Research Theater- "In Place of War"

The University of Manchester

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<http://www.inplaceofwar.net/project/researchdiary/rwanda.htm>

<http://www.inplaceofwar.net/project/casetudy3.htm>

Objective: *Research on how theatre is used in Rwanda and the traditional versus modern usage of the Gacaca*

“It is in [the] 'place' of political pre/post colonial discourse, the physical space of the genocidal acts, and the narrative space that I am interested in investigating the power of storytelling, of establishing a narrative on a local community level that then reconstructs the context of the genocide - possibly realigning a divided ethnic nation through a pre colonial and traditional form of ritual and performance - by telling one's story and standing witness.”



Ananda Breed went to Kigali and worked with the Mashirika Creative and Performing Arts group that partnered with the KIST drama club for a developmental workshop. Rehearsals explored what subject matter and drama techniques would be most effective to demonstrate the use of drama as a tool in Rwanda. It evaluated the effectiveness of techniques of Gacaca through problem solving and interventions. Ananda Breed partnered with Hope Azeda from Mashrika to test the boundaries of technique, how to co-direct workshops and how to work with sensitive materials. Ananda experimented with playback and forum theatre to help deal with issues like genocide and

whether to transform the information into a learning tool or just reflect back what is given. For example in one healing experiment, one man told the story of the massacre of sixteen members of his family and the ensuing revenge. The issue was whether to use playback theatre as an effective technique in post genocide Rwanda and the group agreed that drama was essential. But whether the information should be portrayed in an educational way even if it showed elements of revenge, or if it should be purely sharing in a therapeutic way to help others identify with similar backgrounds was still being discussed.

There was also an overall need to build confidence in people to speak out in light of the problems of government corruption. Following the preparation of images for interventions concerning the problems of Gacaca, a short skit was created that illustrated a woman hoeing a field. A former perpetrator that has been released passes by on his bicycle. The woman recognizes the man, who warns her not to speak. Two friends comfort the distraught woman; one suggests that it is too dangerous to give testimony while the other suggests telling the truth. The woman goes to the authorities to ask about protection if she gives testimony. The authority is unable to give her information about protection, thus the skit ends with the woman saying that she will think about if she will or will not give testimony.

This type of theater helps to raise awareness of Gacaca in the community and raises issues of healing in a way that incorporates the element of revenge of every day life in a provocative way.