

“CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM, RADICALIZATION AND MILITANCY IN NORTHERN NIGERIA”

presented to
the Centre for Peace Initiative and Development,
Minna, Niger State on 12th October 2011
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un Introduction

The year was 1963 and I was 12 years old. I was living in the southern state of Louisiana in the USA and we were passing through the traumatic period known as the Civil Rights Movement. My older brother and I heard of and became curious about an activity that was going to take place about three kilometers from our house. He had recently gotten his driver's license so he borrowed the family car and we drove to the venue. There were hundreds of people who had gathered around to observe this event. Probably the great majority of them were like my brother and me. They were curious about this strange event not necessarily supporters of it. We all stayed back from the main actors perhaps a hundred meters or so. As we watched about 30 men dressed in white garments and white hoods that covered their faces surrounded a wooden cross wrapped in burlap standing upright about four meters high. Another robed character, riding on a horse with a large torch about two meters long slowly rode up to the cross and put the torch against the lower part of the cross. Quickly the flames spread upward until in a few seconds the whole cross was burning. While the cross burned, the men were singing “The Old Rugged Cross.” I do not remember any speeches being made. However, even at my tender age, I got the point. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was holding this public ceremony in a very prominent place to let the African American community know that they were there and that they were prepared to use violence against them to protect their own culture and religion and “keep them in their place.”

This was my first and only experience with the Ku Klux Klan, the white supremacy group that was created in the southern part of the US during the aftermath of the American Civil War. The identity of the KKK participants was protected in their public activities by their white robes and hoods. Though their violent activities were often private, they were designed to instill fear in the public. The KKK members would beat blacks for violating one of their social norms and sometimes even kill them. Their primary method of operation was to intimidate by the threat of violence. And at least one of their motivations was to preserve their understanding of the Christian religion. They believed not only in a separation of the races but in the superiority of the white race and that the black race was under a curse from God. They tried to support their beliefs from the Holy Bible and further justified their actions by singing Christian hymns. Today we would call them “Christian terrorists.”

Violence within Christianity

When most people in the modern western world think of religious violence, they automatically think of Osama bin Laden and the various terrorist activities that have been propagated by his type of Islamic extremists during the last 30 years. However, as I have illustrated, Christianity has not been without its extremists, including those who use violence to support their purposes. Many, including myself, would argue that the Ku Klux Klan was an aberration, an extreme example of a very small group of people who did not and do not represent the Christian faith. However, the KKK has not been the only violent group that has received motivation from their version of the Christian faith nor have they been the only group that has attempted to defend or promote some aspect of Christianity through violence.

- **David Koresh** created a quasi-Christian community in Waco, Texas known as the Branch Davidians in which he considered himself a prophet. He promoted very strange beliefs, some based upon the

Bible, as interpreted by him. His movement turned violent and resulted in the killing of several US federal agents.¹

- **Eric Robert Rudolph** was one of the most hunted fugitives in American history. His two year bombing spree against abortion clinics and sites frequented by homosexuals and even the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta was justified by his belief that the US lost all moral authority to govern when the government legalized abortion in 1973. After pleading guilty and receiving a sentence of life in prison rather than face a trial that could result in his execution, he wrote a long explanation about why he had engaged in violence. He begins his statement with a quotation from Psalm 144:1: “*Blessed be the LORD my strength which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.*”²
- **Northern Ireland** was the home of a 30 year low level war known locally as “The Troubles.” This was primarily a violent conflict between two major sects of Christianity, Catholics and Protestants. Both sides drew motivation from their Christian faith and used the Bible to support their violent actions.³ Rev. Ian Paisley, a deeply pious man never personally engaged in violence or overtly promoted violence but demonized the Catholics in his public oratory to the point of being inciting.
- **South Africa** supported apartheid and the violence that was used to defend it at least in part based upon their Christian faith. On 16 December 1838 the white Dutch settlers in South Africa fought a battle later called the Battle of Blood River in which 470 settlers fought between 10,000 and 15,000 Zulus. During the battle, they promised God that if they prevailed they would plant a church in South Africa. Approximately 3000 Zulus died while only three white soldiers were lightly wounded. To fulfill their promise the 16th of December was turned into a national holiday remembered as the “Day of the Vow.”⁴ The inspiration from that apparent miraculous success encouraged a public commitment to the Christian faith. Unfortunately, the descendants of these people later used the Bible and their official Christian faith to justify apartheid and the violence that was necessary to enforce and defend it.

One of the most recent examples of “Christian violence” is the deadly bombing and shooting attack in Norway by Anders Behring Breivik in which 85 people died. This assault was apparently an anti-Islamic mission. Breivik felt that this horrible tragedy would draw attention to his cause and “give a sharp signal to people.”⁵ On his website before it was taken down, he described himself as “100 percent Christian”⁶ but some believe it is more accurately to describe him as simply being anti-Muslim.⁷

Therefore, it is not accurate nor is it fair to say that terrorism and violence can only be associated with the religion of Islam. The vast majority of Christians are peace loving people and have suffered greatly for their faith over the centuries because they refused to participate in violence. Unfortunately, all throughout church history there has been a small minority of Christians or people who associated with Christianity who have used violence to promote or defend their beliefs and practices.

The problem of violence is not necessary a religious problem but a human problem. We human beings have strong beliefs and convictions. There is built within all human beings a sense of justice. When our personal rights or property or relatives are stolen or harmed or withdrawn, we tend to respond with anger and bitterness. And, in the right situation, that anger can boil over into violence. We feel justified in responding to

¹ See “David Koresh: Cult of Death” by Richard Lacayo, Jordan Bonfante, Sally B. Donnelly, Michael Riley and Richard N. Ostling in *Time Magazine US*, March 15, 1993.

² Koresh's full explanation is found at <http://www.armyofgod.com/EricRudolphStatement.html>. On this same website, apparently sympathetic with Koresh, two other Biblical references are given. Genesis 9:6: “*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*” Numbers 35:33 “*So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.*”

³ See Ann Marie Imbornoni, Borgna Brunner, and Beth Rowen, “The Northern Irish Conflict: A Chronology,” <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/northireland1.html>

⁴ Adi Schlebusch, “Lessons from the Day of the Vow” in Faith Heritage, January 24, 2011; <http://faithandheritage.com/2011/01/lessons-from-the-day-of-the-vow/>

⁵ BBC News Europe, 25 July 2011; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14259989>

⁶ Christian Apologetics Website; post 25 July 2011; <http://christian-apologetics.org/2011/anders-behring-breivik/>

⁷ *The Telegraph*; 1 October 2011. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/norway/8656515/Norway-attacks-profile-of-suspect-Anders-Behring-Breivik.html>. Police have said that Breivik posted on websites with fundamentalist Christian tendencies. For excerpts from Breivik's manifesto, see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14267007>.

violence because the other persons or group have stepped across the line of right and wrong and justice demands that they be punished.

Two Kinds of Militant Youth

The particular group we are interested in this paper is the radicalization of Christian youth in northern Nigeria and particularly those in Jos and Plateau State. Have the Christian youth or at least some of the Christian youth in this area been radicalized to the point that they have embraced violence as the answer to their problems? The anecdotal stories that we who live in the area hear seem to confirm that thesis. Who are these militant youth? What is it that motivates them?

Jos Militant Youth

In April 1994 there was a flare up of violence in Jos in which the local Christian youth, made up of Beroms and other local ethnic groups started down the road of militancy. In response to a misunderstanding that started over the appointment of a Hausa Local Government Chairman,⁸ the local Christian youth got their first taste of violence by burning parts of Gada Biyu Market and a mosque on the Rukuba Road. The September 2001 crisis embraced hundreds of additional youth who experienced burning and destroying and killing for the first time. Subsequent crises have engaged these and many other youth. These combatants were not primarily motivated by religious conviction but to defend their families and communities. As the crises escalated there developed a growing desire to punish those they perceived to be responsible for these crisis and to send a signal to Muslims that they would not tolerate their rights being violated. "Turning the other cheek" had been rejected and "an eye for an eye" was revived.

I do not think that religion is the primary motivation behind the extremism of the typical Christian youth fighter in Jos. It is true that all Christians believe in evangelism and all Christians would love to see northern Nigeria turn to Christ and become a Christian dominated area. In fact, there are missionaries who are devoting their lives to winning Muslims in northern Nigeria to Christ. However, those involved in evangelism are not the radicals. I know of no missionaries or evangelists who would use violence to advance their goals of evangelism.⁹ In fact, those who are engaged in evangelism tend to be much more committed to the authority of the Bible and therefore, the least likely to engage in violence.

Most Plateau Christians who take their faith seriously believe those Christian youth who have become radicalized are not truly "Christians." Though Christianity is a corporate religion that in some sense includes all those whose parents are Christians, mainstream Christian theology teaches that to be a Christian, one has to make a personal commitment to Christ and then must submit to and obey the teachings of Christ. Almost none of these radical youth would have experienced such a personal commitment. Many are drunkards who smoke, take drugs, fornicate, steal and some are even armed robbers, practices most Christians consider sinful and anti-Christian. In addition, many of these youth would not attend church services and are an embarrassment to their families and communities.

The Jos Christian fighters, both Christians and Muslims are primarily reactionaries. Christians are unhappy with what they perceive to be the aggression of the Hausa/Fulani Muslims and Muslims are unhappy because they perceive they are being treated as second class citizens in Plateau. And of course, both sides become angry and anxious for revenge when their properties are destroyed and their friends and families are injured and killed. Most of the youth have no real religious agenda to promote. In fact, though the politicians and community leaders on each side definitely have a political agenda, I am convinced that the majority of the

⁸ "Nigeria: Jos Crises, Ten Years On," *Daily Trust*, 7 September 2011; <http://allafrica.com/stories/201109070905.html>. Another theory says that the conflict started over the Hausa demand for an emirate council. See John Y. Dung-Gwom and Laraba S. Rikko, "Urban Violence and Emerging Land and Housing markets in Jos, Nigeria," a paper presented in *ISA Housing Conference, Glasgow, 1-4 September 2009*. http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_129777_en.pdf.

⁹ It is true that some missionaries so identified with various colonial governments in the past they were tainted by the violence associated with those governments.

Jos fighters have few if any significant political goals. In their private moments, most of these youth would be willing to go back to the status quo of the pre-September 7th 2001 period. The vast majority of the militants in Jos are simply angry youth who believe they have been treated unjustly and are willing to use any means to reclaim their rights and punish those they perceive to have treated them unjustly.

Akhwat Akwop

In July 2011, a group surfaced in southern Kaduna which claims that it is "an unapologetic Christian socio-political and cultural movement." The group calls itself Akhwat Akwop which means "Soldiers or defenders of the Christendom and minorities" in the language of the Kataf ethnic group.¹⁰ Its maiden news release began, sounding very much like a Christian document: "Greetings in the name of our Lord and most gracious saviour and shield, Jesus Christ." The statement also concludes by appealing to Boko Haram members to "give their lives to Jesus Christ who is the Author and finisher of our faith!" and then says:

If you need peace – come to Jesus.
If you need rest – come to Jesus.
If you need freedom – come to Jesus.¹¹

If this group proves to be a genuine organization, it would indeed be a Christian terrorist group with motives and methods similar to Islamic terrorist groups. *Next* says it is "a rival religious fundamental group to Boko Haram."¹² Akhwat Akwop issued a statement on 29 September 2011 which claimed that the Hausa/Fulani are committed to:

- Islamizing Christians in the north and Nigeria as a whole
- Seizing, stealing and acquiring ancestral lands of indigenous communities in the north
- Destabilizing the government of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan
- Seizing back political power by all means and at all cost.¹³

Though this new group is indeed a radicalized anti-Islamic group and uses Christian language, and obviously appeals to Christians for support, it may not be accurate to say that it is a "Christian group" by any definition normally accepted in Christian circles. In its initial public relations statement, it asks seven rhetorical questions. Only one of them has anything to do with Christianity and it is quite general.¹⁴ There is no theological justification for its existence. It says nothing about spreading Christianity. Rather it seems to be an organization that is more anti-Hausa/Fulani than it is pro-Christian. The Kaduna Branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has categorically disassociated itself from the organization and other local organizations have rejected and criticized it.¹⁵

There is some doubt as to whether there is really such an organization on the ground. With modern technology, even one or two persons can create a website, circulate a newsletter and make threats. However, even if Akhwat Akwop represents only a handful of people who have no ability to make good on their threats, they do fit the definition of terrorists because their objective is to fill people with terror. And their radical threats are obviously appreciated by many people. In the "Comments" section of the original Vanguard article describing the organization, the contributors stated that this new organization is "a very welcome news long in

¹⁰ "CAN, SOKAPU, disown ethnic terror group Akhwat Akwop" in *People's Daily*, 22 July 2011; <http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/news/national-news/17207-can-sokapu-disown-ethnic-terror-group-akhwat-akwop>

¹¹ The Akhwat Akwop statement is found in AfricaNewsCircle on Friday, October 7, 2011;

http://www.africanewscircle.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1104:message-dropped-in-northern-nigeria-by-a-faceless-group-akhwat-akwop-in-response-to-the-boko-haram&catid=64:press-releases&Itemid=122

¹² *Next*, 5 October 2011, http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/News/National/5744385-147/fundamentalist_group_disowns_sultan_as_northern.csp#;

¹³ "Christian Militia Akhwat Akwop Issues Strong Statement," in *Naija Pundit*, <http://www.naijapundit.com/news/christian-militia-akhwat-akwop-issues-strong-statement>; see website for the entire statement.

¹⁴ This is the question: "Why are Christians being killed every day in Bauchi, Yobe, and Borno States?"

¹⁵ *People's Daily*, 22 July 2011

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coming” and “the only way to eradicate the culture of corruption and impunity.”¹⁶ One post even includes a proverb that supports the organization using SMS spelling: “He who has bin stung by a scorpion, wud squash even a cockroach at d sight of it.”¹⁷

There were also an equal number of people who objected to this new group. One said, “Christ is not a man of violence! Thus, no one who follows him should subscribe to violence!” Another wrote, “The responsibility of those who CLAIM to be as Christ Jesus (Christian) is to be as Christ, not like the Adversary who has come to kill, steal and destroy. Who do you desire to emulate? Whose servant are you?”¹⁸

All of those who might be considered Christian extremists are no doubt children of Christian parents and some of them would have been baptized. Most of them would affiliate with some Christian denomination and some may even participate in the youth group, the choir or some other Christian activity. Though most sincere Christians in Northern Nigeria are not proud of their actions, these are the ones who might be considered the “radicalized Christian youth.”

Radicalization of Christian Youth in Nigeria

A decade ago, Christian and Muslim youth in Jos went to school together, played football together and considered one another friends. However, with the Jos crisis that started on 7th September 2001, a hardness and antagonism began to develop toward those on the other side. Christian youth were not just willing to defend their homes and properties, they were willing to go on the offensive and destroy businesses and homes and even kill those whom they perceived as enemies, including innocent travelers passing through Christian areas. Over the last ten years, the attitudes have continued to harden, even apart from a crisis.

What has led to this radicalization and militancy? Why are Christian youth willing to burn and destroy and antagonize and kill? Many Christian parents have taught Christian principles of forgiveness and respect for others. Pastors and community leaders, especially prior to the Gada Biyu incident, attempted to stop these youth from perpetuating retaliatory attacks. Common sense and plain human decency teach against these kinds of uncivil and anti-social activities.

What then are the issues that are encouraging such radicalization of the Christian youth and causing them to abandon their traditional Christian teachings and practices for hatred, violence and retaliation? The following represent at least some of the issues.

- **Lack of Justice.** There is within the heart of every human being an innate sense of justice. Certain things are right and certain things are wrong. When Christian youth perceive that the other side is killing and destroying with impunity, they are tempted to take matters into their own hand. When they kill or destroy, they justify their actions by believing that they are just giving those persons what they deserve.
- **Grief over Losses.** Many Christian youth have lost family members or close friends in various ethno-religious crises. The normal grieving process causes extreme emotional reactions which are often not managed very well. There is a thin line between grief and anger and when anger boils over, it often results in violence. It is natural to be angry whenever one perceives injustice. However, many Christian youth have allowed their anger to become unrestrained; they have started believing that killing and destroying those who have abused them is acceptable and even necessary.
- **Peer Pressure.** When young people become angry and become engaged in violence, their friends are often pressured into joining them because of their desire to be accepted and respected by their peers.¹⁹

- **Lack of Forgiveness.** Though there have been many attempts in Jos to reach Christian youth with messages of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation, these messages either have not reached all of the youth yet or some of the youth have not yet accepted them. Allowing bitterness and anger to remain inside a person creates additional stress and makes the person even more unreasonable and vulnerable to more violence.
- **Segregation.** One of the unfortunate side effects of the various crises in Jos during the last ten years has been a growing segregation between Christians and Muslims. Segregation prohibits people from having meaningful contact with the other side. It erodes friendships and removes the buffer of personal interaction that would normally help to clear up false rumors. Segregation encourages suspicion and inspires mistrust. It may provide some amount of short-term protection but ultimately it lays the foundation for more violence.
- **“Enemy” Rhetoric.** Christian leaders have frequently looked to the Bible for guidance during difficult times. Many have used scriptures from the Old Testament that talk about wars and violence. Any time enemies of Israel are mentioned in the Bible, these people have seen a parallel to the Jos situation. In so doing, the congregations, including the youth, have continually had the idea reinforced that those on the other side are “enemies of God” who will become the Lord’s “footstool” (Psalm 110:1). Sometimes pastors intend for the Biblical warfare language to be used in a spiritualized sense but the hearers often apply it to the Hausa/Fulani Muslims.
- **Careless Statements.** Christian leaders have at times justified Christian violence if not advocated it. A *News Brief* article on 23 February 2006 about retaliation of Christian youth in Onitsha for violence against Christians in Maiduguri begins by saying, “At least 20 people were killed in revenge attacks on Muslims in Nigeria yesterday as religious riots intensified a day after the country’s leading Anglican archbishop warned Muslims that they did not have a ‘monopoly on violence.’”²⁰ Whether the statements of the then-CAN president actually inspired that retaliation or not may be impossible to determine. However, that was the perspective of the author of the article and that statement certainly did nothing to discourage violence.
- **Lack of Role Models.** Although there have been a few outstanding examples of youth who have resisted the tendency to engage in violence, there have not been enough of them. Even when Christian youth have courageously stood against the tide and accepted Jesus’ challenge to be peace makers, their stories have seldom been well publicized. The default mood among the youth is that of violence and retaliation and those promoting the peace are often viewed as a minority with less influence.
- **Idleness.** Many youth, even those with university educations, are unemployed. The proverb says “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop.” Rev. Yakubu Pam, the North-Central CAN chairman, declares that “lack of employment and positive engagement” is the most significant contributor to the growing volatility of Nigeria’s youth.²¹ As long as youth have little to occupy their time and little hope of gainful employment, they are vulnerable to being manipulated into violence and other anti-social behavior.
- **Sinful Nature.** The Christian faith believes that there is within humanity a tendency toward sin and evil that can only be corrected by the power of God (Romans 7:14-8:4). It is something like a moral law of gravity that is constantly dragging humans downward. Therefore, without the restraining influence of worship, prayer, praise, good deeds, Christian fellowship and the power of the Holy Spirit in one’s life, the tendency is for human beings to be pulled downward into more and more sinful and abhorrent behavior. Thus, lack of serious commitment to and practice of the Christian faith often leads youth astray.

These and other issues have combined to radicalize at least some of the Christian youth in Plateau State and northern Nigeria. Unfortunately, the situation is not likely to change significantly unless the issues that have encouraged them are addressed.

¹⁶ *Vanguard*; 29 September 2011; <http://allafrica.com/stories/201109290615.html>

¹⁷ *Vanguard*, 7 October 2011; <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/09/boko-haram-christian-extremist-group-akhwat-akpow-threatens-retaliation/>

¹⁸ *Vanguard*, 7 October 2011

¹⁹ Positive peer pressure has also kept youth from engaging in violence as well.

²⁰ “Christians kill Muslims following warning by Nigerian Archbishop;” in *News Brief*, http://www.ekklelesia.co.uk/content/news_syndication/article_060223nigeria.shtml

²¹ Telephone interview with Yakubu Pam son 6 October 2011 by Danny McCain

Consequences of Radicalization

The youth are convinced that they are solving the ethno-religious problems with their violent responses but the question we must ask is this: Are things improving as a result of these kinds of violent reactions or getting worse? The periodic violent upheavals in Jos and the surrounding areas during the last ten years suggest that things are indeed getting worse. What are some of the consequences of the increasing militancy of the youth and the deteriorating peace in Jos and its surrounding areas?

Consequences to the Youth

Willingness to Engage in Violence

One of the most important consequences of the hardening of attitudes of the Christian youth has been their willingness to engage in more and more violence. It is not normal to want to pick up a cutlass and go decapitate someone. However, the combined issues described above, without appropriate counterbalancing initiatives, have helped to propel Christian youth in the direction of radical and violent conduct. For examples of this, one only need to look at the comments after practically any article in an on-line journal or on Nigeria chat rooms and one can see the rabid hateful language.²²

Loss of Rational Thinking

Once people start down the road of violence, they become less and less rational. They make irrational statements and irrational decisions.

- Irrational youth attack the military and police.
- Irrational youth disregard the advice of their parents.
- Irrational youth fail to understand how their actions affect others.
- Irrational youth risk their lives to bring justice to their perceived enemies.
- Irrational youth attack people on the other side who have done nothing against them.

Repugnant Behavior

The longer these crises go on, the more irrational the behavior of the youth becomes, to the point that they engage not only in violent behavior but activities that are repugnant and inhuman. One of the reactions of the Rukaba Road disaster was the roasting and eating the flesh of combatants who had been killed.²³ In addition, after a confrontation in Dutse Uku where a Muslim youth had been killed, his head was severed, placed on a stick and carried around in a victory celebration by the Christian youth.

Hatred and Distrust in Children

It is a sad reality that the children currently in SS2 have lived their entire school lives during or between violent crises. And what these children are hearing from their parents and others they respect is often bitter and angry rhetoric. What is the result of growing up in this kind of environment? It is teaching children to hate those on the other side.

Recently, I made a similar statement to one of my friends. He smiled and said, "Yes, that is true." He then told me that a few days earlier, his four-year old son said, "Daddy, did you buy that suit in America?" My friend replied, "No, I bought it from a Hausa man." His son quickly replied, "No, Daddy, you should not buy anything from a Hausa man." Although this man employs several Hausas and has a better relationship with

Hausas than the vast majority of the people in Jos, his son has picked up from casual interaction with others that Hausas are bad people and not people one should do business with.

About three days after that incident, I was chatting with a Muslim law student at the University of Jos. He told me that some time before that, his nephew saw a small scratch on his vehicle and said, "Uncle, did the infidels do that to your vehicle?" This child had learned from someone that Christians are people who damage and destroy things.

The point is unless we stop these kinds of rhetoric that have become commonplace in Nigeria, we will teach our children to distrust and hate those from the other side.

Loss of the Christian Faith

Anecdotal reports from before the Gada Biyu incident claim that parents and others heard of the planned disruption of the Muslim Sallah. Several pastors attempted to talk to these youth but were told bluntly that they were not following the Biblical "turn the other cheek" philosophy and were not under the authority of the pastors. In rejecting the clear teachings of the Bible, they in essence rejected the authority of Christ in their lives and ceased to be Christians by any acceptable definition of Christianity. The Bible has severe warnings for those who reject the Christian faith.²⁴

Consequences to Society

Social Disintegration

The more the youth are radicalized, the more the society becomes dysfunctional. After the first two Jos crises, Muslims stopped living in Christian areas and *vice versa*. After the Christmas Eve bombing in 2010, people even stopped going into areas that were controlled by the other side. After the Ramadan Sallah event, Christians and Muslims have even stopped buying and selling from each other in what was before considered neutral areas. Therefore, the society continues to disintegrate. This encourages more suspicion and more hatred and more social unrest and more violence and the cycle continues.

Expanding Violence

The radicalization of the youth also encourages more and more violence. After the September 2001 crisis, it took seven years before things boiled over again. The next major violent incident in Jos took 13 months. The next incident of violence took 11 months and the one after that took only eight months. What this suggests is that the more radicalized the youth become, the more they are willing to respond to grievances with anger and violence and the less likely they are to reach out with reason and understanding. This leads to a downward spiral of violence that is extremely difficult to halt.

Reverse Development

Obviously, violence discourages development in the society. However, the repeated violence that we have had not only discourages development but reverses it. Unfortunately, some companies can no longer function because they are losing so much manpower through violence or the threat of violence. There are many companies who are considering moving their operations to another state where there is more peace.

The expatriate owner of Zamani Farms in Jos, identified only as Norma, wrote a moving letter to her customers about her decision to leave Plateau State to go another part of Nigeria where she can work without the threat of violence. She wrote:

²² See comments from the Facebook group *jtownperspectives*. <http://www.facebook.com/groups/257218420962/>

²³ Undated news release from Reconciliation Trainers Africa (RETA) immediately after the 29th August 2011 Gada Biyu incident contains a picture of a body being roasted over a fire and a youth eating some of the flesh.

²⁴ See Matthew 24:9-10; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Hebrews 2:1, 3:12-13, 6:1-6, 10:28-29; 2 Timothy 4:10.

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The situation here has created really impossible conditions for us on the farm. Our young crops need constant attention and care . . . When workers can't come to the farm, or when they say they don't sleep at night for fear of attack, and have no peace of mind, of course they cannot concentrate on their work. Our production has suffered seriously, we are running at a loss, and feel terrible that we are unable to provide our customers with the quantity and quality of vegetables they have come to expect from us . . . Now it is obvious that we have finally come to the end of the road.²⁵

Norma has made a decision to relocate to another state. She is only one of many who have made that decision or are considering that decision based upon unabated violence. One can hardly fault a business owner for such a decision. However every business that is lost encourages the cycle of violence. Loss of business means greater unemployment which means more anger and idle time which means more susceptibility to violence which means even greater business flight and the cycle continues.

Responses to Radicalization

How do we reverse the radicalization of Christian youth? One cannot address that problem without solving the fundamental problems that have led to the various ethno-religious crises in Plateau State. It has not been the purpose of this paper to outline all of the problems that have led to the crises in Plateau. However, those issues must be identified and addressed before the Christian youth in Plateau will renounce their radicalization and return to normality. How are we going to do that?²⁶

When General Colin Powell was the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, he developed his doctrine of warfare. His philosophy was that if a nation had to go to war, they must hit the enemy as hard as possible from as many different angles as possible with all the weapons they have at their disposal and continue doing it until victory was achieved.

It is my conviction that an approach to tackling the crisis in Plateau State must follow a similar strategy. The enemy is improper thinking that leads to hatred and violence. To use the military metaphor, we must engage in a powerful war against hatred and anger and violence and retaliation and anything else that would disturb the peace. We must hit these problems with a coordinated effort from every possible angle. So far our approach has mainly involved the security sector to protect and the medical sector to treat the injured. However, we must now engage many more sectors of society, including the faith community, education, business, media, entertainment and the government. The following is a simple outline of some of the responses I believe could and should be attempted.

Religious Responses

Christian Consultation

Whenever the early Christians had a disagreement over the issue of circumcision, the leaders of the church invited the other leaders of the church to come together for a consultation. During this consultation, the leaders followed a specific format.

- They met together.
- All sides were presented.
- They reached a consensus.
- They published the conclusions.
- The distributed the results to those effected.

²⁵ Quoted in the blog of John Campbell, posted on the Council on Foreign Relations website.

See <http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2011/09/08/conflict-in-jos-a-letter-from-norma/>

²⁶ Because this paper focuses on the radicalization of Christian youth, I primarily address Christians in this paper. However, most of the principles and recommended responses apply equally to Muslims as well.

I am convinced that the Church on the plateau needs to have a similar type of consultation about the violence in Jos and particularly the hardening and violent attitudes and reactions of the Christian youth. Obviously there are different opinions about the cause of the problem and the way forward. However, these different positions cannot be resolved until the church leaders meet together. Christian leaders need to meet together and present all possible solutions to the Jos crisis. They need to reach a consensus. They need to write down their consensus position and distribute the results to those who are affected by them. After that they must do self-monitoring to insure that the consensus position is adhered to.

Meaningful Dialogue and Interaction

There are two sides of every conflict. Until both sides are able to sit down and discuss their points of view in a calm and polite manner, there is going to be little progress on solving the problems that have caused the conflict. Therefore, Muslim and Christian leaders must find a way to meet together and dialogue. These discussions must not just be a public relations gimmick that lasts for an hour or two and then each side feels it has fulfilled its responsibilities. Muslim and Christian leaders and ethnic leaders from both sides need to continue dialoguing until they identify answers and can make appropriate compromises.

I believe that another way to address the extremism among the youth is to have dialogue meetings with the youth. This technique has been used extensively by the Young Ambassadors for Community Peace and Inter-Faith Foundation (YACPIF) which has sponsored a number of activities that have brought Christian and Muslim youth together for discussions. These began at the Kwararafa Cinema in Central Jos and have included youth rallies in Bukuru and six other communities. In these rallies, the youth were challenged to come together and re-establish the relationships they enjoyed before. In all cases, the youth were ready to lay down their swords and reach out a hand of friendship to their opponents. The greatest gains in restoring relations between Muslims and Christians have been made when the initial dialogue was followed up by regular meetings that continued the dialogue. In fact, there have been remarkable examples of transformation among the youth. Some who were leaders in the fighting before have renounced all violence and become ambassadors for peace. Such activities have proven to be very beneficial in restoring friendships and breaking down negative stereotypes of the other side. They have also demonstrated that the radicalism of the youth can be reversed and youth can become ambassadors of peace.

For the past 10 years, I have helped to develop faith-based HIV/AIDS projects for Nigeria's public schools. These projects have involved both Christians and Muslims. Bringing Christians and Muslims together for writing projects, training workshops and other interactions has demonstrated we must go beyond dialogue. When Christians and Muslims are actively engaged in projects that mutually benefit each other, they are far less likely to be suspicious of one another or engage in violence or even listen to criticism of each other.²⁷

Reducing the Rhetoric

As stated earlier, Christians and Christian leaders have often found scriptures related to warfare and enemies and then used those scriptures to describe the conflict and to formulate their sermons and even prayers. I am convinced that this is not helpful. Without going into the theology of violence in the Bible²⁸ I will simply say that the wars that were fought in the Old Testament have little parallel with the kinds of battles that are going on in Jos and Plateau State. The problem of negative rhetoric is not just in the churches. As illustrated above, families are perhaps even more guilty. Therefore, Christian leaders and Christian families need to tone down the rhetoric. They must recognize that that rhetoric helps to create suspicion and anger in the youth.

²⁷ For a more thorough discussion of this model, see my article entitled "Which Road Leads Beyond the Shari'ah Controversy? A Christian Perspective on Shari'ah in Nigeria" in *Comparative Perspectives on Shari'ah in Nigeria* (editors: Philip Ostien, Jamila M. Nasir and Franz Kogelmann), Spectrum Books Limited, Ibadan, 2005, pages 7-26.

²⁸ I have developed the theology of violence and peace in "The Doctrine of Violence and Peace in Progressive Revelation," a paper presented to Peace Building Meeting of Christians and Muslims, Jos, on 27 July 2011.

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Fortunately, there are some good examples of those who are keeping the stereotypes of the other side from infecting their families. I heard a story recently about a Muslim family whose house was burned during the January 2010 crisis. One Children's Day 2010, the daughter of the owner of house attended a ceremony promoting peace among children. During the ceremony she was asked what happened to her house and she said it was burned. The leader asked, "Who burnt your house? Was it the Christians?" The young daughter said, "Well no. My mother said the ones who burnt the house are the wicked ones. My mother said that it is not the Christians who burnt our house. If they were really Christians, they would not do that. My mother said not all Christians are bad."²⁹

Clear Teaching

Jesus said, "*You will know the truth and the truth will set you free*" (John 8:32). People do not absorb truth automatically. They must be taught truth. There is a tendency within humanity to lash out when one has been injured by another person. The only way to overcome this tendency is through teaching and training. Therefore, in order to reverse the radicalization of the youth, Christians must engage in a massive teaching campaign.

- **Pastors.** According to Ephesians 4:11, the primary teacher within Christian community is the pastor. Therefore, pastors must use the pulpit to clearly and forcefully teach what Jesus taught about violence. They must identify radical members in their congregation and deal with their sin of violence like they deal with other sins where church discipline would be exercised.
- **Youth Leaders.** Most churches have youth leaders and youth programmes and a programme of Bible study. A special curriculum must be prepared for the Christian youth and this curriculum must be adopted and taught to all of the Christian youth in the Jos area. In addition, Martin Luther King Jr. demonstrated that teaching about violence was not enough. There must also be training that includes role playing of typical violence scenarios. It is only as Christian leaders take teaching of their youth seriously that they will begin to see some success.
- **Teachers.** Many churches and denominations have schools. Teachers in these schools must be used to teach forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. In addition, church leaders must be willing to work with the Ministry of Education at the state and federal levels to find ways to inject more peace content in the public school curriculum. (This will be addressed in more detail below.)

Radical Engagement

Our problems have become so severe that church leaders must consider engaging in radical solutions that may not be acceptable by all.

- Christian communities should make corporate restitution. Where Christian groups have burned mosques or Muslim homes, Christians who live in those communities should attempt to rebuild or restore what has been destroyed.
- Christians and Muslims should invite one another to their churches and mosques to extend the hand of friendship and forgiveness.
- As has been done in Egypt, Christians should offer to protect mosques in vulnerable areas from rogue Christians on Fridays.
- As has been done in South Africa, we should have public truth and reconciliation meetings, in which confession of both private and corporate wrong doing is publicly made and forgiveness is granted.

Courageous Modeling

Providing a positive example is best form of teaching. In addition, the best way to motivate someone to do something is through modeling that particular thing. Christian pastors and other Christian

leaders must be challenged to demonstrate positive examples of forgiveness and reconciliation and must be seen as peacemakers. If religious leaders are looking the other way when violence is taking place and privately complementing those who are defending Christianity with violence, this is sending a powerful message to the youth. However, if pastors are speaking words of peace and are actively engaged in radical peace making, that will send an equally powerful message to their youth.

Rev. Yakubu Pam is a good model of a Christian peace maker. After attending a UN peace workshop in New York, he was inspired to encourage peace in his community. In December 2009, he conducted a peace training workshop with Muslim youth near the Kwararafa Assemblies of God Church he pastored in a Muslim dominated area of central Jos. During the January 2010 crisis, when Muslim youth from another part of Jos came to burn his church, 23 of the young men he had trained surrounded his church and protected it. This kind of success encouraged Pam and helped to motivate him in creating the Young Ambassadors for Community Peace and Interfaith Foundation. This joint Christian/Muslim project works with youth to bring peace back to Jos. Since January 2010, Rev. Pam has done the following:

- Initiated eight peace rallies for Christian and Muslim youth in various volatile areas of Plateau State. These rallies have reached hundreds of youth with a peace message and have convinced many youth to abandon violence and embrace peace.
- Sponsored a football camp for Christian and Muslim youth. culminating in the Jos Peace Cup where a team of half Christians and half Muslims from Jos North played a similar team from Jos South.
- Trained a group of Christian and Muslim youth to monitor the 2011 elections.
- Created a centre where Muslims and Christians could come together in a neutral place to watch movies, play games and encourage desegregation.
- Engaged in advocacy for peace in Plateau at various levels of government.

It has not always been easy for Rev. Pam to do these things. Many of his fellow Christian clerics have viewed him with suspicion and have openly criticized him for working with Muslims. However, the results of Rev. Pam's efforts have been significant. Not only have many youth rejected violence but many have helped to stop violence in their communities and have become vocal and public advocates of peace.³⁰

There are many other things that Christian leaders can do. It will take this kind of strong Christian leadership to challenge other Christian leaders and Christian youth to move forward and make peace.

Government Responses

Political Sector

Government officials have the greatest responsibility in stopping violence and making peace because the most important duty of government is to insure the safety of its citizens. Therefore public officials must enact legislation, advocate for job creation schemes, support peace initiatives, and represent all of their constituents fairly. Political candidates must once and for all renounce violence and conduct their affairs in a transparent and honorable manner. The society must collectively renounce the endless cycle of contesting election results and demonstrate that good people can lose elections graciously. Politicians must be seen as proponents of peace and must be seen as being fair and objective in their statements. Without a strong commitment by government and government agents, there will be no lasting peace.

Legislatures must stop running away from the settler-indigene issue and address it in a way that it is brought to a satisfactory conclusion. In addition, where there are mixed ethnic and religious communities, the federal or state legislatures should consider some form of affirmative action in hiring policies to guarantee the rights of the minorities. Since the issues of religious and ethnic differences are not going to go away, law

²⁹ Interview with Nafisat Lawal on 23 September 2011 by Katrina Korb

³⁰ Interview with Rev. Yakubu Pam on 29 April 2011 by Danny McCain

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makers may also consider creating legislation that will require religion and ethnicity sensitivity training for workers before and during employment in both the public and private sectors.

Education Sector

There is no sector of government that has greater influence on society than the education sector. The Ministry of Education has access to students from the time they are five years old until they are adults. The way people think and act as adults is greatly shaped by those particular formative years.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education must make a deliberate effort to use its powerful resources and the years they have access to the youth to help instill attitudes of peaceful coexistence and respect for fundamental human rights. A special task force should be commissioned by the Ministry of Education to create additional content for various subject areas such as religious studies, social sciences and English language at multiple levels of primary and secondary schools so that in every school year, students are exposed to issues related to peace and reconciliation.³¹ The National Universities Commission and the National Coalition of Colleges of Education and other bodies responsible for tertiary education must accelerate work in peace education. for tertiary students. The Ministry of Education has the experts and the resources to develop and implement such programmes. They simply need the directives and funding from the highest level government officials to do it.

Fortunately, progress has already been made in this area. A good model of such a programme is the GST 222 - "Peace and Conflict Resolutions Studies" which was developed by the Center for Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies of the University of Jos in conjunction with the National Universities Commission. This course was developed in 2006 and is now a part of the general studies programme of the University of Jos which means that every student enrolled in a university degree programme is required to take the course. The course has also been recommended for all universities in Nigeria.³²

If education is the best tool for influencing future generations, why should we not use this tool massively to address the issues of violence and peace?

Security Sector

The security forces in Nigeria have been given a very difficult task in trying to restore peace to Plateau State and keeping the warring youth apart. The primary training of the police is to protect its citizens against robbers and other domestic criminals. The primary training of the army is to protect its citizens against foreign interventions. Therefore, in quelling internal civil conflict, the government has asked the security forces to step out of their traditional roles and do what they have not been adequately trained to do.

In light of reoccurring civil unrest in Nigeria, it is time to increase the training of the police forces and armed forces to deal more effectively with the kinds of civil unrest Jos and Maiduguri have experienced in recent years. The police academies and military schools must include more content related to such issues. If necessary, international experts must be brought in to better prepare the security forces to deal with such civil unrest.

In addition, the security forces need to improve their public relations skills. Both the army and police have suffered enormous public relations setbacks due to mistakes on the part of their personnel and unsubstantiated rumors. Every security officer is a human being and is capable of making mistakes. The public

³¹ My colleague, Dr. Katrina Korb of the Faculty of Education, University of Jos, and I have worked on such a curriculum and have had useful preliminary discussions with the Plateau State Ministry of Education.

³² See University of Jos General Studies Prospectus. The following is a partial description of the course: "This course is designed to expose students to Peace and Conflict Resolution as necessary ingredients in national development. Using case studies from within Nigeria, Africa and other parts of the world, the course aims at stimulating students' consciousness of desiring peace and working towards it at both the micro and macro levels of human existence, especially in their immediate societies." For a description of the NUC/UNIJS cooperation on this project see www.unijos.edu.ng/cecomps/?q=node/3

is willing to forgive football players who make mistakes that result in the lost of important games and hurt the image of the country in the international community. If the general public received honest explanations that acknowledge the mistakes that have been made, the Nigerian people will be forgiving and understanding and will have a greater appreciation and respect for those who put their lives on the line to provide security. The security forces need to approach public relations with the same degree of seriousness and commitment that they have approached their patrols in the street.

Justice Sector

The judiciary has also received a lot of criticism from the general public for their lack of prosecution of those arrested during these crises. Part of this is unwarranted because the judiciary must work under the legal rules of evidence and when such evidence is not available due to the "fog of war," the judiciary has no choice but to release detainees. However, the judiciary must be seen as doing more to bring about justice to those who have committed crimes. There needs to be a speedier process of conducting trials for suspects so that the public will be able to see a clear link between the crimes and the punishment. The lack of justice is one of the things that encourages the radicalization of the youth.

Another commonly held view that must be corrected is the idea that a crisis period is a free crime zone and that people can commit all kinds of crimes and they are somehow justified because what was done was during a crisis. Those who commit crimes, whether during a crisis or not, are criminals and must be treated as such. The judiciary with speedier and more aggressive prosecution will help to reduce that kind of thinking.

Those youth who have been detained for crimes during a crisis should be encouraged and, if possible, required to use their time in detention to learn more about mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. Movies, music, literature, lectures and entertainment that promote peace should be made available to those who are being detained. Also, small groups from opposing camps should be provided with opportunities to meet together for a supervised dialogue while in detention. Rather than allowing prison time to further radicalize those who have been arrested, prison officials should exercise their creativity and find ways to bring these warring parties together that will prepare them to contribute to the peace.

In addition, Nigeria should learn from other parts of Africa that are reviving certain traditional forms of punishment for criminal activity and traditional forms of reconciliation. For example, instead of detention (a western concept), restitution might be more beneficial because it allows for reconciliation. A traditional practice of reconciliation in Sierra Leone has proven beneficial. After the devastating war there, a concept known as Fambul Tok was re-introduced. The phrase literally means "family talk" in Krio, the *lingua franca* of Sierra Leone. This is a traditional practice of families or communities coming together to discuss and resolve problems. Participants can speak of their pain and loss during the conflict and can seek and grant forgiveness. This is often done around a bonfire. After such a ceremony, the communities will follow up with visits and joint work projects. This kind of traditional justice and reconciliation has helped to restore normality to Sierra Leone.³³

Industry Responses

One of the biggest problems in Nigeria is unemployment. A huge percentage of the youth, even those having a tertiary education, are unemployed. An unemployed young person is a threat to the peace of the nation because he or she is much more likely to engage in violence than someone who has a job. Therefore, one of the best things industry can do for the community peace is to find ways to employ more of the restive youth. An employed youth is a contributor to society in many ways, including an advocate to stop violence.

³³ See Ishmael Beah, John Caulker, Sara Terry, Libby Hoffman, Benedict Sannoh, *Fambul Tok*, An Unabridge Editions Book, New York, 2011. Also see "Reconciliation and Traditional Justice: Learning from Africa's Experiences," a project report of a workshop sponsored by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in Pretoria 26-27 September 2006. This report provides several models of traditional justice from different parts of Africa. http://www.idea.int/conflict/upload/TJM_Pretoria_Workshop_Report_Final.pdf

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Employers have an enormous amount of influence over their employees. They control their lives for an average of eight hours a day, at least five days a week. Therefore, employers should consider implementing a wide range of activities that would foster peace.

- Integrate the work force so that there is no ethnic or religious segregation on the job.
- Require pre-employment peace orientation and monthly peace meetings.
- Include peace messages on products and facilities where possible.
- Give awards and recognition to those who are peacemakers.
- Fund appropriate community peace initiatives.

Nearly all of the professions, such as physicians, lawyers, architects, engineers, accountants and others have professional organizations that support their professions. These professional organizations are made up of well-educated, intelligent and experienced people. Each of those organizations should create a committee that would brainstorm ways that their organizations and professions can make a contribution to the community peace efforts. Peace is a benefit to everyone, including the professions.

Community Responses

Everyone in Plateau State lives in some community. Most communities have various types of community leaders, including traditional leaders. Several communities have organized vigilante groups to help protect their communities during times of crises. Those community leaders who have organized vigilante groups should use their same influence and organizational ability to bring together the various individuals and groups within the community to advocate for peace.

- **Traditional rulers** should be the leaders in peacemaking because they serve all the people in a particular community. They must use their enormous influence to promote peace and must be held responsible for violence that originates in their communities.
- **Women's groups** have abilities that are greatly underestimated in most communities. Some of the most significant peace work in Africa have been done by women's groups. A motivated woman is powerful force for good. Interestingly the most recent recipients of the coveted Nobel Peace prize were three women, two from Liberia. One of those women, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, is the president of Liberia.³⁴
- **Youth groups** have the most to lose in any conflict. Just as some have been radicalized as trouble makers, many others have been and can be radicalized for peace making. Communities must work hard to encourage the youth to embrace peace.
- **Market coalitions and unions** have a great motivation to have peace in the community because without it, they cannot conduct business. Such organizations should be challenged to find ways to promote peace and reconciliation.

One thing that encourages ethnic and religious clashes is the growing segregation with the Jos communities. Where there is segregation, there no longer exists the natural ways of dealing with suspicions and rumors. Therefore, even the most ridiculous rumor can take a life of its own and create tension and spark violence. Thus, there must be a deliberate effort on the part of the communities to re-integrate.

- Our communities need to re-integrate their schools.
- Our communities need to re-integrate their markets.
- Our communities need to re-integrate their celebrations.
- Our communities need to re-integrate their sports activities.

³⁴ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 October 2011. The article begins: "Leymah Gbowee confronted armed forces in Liberia to demand that they stop using rape as a weapon. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became Africa's first woman to win a free presidential election. Tawakkul Karman began pushing for change in Yemen long before the Arab Spring. They share a commitment to women's rights in regions where oppression is common, and on Friday they shared the Nobel Peace Prize." <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/world/52691975-68/women-peace-prize-liberia.html.csp>.

Media Responses

The media is the voice of the community. Mass media was used in Rwanda to stir up the Hutus who controlled the media against the Tutsis and genocide was the result. Media, on the other hand, can be a powerful voice for forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. I do not believe that the public media was misused too much during the various Jos crises. There were few if any provocative statements that were allowed on the TV or radio. However, the social media, particularly the use of text messaging has had a devastating effect in spreading rumors and stirring up passions. In addition, the "Comments" after on-line articles related to controversial subjects and facebook groups clearly demonstrate the different positions and illustrate the vitriol that each side has for the other. Obviously there have been hundreds of positive editorials and articles written that have encouraged peace and reconciliation. Such thoughtful articles are all to be commended and continued. However, editors of online newspapers must be more careful to remove posts that are purely inciting and provide no useful point in the discussion. I must also point out that the social media has also been used very powerfully to calm fears, call for prayer and promote peace.³⁵

Radio stations tend to be almost silent during crises and often only broadcast the official government communications. Radio managers should not ignore a crisis while it is ongoing. Well trained specialists from both communities need to be available in all media houses to try to calm down the situation during times of tension. Experts must be available to screen and edit public proclamations. Hotlines should be created where concerned citizens can call and get accurate information.

The entertainment media, and particular the movie industry is one of the most influential sectors of society. Writers and directors of movies should be encouraged to write and produce movies that will contribute to the peace making in and around Jos. Even the process of movie making can contribute to peace making by integrating the staff and actors and demonstrating peaceful co-existence in the communities where movies are being made.

Many Nigerian musicians have written peace songs. One of the most impressive efforts is the Neighbor to Neighbor project called "Song for Peace" which was written by Steve Gukas and produced by Wole Oni and Jeremiah Gyang and performed by many of Nigerians top artists.³⁶ This is an excellent strategy because most of those youth who are tempted to become radicalized listen to popular music. Youth listen to popular songs so much they memorize them. Reminding the youth of peace through the music they listen to and sing is a powerful step toward peace. In addition, music concerts often transcend ethnic and religious divides and help to break down stereotypes and create unity and acceptance.³⁷

Media is a regular part of our lives. Those responsible for the many forms of media must be convinced to use their vast resources and influence in this battle for peace.

NGO Responses

There are at least 11 non-governmental agencies who are part of the Plateau State Peace Network. All of these are engaged in peace making efforts in Plateau State. The most common activities include dialogue, training, peace education, economic empowerment, religious instruction and sports.³⁸ Interestingly, eight of the eleven are inter-faith agencies. Although there is a bit of overlap between them, each was created to address a particular need and each has developed a certain specialty. These agencies must continue to work together to insure that there is limited overlap and the greatest possible mutual support. They should freely

³⁵ Rev. Gideon Para-Mallam of Jos has been one of the most effective in using this text messages for peace. His text messages have consistently called for prayer, for forgiveness and tolerance and rejected violence.

³⁶ See YouTube. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRGXMJuTXzs&feature=player_embedded

³⁷ For a description of the power of music concerts to bring people together, see Carmen McCain "From Kano to Lagos, all for a concert" in *Weekly Trust*, 13 August 2011. http://weekly.dailytrust.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6831:from-kano-to-lagos-all-for-a-concert&catid=57:my-thoughts-exactly&Itemid=154

³⁸ The number in parenthesis tells the number of the organizations that are targeting the following groups: Youth (10); Community Leaders (10); Women (9); Religious Leaders (8); Traditional Rulers (7); Children (6).

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share their expertise, their resource persons and even their experiences in raising funds and working through government red tape. Government, the religious leaders and community leaders should provide maximum support and encouragement for these peace making NGOs.

Islamic Responses

The American proverb says, “It takes two to tango.” Christian youth have not become radicalized without some provocation. There is little benefit in trying to determine who threw the first stone in various conflicts. The truth is that the radicalization of the Plateau youth, both Christian and Muslim, feed on each other’s violence. It is to the advantage of both that the other side reverses its slide into extremism. Therefore Muslim clerics and Hausa/Fulani community leaders could help to de-radicalize Christian youth by doing the following:

- Teach Muslim youth against violence and provocative behavior.
- Warn Muslim extremists that lawbreakers will not be protected or defended.
- Encourage Muslims to reduce the negative rhetoric and inciting language.
- Reach out to Christian counterparts for dialogue and cooperation.
- Separate yourself publicly from all violent forms of violence within Islam.

An East African proverb says “It takes a village to raise a child.” I believe that, in a similar way, it will take the whole community, both Christians and Muslims to reduce the tension and reverse the radicalizing tendencies of the youth, both Christian and Muslim.

Conclusion

The radicalization of the Christian youth did not occur in a vacuum. Parents, Christian leaders, community leaders, educational leaders, and government all bear some responsibility for what we have allowed our youth to become. Therefore, all those who have contributed through bad examples, poor teaching or neglect must also share some of the responsibility to help reverse the radicalization of the Christian youth. This is not an impossible task.

Rwanda had descended into a far worse crisis than what Nigeria has experienced so far. One ethnic group had become radicalized at one point that many in that group tried hard to exterminate a rival ethnic group. And yet 17 years after that genocide, Rwanda has almost fully recovered. It is one of the cleanest, safest and most peaceful nations in Africa today. How did this happen? It happened because leaders took responsibility and implemented some of the methods I have described in this paper. And that strong leadership has led to success.

Augustine Davou actively participated in the battles against the Angwan Rogo Muslims during the November 2008 crisis. However, as a result of the Jos North football camp and the Jos Peace Cup activities, he renounced violence and has become an ambassador for peace. When the Christmas Eve bombings took place in Gada Biyu, he was in the vicinity. However, rather than joining in the retaliation attacks, he appealed to several of his friends not to retaliate: “Let’s think of tomorrow . . . If you see your friend outside holding a weapon, maybe a stick or a machete, call him and talk to him. Just try to let him know that violence can never solve any problem.”³⁹ His voice of friendship and reason has motivated some of his friends to also reject violence. Augustine is a former Jos fighter who has embraced peace and become a model for the militant Christian youth in Plateau State to overcome their extremism, radicalization and militancy.

The Christian youth have gone far down the road of violence and radicalization. However, the situation is not without hope. As I have illustrated there are pinpoints of hope on the plateau. With commitment, hard work and patience, the radicalized youth will respond and once again become productive

³⁹ Interview with Augustine Davou on 5 January 2011 by Katrina Korb

and peaceful citizens of a prosperous and re-integrated Plateau State. And when Plateau State solves her ethnic-religious problems, she will have a powerful testimony and be a beacon of hope for other troubled communities.