

COLLECTIVE JOURNAL, Abridged

CATHERINE STRECKER

7/28/06

We are here. We are tired. My eyes will not close; the desire to see it all is too great.

MARISSA SELLERS

7/29/06

After some of us joined Heather for yoga, we took tea and met together at 10:30.

Olivier – studies law at Butare University

Jeanne d'Arc – Nat'l University of Rwanda/survivor

Impressions and intentions:

What does it mean to rewrite history ?

What is the role of the theatre ?

Circumstances necessary to spark genocide

- Fixed ideas about classifications
- Control of media – 2 radio stations
- Utopian idea to be realized through extermination

EMA BELL

7/30/06

Schedule

Welcomed by Augustin Karekezi (Jesuit Regional Supervisor)

- "Rwanda is still bleeding."

Had dinner with Jean – Pierre's family.

-I started to miss home. It reminded me of Sabbath dinner back in the states.

There is a connection that I have in Rwanda that is both painful and joyous. I see my family in the face of Kigali. I have a history with Africa that I may never know and Rwandans have a history that they can never forget.

GLORIA M.P. NGABIRE (GOGO)

7/31/06

1st day at the US Embassy

We did many exercises this morning and it's only after 6pm that I realize that things so simple to do can be so tiring.

ITAMAR STERN
8/01/06

Today was our first experience of Survivor Testimonials. We heard three stories of women that have been with us since day one. First came Jeanne d'Arc, a beautiful young woman, 24 years old, who lost her parents during the genocide and was mistreated at an orphanage for years after. The second story was that of Triphine who explained to us that this was her first time telling her story and coming to terms with her actions since the genocide happened in 1994. We also heard a few moments of Alice's experience (Alice is Antoine's wife).

The survivors mentioned that one of the main reasons they are putting themselves through more suffering and telling their stories is so that we can know the truth and represent it overseas. What's more, they were clear that they weren't only asking us to speak the truth, but that it is our responsibility to let the world know about the atrocities that occurred in Rwanda.

What is the point of all the museums, plays, remembrance days, books, survival testimonies, films, if genocides continue to occur?

I am utterly destroyed by today's activities.

MUKAGATAYIJA JEANNE d'ARC
8/02/06

After yoga, we went to Parquet General de la Republique (public prosecution) in a meeting w/ Martin Ngoga (attorney general = public prosecutor)

After genocide of 1994 we had so many problems in Justice: A million of persons were killed innocently, there were more than 200,000 prisoners many were not known: their identity and their accusations, etc. because there were few (12) twelve magistrates. That is why these issues in classical justice were not easy.

Justice has many practical definitions and various administrations according to the situations.

So we created Gaçaça courts: To know the truth about who committed genocide. I liked the presentation because it was talking about "justice in context."

After lunch, we rehearsed Evas' play talking about what happened in Rwanda during the genocide. For the first time, I couldn't afford to stay in the room where we're playing because the play reminded me what happened during the genocide, I ran away traumatized, crying, but I finished by participating in one group and I appreciated the way in which that group has represented the play. (This was very important for me).

"I will open myself up to you and I thank you for sharing your stories because I am the lucky one."

I loved what we are doing.

ERICA SCHMIDT

8/03/06 Thursday

This morning on the walk back to Christus from the internet café – a man carrying chickens, perhaps 20, he holds them by the ankles upside down, beautiful feathers, sometimes they squawk.

We have two survivors who are both training to be lawyers in our group. “200,000 in prison is nothing to me. For me I want to know who did this to my family. For me this is a result expected.”

We gather in a big building. As a group we talk about what we are doing here. Art promotes peace. We present some work: 4 vignettes. Have people walk from place to place to watch. Then we return to the building and discuss/answer questions.

A survivor might take a very long time to tell the story. This is how Olivier has come to understand artistic process. He says we can take as long as we need.

I am in the van that goes to try on the dresses. A miracle. Made in 3 days. The market; color, prints, traffic. Women in a circle selling vegetables. I see carrots. Several look at fabric. The lady I bought from last time grabs my wrist. Shows me. Smiles. Slaps my hand.

JP introduces: Joseph Mutabosa the ex-ambassador of Rwanda (He was ambassador during the genocide.) who is now working with the African Union Secretary General and Tom Ndahiro a Rwandan scholar on genocide and the involvement of the church in genocide who is also editor in chief of a newspaper and a member of the Rwanda commission on human rights.

Tom says: "A dog was abandoned by some whites. This dog refused to eat the bodies. But it was starving. There were dead bodies around scattered. All around but this dog refused to live like some human beings. One would wish to become a dog to behave well. Because some human beings have become less than noble."

([That night,] we circle up, as is our way.)

JP says : “ I am because we are.”

JOY TOMASKO

8/04/06 Friday

The crows are cutting through the cloudy morning. Today feels very quiet. The majority of the group arrived a week ago. Amazing the capacity of a week.

Now in a big conference room in the President's office/estate. Many guards with guns but quite friendly.

First Minister – Soline Myirahabimana – invites us to be at ease.

Madame Domitilla Mukataganzwe – National Service of Gracaca Jurisdictions.

Only 6,000 have been tried in prison – estimate between 700,000 – 1 million participated in genocide.

Some judges have been found to have committed genocide and need to be switched.

As of yesterday 10,500 cases of Gaçça tried.

Regarding rape, dehumanization of Tutsis – genocide in broad daylight – everyone knows – “Sometimes in April we see people demonstrating, denying the genocide in other countries – they are offered protection by police.”

Need internal help – as writers – writing, and movies – please get the truth– show it.

We arrive at Antoine and Alice's – both radiating welcomes into their home – backyard – view of lights – their daughter shines. What are the words beyond generosity – family – community – hope – words we've been saying and living here.

After quick stop at Centre Christus – some continue on to ICBC – me included – we've gotten rid of notebooks, cameras, etc. Rose negotiates with the bouncers – and then onto the strobe light dancefloor. Often in the shape of an 8 we dance. Dance, dance. Releasing. Jumping. Then home. I just said goodbye to Jeanne – d'Arc – she leaves us in ½ hr. She says she will return next year – Doors keep opening, invitations keep getting extended with each meeting –

JOHN KERN

Saturday 8/05/06

Gaçça... How do you reach the heart of a thing? As Roberta would later put it, four rows of Americans amidst a crowd of newly born Rwandans invested totally in their birth. We sat amongst them as best we could, and yet again, we were invited, absorbed and celebrated. This is not without moments of letting the murmur of our translators distract from the hearing or the creeks of the benches send a nervous but somehow sincere reminder that our group is alien and amateur.

As time passed, about 5 hours in total, the weather shifted from patchy skies to cloud cover and soft wind.

Jean-Pierre, the accused in pink, had killed a woman clearly and offended more in shadow. The woman's husband rose and provided witness offering forgiveness only if Jean-Pierre would tell him where he had left her body. He needed her bones. Jean-

Pierre told the man that his wife had been loaded onto a truck with many others and that the body would never be found. The only hope was with the driver of the truck, but unfortunately, that man had fled in exile and obscurity.

Three girls who were listening to the stories of the death of their mother (she was stripped of her clothing and killed with a large stick), break into tears and have to leave. Soon after the husband is broken as well and his pain is voiced. One woman rises quickly clutching her head and screaming. She is escorted out and into a nearby structure where all who cannot stay are taken and comforted.

Olivier, one of our gracious interpreters has broken down as well.

Two bullet points on the Gaçaça pamphlet state the system requires:

- active participation of the population
- support and good understanding of the international community

Both are listed under the category “the success of Gaçaça process relies on.”

In this, the moment was successful and we become penitent and eternal.

“Peace is the perpetual rebirth of existence” – Merlean Ponty

MBALINDA HARRIET

8/06/06

Genocide memorial (Kigali memorial center). Mass graves; a bit left open to witness; beautiful flowers; we laid wreaths.

Childrens’ photos displayed victims. How they died and their biography very innocent but shot, stoned, hacked by machetes (pangas).

Childrens’ quotations: “I like volleyball and films.” “I don’t have photos of my family.” “I like to read autobiographical books about people who have suffered in their lives. It is a consolation to me. Prayer is also important to me.”

Left at 4:53 pm.

Time for movies/films; [a meeting with four Rwandan playwrights.]

Hope [Azeda] was asked about how she gets on with casting and if she got problems with some of the parents kids – she did actually lose one of the main characters two days to the performance – parent did not want her to take part in the idea of reconciliation.

Tough time when the parents cannot let children be children!

SANDRA KABANO-KOMAKECH

Monday, 8/07/06

We split into two groups: those going to the economics conference and those to the prison.

[At the prison.]

The lady with the beautiful smile is the director of administration.

No. of prisoners :

Updated statistics as on 7/8/06

Men – 4949

Women – 659

Children – 35

Statistics by age

	14 – 18	19 – 69	70+
Men	56	4851	42
Women	18	624	17
Total	74	5475	59

Statistics by crime

	Total	Confessed	1-25	Life Sentence	Death Penalty
Genocide					
Men	2538	1230	1233	157	33
Women	339	127	21	3	3
Other					
Men	2411	467	78	57	
Women	320	46	21	13	

Three prisoners came in dressed in pink (very clean)

Claudine – not yet sentenced/confessed

Amalie – confessed and sentenced

Antoine – Gaçaça representative

Wondering why Amalie didn't take off his shades and then how it is possible that he can be sentenced to death without having killed anyone!

Most of us didn't want to hear more stories of people being 'torn to pieces' which I thought was a good idea.

Now we're off on our 45 min or 1 hr trip to Nyamata.

A lady called Sayina took us through the horrific events. Nothing has been touched or changed.

The Tutsis would come hide in church and the Hutus would throw grenades. The roof outside and inside covered with holes from the shrapnel. The walls and roof covered with blood marks. A once white cloth covers the altar but it's all covered with blood stains. The level to which the blood reached is clearly marked on the walls

and tablecloth. Rosaries of the dead are kept so people can identify. On the right is a room filled with clothes of the dead. Sayina says there are still remains in those clothes. The walls are covered with patches of dry blood and this is where babies not killed by grenades were thrown until they died.

We moved down to a mass grave where the skulls of bones. Most of them badly cracked.

A coffin lies below of a lady called Mukandoli who was tied with both legs and arms apart, with her baby to her chest, raped and a sharp stick pushed thru her vagina to her head. (Christ Jesus.)

10,000 people died in the church.

Then a final mass grave of people found buried in a latrine some have been identified.

Any survivors? Less than 10. Some of them tried to run but were caught and thrown into the river.

How do you feel when you go to church with these same perpetrators?

She summed it up in one word “kwihangana” which means you see someone who’s done harm to you but you do not harm them back.

[In] the evening:

Ms. Rakiya Omar [Founder of African Rights] came here [from Somalia] in 1994 out of ignorance. She had no idea what she was getting into. She just wanted to get first hand information.

What she believes:

Genocide not over in terms of consequences. Everyone’s life was changed.

How can we help?

The history of impunity was one of the major factors that led to genocide. A Hutu wouldn’t be punished for killing a Tutsi! There was no justice at all. Even priests were encouraging their parishioners to kill the Hutus.

More information : www.africanrights.com

Gaçaça falls short of international standards but she feels no one has come up with an acceptable justice system. She thinks it’s imperfect, unjust, and if it worked there would be more people in prison.

Gaçaça tries about 47,000 perpetrators. (Ah... Ah.) She feels that emphasis should be on the planners and incites of the genocide and that one thing she appreciates about Gaçaça.

MELODY COOPER

8/08/06

Meeting Kagame today! Our group is smaller (Leslie and Harriet left early am) and Roberta, Ema, and Heather leave today. As we sit in the large reception room at the president’s office waiting patiently for Kagame to arrive, I realize this is the first

president I am having an audience with. A private audience – and I’m insanely happy that it’s with an African president. There’s an aspect of being African American while here on this trip that raises all kinds of questions and brings all kinds of answers. I’m an outsider, a stranger, a muzungu, and yet there are connections, similarities, familiar moments. Nataki, Ema, and I are dressed in our African dresses for a reason. There’s an unspoken sense of solidarity. If the holocaust was about hatred of other, the Rwandan genocide was about self hatred...the Belgians beat the child and the child grew to turn on itself – self mutilate, self destruct. And in America, blacks know this story all too well.

Kagame arrives – tall, slim, in glasses, shakes each of our hands. Soft spoken. I’m nervous, delighted, but all my encounters with officials from the government are tempered with doubt. Kagame has had a daunting task, but there have been serious questions and accusations surrounding human rights (the way perpetrators were detained, the way street kids are treated by authorities) and criticisms about his foray into the Congo to take resources – with violence. I hold the negative with the positive, knowing the impossible task he has. And even if some think it’s true that the RPF had some culpability in allowing political and military maneuvering to delay or affect some of its response to the genocide before and as it happened (all truths are complex and some actions are necessary) who are we to judge? We were not there. Facts can be misinterpreted or gain or lose value according to perspectives and alliances with other facts. This is the danger of revisionism – to show facts to meet an agenda – and this can be done by anyone. But I reserve my doubt in the balance of deferring to the victims.

Kagame is eloquent, succinct, willing to entertain our questions. We ask about children with AIDS – how he sees things improving for Rwanda over the next 12 years. What has sustained him...what has and can the international community do...his responses do not sound rehearsed or tired. He speaks at length about the need to address poverty. He is sustained by the will of Rwandans to live...and to live as others do. He tells us that our being here is one of the steps towards the international community helping. But in all of it, it is clear – with outside help or not, Rwanda is building anew. Not rebuilding – but creating new and better ways to co-exist, heal, move forward.

Kagame speaks to us for an hour.

I don’t want my memory of Rwanda to be subsumed by and obsessively focused on the genocide. I must surround myself with the beauty of the place, the joy of the people, the smell of the middle of the forest, the sight of the green mosaic of hills, Omar’s laughter, Jeanne d’Arc’s smile, Triphine’s grace, Aziz’s energy, Gogo’s wisdom, Antoine’s generosity, the whisper of Jean Pierre’s voice, Eva’s wit, a child’s smiling wave from a field a ¼ mile away, a woman nursing her child, an animal playfully rolling in the underbrush, men joking with each other as they saw huge logs on wooden stilts – a river sweeping from the past, through the present, and into the future...with genocide a part of it, but not defining it... Instead an inefficient dam around which the rivelets of life pass over, under, and around.

Butare! Universite Nationale du Rwanda. Our rooms are incredible. Sweet. Door to balcony: full moon. 7 women drummers at the arts center. Teacher/leader is male. Steven. Heart Beat! After the women finished, some of us were able to jump on stage and play with the women. Exhilarating. Soul beats.

Kiki spoke to us (lead actors in Des Espoirs) in French, translated by Gogo. She speaks very fast about the arts department. Aim was to eventually form independent companies. Have workshops for contemporary dance, music, theater, and drumming. Ultimately want to create a training nucleus from which artists can learn and go all over the world. Important to export their art and to contribute to transforming art around the world.

Returned to second floor of university to watch the Rwanda news – we were top of the news: Kagame meets with Americans! Interestingly all of the close camera shots were of my white colleagues (with the exception of Jean Pierre) but clearly, American = white in Rwandan media. Even in Africa, an African American can become “second class” or “invisible.” Nataki pointed out that it’s also because we’re women of color.

NYIRINGANGO NADINE KELLY
8/09/06

We enter in the National University at 10:30 in the faculty of Law. We met the academic vice-rector of the university Mr. Fitias and he welcomed all of us very well. He’s going to ask if we can meet the rector of the university so that he can talk to us.

The rector: Professor Silas Rwakabamba.

The rector thinks that the media can be misused like it was in 1994, and now it [plays] a key role.

A big message he tells us is in civic education. I think youth may be educated in civic education because they’re leaders of tomorrow. The youth has to be called as Rwandese and not as Hutus or Tutsis.

Now we enter in main campus and it begun in 1965 after the independence. We entered the biggest theatre in the whole country and it has the capacity of 1250 people to be here for the show.

We leave Butare to Gikongoro province (Murambi) to visit the memorial site of genocide.

On the way from Butare to Murambi, I saw many children on the road and I recalled about the children (victims) of genocide that are buried in Gisozi site memorial (Kigali).

Arriving at Murambi at 3:00, we found a survivor of this place who is also a guide. He told us there was Zone Turquoise of French soldiers who were trying to hide and deny the killings.

Administration authorities mobilized people to group here (Murambi) together so that they will be protected and saved. This was wrong, for the survivor, it was a strategy of grouping together all the Tutsi people around and kill them at once. After

entering in the site where bones are (I can't imagine how I was, because normally when I am visiting a genocide memorial site, I can't stop crying until I go back home; I could even continue dreaming about children that are victims who were killed. But now, I think I'm stronger than ever, I surprise myself!)

The survivor had about 50 people in his family, but now, there remains only 4 people including himself.

These graves of Murambi site contains 50,000 people who are buried.

This genocide memorial site was the technical secondary school of Murambi and now it has become a grave! What a story! It is unthinkable, but it happened.

Murambi:

- 50,000 killed in 46 – 48 hours
- 5 rooms filled with childrens remains aged between a couple of months to the 10's and 12's.

the remains of a child,
barely 2 years
clad in a stained
red sweater
half his head smashed
the other "surviving"
half with what remains
of his babyish hair
next to him lies another
no older than she/he
his/her arms raised high
the face caving in
where she/he must
have been hit
its hard to imagine that
humanity was and is
capable of this

I can never understand how they killed children. I'm sad to stay here and leave the whole group. So, nice trip and wish you the best.

TRIPHINE NYINAWABANA

8/10/06

We leave Butare at 5:20 for Kigali.

Post Murambi a member of our team is physically ill. We look to her comfort 2 stay behind. Dinner at Rose's. best food yet. Dancing til dropping. Bed at midnight. Last full day. Kigali/Rwanda. Most of the group off to the National Park. Melody stays behind – she's leaving this afternoon. Sandra and I stay behind. Uganda prep.

DARIUS MANNINO

8/11/06

Travel Day (Rwanda – Uganda)

Today we left Rwanda on a trip that crosses a border, an equator, and a time zone. After saying good-bye to friends we begin our journey north then east to Kampala. The ride is long, a small but significant portion of it spent crossing the Rwandan/Ugandan border. Off the bus, two long lines, slow moving, although JB says this was a relatively quick crossing. Arrive Kampala, 10 hours later to rush hour traffic. Eventually arrive Ndere Centre. Beautiful grounds, pleasant rooms, and warm introduction for all. Peaceful here, away from the hustle and bustle of Kampala proper. Quick tour then off to Koi Koi and African BBQ at Ndere's outdoor amphitheater. Koi Koi – Friday nights at Ndere center filled with the sharing of culture, dances, riddles, stories, guest artists, songs, more dancing, and all the self roasted corn you can eat ! Truly, a good time was had by all. Can't imagine a better moment for our arrival. Moon above still seems spectacularly full. We all excuse ourselves from Koi Koi "to make it a short call" and slip off to bed.

DARIUS MANNINO

8/12/06

Ndere Centre

We all took about 20,000 pages of notes about Ugandan history, Ugandan theater, and the history and inner workings the Ndere Theater Troupe. Tons of invaluable information delivered with great generosity and style by Ndere founder and artistic director Stephen Rwangyezi.

Day began with yoga taught by Allison Russo. Next a nice full breakfast followed by informal introductions between American and Ugandan artists. Everyone then took to the stage for a full group warm up led by Okello Sam, thus beginning what promises to be a productive week of sharing between dedicated theater artists.

If genocide is life defeating then our work must be to affirm life in such a way as to make one another more visible, more known, less "the other" and therefore harder to deny, harder to ignore, harder to kill.

The rest of the day was filled with two lovely tea breaks, a brief moment of group dancing, music demonstration, and two short periods of ensemble building theatre games and exercises lead by members of Ndere Theater Troupe. After that, free space for emailing and laundry before heading to dinner.

OKELLO SAM

13 August 2006

My day started in the same what might be or seemed to be the normal way. No rest, no holidays, not weekend. Worried that I am missing the Sunday church service, worried about being away from my wife and children, worried about the show in Entebbe, worried about the troupe, worried about my siblings and mother, worried about the CalArts workshop, worried about Hope North. Then I take action to coordinate issue in these areas by either my physical presence and attention or phone call.

Anyhow I finally get to the centre (Ndere Center) to attend the Cal Arts workshop. The uniqueness of the day is revealed in the beauty of happenings. I moved and worked with the group as the beginning exercise and out of nowhere Erik and I discuss how we could work out a way of longer relationships between CalArts and Ndere centre. How we could make Ndere centre an arts institute with accreditation from CalArts. (This is one of my dreams.)

JOY TOMASKO

8/14/06

I've been processing the day a bit with Shannon post-circle. Now she's sleeping and I hear dogs and cicadas yapping away outside.

Tonight I said I feel like a shell. Hmmmm so I elaborate.

Responsibility.

Muzungu. Wealth. American. Wealth. What do I do in my own country? What will I do?

What have I been doing in Africa?

First thought in my mind? Listening. Being present. Present ? At dinner tonight we talked about Murambi some. At Murambi I felt like I took myself out a bit – I watched myself being watched going through a museum of genocide memory with bodies preserved in lime – how long can they be preserved, how long will the survivor live to be a guide – questions asked at dinner. I felt like the Gaçaça hit me harder than Murambi – the wails, the cries, the unexpected eruptions.

And we come to Uganda wearing Rwanda on our sleeves, missing home – what became home. Re-entering/focusing on art making in the practical sense first although community/politics is still the intention. I do love that I feel we're more directly in nature where we are staying here. There's a mist blanket over the houses and the temple in the distance that is evocative of dream landscapes...

We saw JB's direction of *Come Good Rain*, a one man show. I love the multiplicity and prayer-like aspect of the title *Come Good Rain*. An invocation. A hope. Okello – Ugandans don't even know the truth. Then there are things not talked of. Grace – a similar approach to getting people to care, locally, about people/war/situations in the north should be addressed in theater like HIV education has.

Post-lunch was dancing! We learned 3 dances. A dance for the king, a courtship dance, and a kid's dance. Amazing! Aside from a sweaty workout, it was great! I do

believe and it's been said here – dance, music, theater – truth telling builds community and trust. Could be used for negative propaganda crap – but you hope for good. Tomorrow we go to Hope North. I can talk to people here about the 20 year war – how close are we going? As outsiders how close do we get/can we get? Each day so many questions – a shell. No. I become a shell when there's too much circling around an issue not going to the heart – otherwise I'm more of a vessel.

SHANNON SCROFANO

8/15/06

Lazy morning of yoga, continually delightful breakfasts (I carnivore on bacon!) the gingery gingeriest of African teas. Gifts of necklaces and bracelets from Andrew, Catherine trades back one of her metal masterpieces.

We queue up for the trip north – it feels like a convergence (although geographically more in satellite position). I realized yesterday that likely not many of our Ugandan counterparts have been there either – we are joined by Ndere people, UDTA artists and MDD students from Makerere.

We arrive to perhaps the most wonderful welcome I've received in my entire life (and I include huge Sicilian families waiting endlessly at train stations in this equation). All the kids emerging from every hut and building and patch of shade, dancing, drumming, and signing. There is an extraordinary receiving line of hugs and handshakes and choruses of welcome, flowers in our hair, and we join in the dancing (this is consistently one of our strengths – not necessarily quality of movement but definitely willingness to make fools of ourselves and have the best time ever doing so).

Hope North is a cluster of round thatched roof huts, some family homes, some guest homes, and a long rectangular building (built by the Dutch ?) split up into classrooms for the school and a boys' dormitory. The girls' dormitory houses less than 40 girls for a total of 81 students. Thaddeus, the managing director who has been with the organization for two months, says their next goal is to build more dormitory space. The school has been a part of Hope North for two years, but the community began in 2001. There is also Olympus Bakery on site, a very recent addition, where they bake buns and donuts, I think to be sold locally.

My understanding from Thaddeus and Susan (from Ndere), who has previously been here, is that the center began with a few core families (who were also given land to cultivate nearby) who moved down from the more war torn northern parts. The student population is composed of three groups – former captives of the [Lord's Resistance Army] who escaped, kids orphaned by LRA massacres, and other kids who have been in some way severely traumatized by the LRA or living in northern areas besieged by the ongoing conflict. A magnificent woman with a beautiful warm smile (who can incidentally balance a pot on her head with the grace and agility of a woman half her age), is head caretaker – everyone calls her “mama” appropriately.

After dinner, we meet our matches – the boys have been waiting to take us on in football. It was a tremendous show of effort, but the boys definitely had home court

advantage and most of our cheerleading squad deserted pretty quickly (the other side did, after all, have the drums and the kids – I can't argue with that).

ALISON RUSSO

8/17/06

Arrive, shift, breathe.

Lights out—we breathe together, stiff after long drives to far away worlds flush with the pulse of life. “You’re welcome”... for the gratitude you already feel, for the moment that comes after... too late... for the gift of food (when there is little), the gift of song, the gift of time... “Thank you” comes later, after time, after wonder... “Thank you” comes later than it should, but it is there... thank you—from the heart... Back to the day: rehearse, remember, together we lift and separate the muscle of the brain. Sending “one” to “two” to “three”; we dance, enjoying (or not) the soft exhaustion—the line blurs—there is a knee brace, two crutches, a sore achilles. Rest, wash, lunch, another circle forms... to talk about where we’ve been and where we might be going ...”might” might be required, “will” will be necessary.

Washing, ringing, lines of clothes—thoughts... Talk to each other... ourselves... we play... rehearse... perform! Receive gifts of bounty of music of love... wood carved, curved strings—pulled taught... holding light, holding sound. Shirts held to lines across time, across space—clipped together with a tiny wooden clothespin. Strong enough to hold... strong enough to hold.

I miss you all already.

Love love love,

Alison

AGABA DERIS

8/18/06

This workshop has been inspirational and educative not only in the theatre circle but also in other areas of social and academic lives. I personally learnt how to make theatre relevant in solving problems in society. For example the war in Rwanda and the conflict in the North. I hope to learn more about how to use theatre for developing society.

BENJAMIN MPAKA BUESIGYE

8/18/06

From the workshop, I have learnt and benefited a lot. In just a few days, I have been able to learn things that would have probably taken me years and for that I shall forever be grateful to this team. About the workshop and more specifically the Hope

North project, I've come to realize that I too can be useful and relevant in my own small way that may benefit the suffering people in the conflict plagued Northern Uganda. From now on, I've promised myself that I shall no longer 'kill one eye' or be aloof or think that the Northern Uganda issue is so big for me to make a contribution. I therefore hope to work on a play that I think can be ready next summer.

My prayer therefore is that we find a way of continuity so as to keep the fire burning so that when we meet for the workshop we can compare notes of how far we have gone.

KNEGGA ANDREW PADDY
8/18/06

The workshop has inspired me so much to know many things and share what is there between the people in Uganda and those in the outside world. It has been beneficial, academically and politically, due to the things discussed by the people who were in the workshop. I would like there and put my sincere happiness to the people who participated in the workshop like CalArts, MDD, UDTA, and finally NDERE troupe for discussing such good and beneficial things.

I have seen and felt the suffering of the people in north. I went to Hope North and Okello talked a lot about Gulu, many people who are out of that area do not know what is happening there but I got to know it.

GRACE FLAVI IBANDA
8/18/06

The workshop while mainly starting with theatre, I feel the link with dance was taken care without it being necessarily defined. The mutual respect of the mix of individuals, without any pretension of "I know better" attitude, I feel allowed all the participants space and time to be themselves. The artists' responses to the history and present arts situation in Uganda and I guess in Rwanda was both gratifying and challenging to me as a person in Uganda but actually lacking in the knowledge of the war history of my country. Thus Rwandese overview and Okello's analysis of the North I feel continue the challenge my curiosity and want to find out understand Uganda's history. The workshop therefore allowed me to re-learn about listening, focusing, analyzing my own approach to work and the relevancy of my artistic work within the disturbed political situation in Uganda. Try to change attitude by engaging the community outside the north of Buyade/South Uganda to get the northern Ugandan war issue came part of their life too, in this way it's a Ugandan issue rather than the northern Ugandan issue.

KEBIRUNGI BARBARA
8/18/06

I've been through one of the most incredible weeks of my life. To begin with, I didn't expect much, mainly because I thought this was just one of those events I'd document (that's what my job is at the centre).

I couldn't have been more wrong. Because now I feel that I've been more documented than document.

Being a part of this experience has brought out sparks where I thought ash had reigned for so long.

It was a fire that had (I thought) long given up its flame, but alas for joy, not shame, this time. Am grateful for this time that we've had and shared for the openness, the joy, the laughter, the smiles, and yah, that "girl talk" over tea...

NATAKI GARRETT

8/18/06

OK so we leave in a few minutes but only minutes ago did I feel like I settled in, so forgive today's journal entry. I am writing from Entebbe Airport which overlooks Victoria Lake, I will recount our steps backwards from there.

Leaving makes me just as apprehensive as arriving did – instead of "will I do enough," I wonder if I am capable of more when I return to my life.

We arrived a little late to the airport because our hosts really wanted to give us a big send off so instead of leaving late and going straight to the airport we detoured to where the Ndere Troupe is housed where they played the song and dances the dance we learned a few days ago. Then they presented a really beautiful picture of all of us. Before the Ndere troupe housing base we traveled across town during what we've been told is the worst day to drive in the city. It's the day the kids are let out of school for the holiday so everyone is on the road trying to get their children home. For me the city felt festive, busting, jammed and chaotic. Everything I had been wanting to experience in Kampala but wasn't really able to because of our packed schedule. Earlier today we shared our last group meal – boiled potatoes, rice and peas, spaghetti, chicken and sauce, steamed vegetables, beef kema, and fruit salad. Also there were hugs, near tears, pictures taken, last minute checks, a fashion show starring Itamar, gift exchanges, contact info exchange, an exchange of words and feelings and a combined sense of sadness and excitement.

What I'm thankful for:

That nameless bird who's song is like a dance. Trifine's song at Mirambi, the women who sang at the tailors to celebrate a wedding, the children's song we learned at Ndere, the song and dance of the children today. The song/soundtrack of this trip, the what and why screeched by the crows, the constant song in my own head... "I had a song in Africa."