



# Friends Peace Teams Peace Ways

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*Partners in Peace...*

## Adrien Niyongabo: Burundian Quaker Peacemaker

*By Elin Henrysson of Quaker Peace & Social Witness*

Adrien Niyongabo was born in 1972, the year of one of the worst mass killings in modern Burundian history. Tens of thousands of educated Hutus were killed by extremists within the ruling Tutsi party. Adrien's life was to become centered on healing the deep wounds wrought by this ongoing conflict.

Adrien's childhood was challenging but wrapped in the warmth of community. Older children cared for younger children when parents went to work in the fields; at the end of the day, all the children were fed by the first parent who came home. It was a time of three meals a day and running naked through tropical rains.

At the age of seven, Adrien's parents separated and his mother raised him and his siblings on her own. Although she supported her family on just the income from her small piece of land, she prioritized the education of her children. The community came alongside her in this effort and she was able to put all her children through primary school. Adrien also completed secondary school. He has never forgotten his mother's self-sacrifice and the community's commitment to supporting her. This is where he began to learn compassion – the ability to be present in someone else's struggle and suffering.

In 1993, Adrien began attending university in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi. This was the year the first democratically elected Hutu president was killed. His assassination kicked off an ethnically charged civil war, termed "the crisis," that was to last 13 years. In 1995 the conflict reached Adrien's



university, resulting in a massacre of students. This war forced him to end his studies. During the next eight years, he lived in the fear that gripped his country. The tight-knit community that Adrien remembers from his childhood was split along ethnic lines and Adrien fled, along with other Hutus, from areas controlled and protected by the Tutsi-dominated military.

Adrien is an example of the arbitrary classification system of ethnic groups in Burundi. Although he's Hutu, he stands tall and lean, characteristics generally associated with the Tutsi ethnic group. During the crisis this was more than an inconvenient anomaly – it was dangerous. He remembers fleeing with other Hutus past a checkpoint. The militiamen pulled him out, told him that he was a Tutsi spy and asked him to wait for his execution. As he

stood, preparing for death, someone in the passing crowd recognized him and said to the militiamen, "This man is not a Tutsi. I know him. He is Hutu." They were eventually convinced to let him go. In that moment, he felt God had given him life again. This was not the only time his life was threatened because of his appearance, and each time he escaped unharmed, he grew more determined to help people come out of the confusion of ethnic violence.

In the context of this fear and brutality, life continued. Adrien fell in love with Odette Nahayo. They married and had four children.

*Adrien...continued on page 2*

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## From the Editor

This issue of *PeaceWays* focuses on some special people and organizations—Friends Peace Teams’ partners in peace work, both inside and outside Friends Peace Teams. How do we find new partners? We go to places in the world that have experienced high, even extreme levels of violence and meet groups, organizations, or individuals who live in those areas and are looking for a way out of violence.

Who are those people? Particularly in Africa, they are often members of the Society of Friends. In Indonesia, they are both Muslims and Christians. In the Americas, they may belong to various Christian groups. They do not necessarily belong to any organized religion.

Our partners include individuals of all sorts: women and men, old and young, people from opposite sides of conflicts, victims and perpetrators

of violence. (Often, people are both victims and perpetrators.)

Our basic programs—the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) and community-based trauma-healing workshops build relationships and explore peacebuilding concepts. All of our programs, following Friends’ belief and practice, seek and find “that of God in everyone.” They are designed to draw on all of our inner resources and wisdom together. The participants, including FPT members, step out of the boxes of victim, perpetrator, and rescuer.

Some local participants go on to become facilitators and leaders, carrying on peacebuilding programs. Additional programs such as election observing in Africa and developmental play in Indonesia are created cooperatively depending on local needs. Friends Peace Teams seeks to establish long-term relationships and continue to work with our remarkable partners as they carry out their peacebuilding.

*Caroline Lanker*

### Friends Peace Teams

Friends Peace Teams (FPT) is a Spirit-led organization working around the world to develop long-term relationships with communities in conflict to create programs for peacebuilding, healing and reconciliation. FPT’s programs build on extensive Quaker experience combining practical and spiritual aspects of conflict resolution.

1001 Park Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63104-3720  
USA

314-588-1122  
[office@friendspeaceteams.org](mailto:office@friendspeaceteams.org)  
[www.friendspeaceteams.org](http://www.friendspeaceteams.org)

*PeaceWays* Editorial Team:  
Editors: Caroline Lanker and Sharon Hoover  
Proofreader: Ann Walton Sieber

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**Adrien...***continued from page 1*

Adrien was raised Catholic and even contemplated priesthood in secondary school, but Odette was part of the Quaker Church in Burundi. Through her, he learned about the principles of non-violence, about the presence of God in all people, and about the movement of the Spirit. These resonated deeply in his heart and when they married, he joined the Quaker church. He and Odette were very active in the Quaker community and it was here that he became involved in healing the broken tissue in Burundian communities.

In 1999, the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) supported Adrien for a three-months’ training in trauma healing in Capetown, South Africa. In 2003, in Rwanda

he led a one-month trauma-healing training and spent four months with other Quakers developing a community-based trauma-healing curriculum. The result was a three-day workshop that brings together participants from both sides of a conflict to learn about trauma, to share their stories, and begin to restore relationships. After the first 25 successful workshops in Rwanda, Adrien returned to Burundi to set up Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities and to begin running workshops there.

Adrien has a quiet charisma that commands a room, but more than that – he is exceptionally skilled at establishing a space of trust, at leading participants through sensitive topics with gentleness and humor, and at drawing out participants’ inner strength. When he listens, he turns his body toward the person and focuses his entire energy on waiting for a story to emerge. His eyes follow the ebb and flow of the narrative, giving the speaker strength to continue and assurance of understanding. He creates a presence of holiness around the person that honors the experience and implicitly asks others to respect it.

The crisis in Burundi officially ended in 2005, and the last rebel group signed a peace agreement in 2008. But the process of healing is far from complete. Adrien continues to lead the work of Healing and Rebuilding our Communities. He also continues his own healing and rebuilding following the loss of his wife in 2009 and his mother in 2011. It is by drawing from the wells of his own experiences that he continues to come alongside grassroots communities with wisdom and compassion.

**African Great Lakes Initiative**  
[dave@aglifpt.org](mailto:dave@aglifpt.org)  
[www.aglifpt.org](http://www.aglifpt.org)

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## How Does “Way Open”?

By Val Liveoak, Coordinator of Peacebuilding en Las Américas

In following our leadings, in addition to corporate discernment—“clearness”—Friends sometimes look for signs of opportunities to carry out the leading, which may come from God. When we perceive these signs, we say, “Way opened.” These signs may be subtle or dramatic, synchronistic or providential, and may appear to some as accidental or random.

In Honduras, way opened rather clearly and markedly. In early September, 2009, I traveled to Honduras with a Costa Rican human rights delegation to see how the June coup was affecting Hondurans. (The story of how I was able to join that delegation is in itself an account of way opening, but one for another time.)

A companion and I were designated to travel from the Honduran capital, Tegucigalpa, to San Pedro Sula, the country’s second largest city, to interview members of the National Resistance Front who were holding daily protests, as were others throughout the country, which were being violently suppressed by the coup government.

We arrived in San Pedro after dark, having stopped in an intermediate city to interview protesters there, and without having a direct communication with the person who had been pre-arranged to host us. When we still could not contact him, we stood in the bus terminal in a quandary about our next steps, not having planned an alternative for lodging. We called the person who had made our arrangements, and she gave us the number of another member of the Resistance, Nelly del Cid. After a phone call, Nelly picked us up, took us to her house, fed and put us up, and transported us to a number of meetings with

various Resistance groups the next day, showing hospitality and trust such as we had received from other members of the Resistance. In a breakfast conversation, each of us talked a little about what we did. Nelly spoke about the *Misericordia Tejedoras de Sueños* (Mercy Dream Weavers), my companion about his life in Costa Rica, and I about Peacebuilding *en las Américas* (PLA) and the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). When Nelly heard this, she said, “That’s just what we need! Can you lead an AVP workshop for us at our spring retreat?” I was equally excited about the opportunity to begin AVP in Honduras.



Val Liveoak with an AVP group in Honduras

As described in her article, “AVP in Honduras” on page 7, Nelly and *Tejedoras de Sueños* have become exemplary partners for PLA in Honduras, doing a workshop nearly each month and also having facilitator meetings and other kinds of outreach for AVP. More recently, they have also been holding workshops in Community-Based Trauma Healing. I am not inclined to consider our meeting as a random event, but rather to see at least a synchronicity of events leading to a partnership. As Quakers say, “way opened.”

Peacebuilding en Las Américas  
PLA@friendspeacetams.org

## Asia West Pacific Initiative!

The Indonesia Initiative of Friends Peace Teams (FPT) is expanding its mission and becoming the Asia West Pacific Initiative. The expansion was approved by the FPT Council in its monthly conference call on February 21, 2012.

This exciting development began with contacts between Friends Peace Teams and individual Friends in the Asia West Pacific region—in the Philippines, Korea, Singapore, New Zealand, and Australia—over the past few years. One of those Friends is Peter Watson, a woodworker from Aotearoa/New Zealand. Peter has already been assisting a facility in Indonesia that is making childrens’ blocks for preschools, in conjunction with FPT developmental play training. (See also “Peacebuilders in Indonesia” on pages 4-5.)

In April 2011, Nadine Hoover was a guest at the Friends World Committee for Consultation, Asia West Pacific Section (FWCC-AWPS) gathering in the Philippines. Following that meeting, Valerie Joy, Secretary of FWCC-AWPS, was instrumental in arranging for Nadine to attend Australia Yearly Meeting in Perth in January, 2012.

Numerous Australian Friends expressed an interest in participating in Friends Peace Teams in Asia. John Michaelis offered to be co-coordinator of the expanded initiative with Nadine. The working group for the Indonesia Initiative subsequently recommended the formation of the Asia West Pacific Initiative to the FPT council. ■

## Peacebuilders in Indonesia

By Nadine Hoover, co-coordinator of Asia West Pacific Initiative

Peacebuilding in Indonesia spreads through the partnerships among Friends Peace Teams and Indonesian peacebuilders. Most of the Indonesians carry on peace work where they live, as they can, while leading busy lives, supporting themselves and their families.

### North Sumatra:

Friends Peace Teams (FPT) has worked in Barak Induk, North Sumatra, since 2005 with people displaced from Aceh by war. Regular visits by FPT members have helped prevent loggers and oil palm plantations from running them out once again.

**Mislan** and **Ida** are the backbone of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) and developmental play in North Sumatra. They opened Tunas Baru (New Sprouts) Preschool, sharing all they learn with other small schools in the mountains around them. Mislan is pursuing a degree in early childhood development. Their whole family supports FPT!

A recent story from North Sumatra illustrates the value the people there place on the support from FPT. When Nadine Hoover offered to facilitate a training session for teachers in February 2012, she was asked how many participants there could be. She jokingly said, "You know me, three to three hundred," knowing that all our trainings are limited to 24 participants. When the FPT group arrived, there were 230 women gathered! They



*Mislan and family: Mislan is in the center of the front row, along with his grandchild, Dimas. His wife, Ida, is on his right. FPT members: Autumn Star, far left, and Nadine Hoover, back. Mislan and Ida's son Edo and daughter Vera are also in the front row. Vera's husband Gino stands behind her and daughter Dita and her husband Jun, are in the back left.*

divided the participants into 23 groups of ten and proceeded to conduct an AVP-style workshop in spite of the numbers. The participants were thrilled and grateful!

### Central Java:

The **Society of Health, Education, Environment and Peace (SHEEP)** is an Indonesian non-governmental organization (see [www.sheepindonesia.org](http://www.sheepindonesia.org)). The members of SHEEP are from Jogjakarta and Pati (mostly Mennonite connections). FPT member Nick Rozard is currently working at SHEEP in **Jogjakarta** with **Andreas** and **Rina** to develop ceramic water filters that can be produced and used in Indonesia. (See *PeaceWays* Spring 2010 "Silver-Treated Ceramic Water Filters.") Working pre-production prototypes are scheduled to be available for testing in May 2012. SHEEP member **Petrus** was assigned to Aceh after the 2004 tsunami and worked with Nadine Hoover there. He was one of the



*Participants in an AVP-style training in Stabat, N. Sumatra, February 2012*

people who first recognized the critical need for clean drinking water that prompted the water filter project. Later, he was working in the SHEEP offices in Jogjakarta, but his home and family were in **Pati**, a five-hour drive away. His wife, **Nanik**, teaches English to children. AVP training was invaluable for Nanik at home and at work. Petrus and Nanik are now building a base in Pati, called **Peace Place**, with space to hold workshops. Petrus saved and invested in a plot of land; men from a Javanese, animistic village moved a traditional Indonesian house to the location. Peace Place is a rare public space that welcomes both Christians and Muslims to work and play together.

Training in AVP and developmental play was first held in Pati in October 2008 with assistance from FPT member Sarah Rozard and **Ferrizal**, the FPT coordinator in Aceh. Nadine Hoover has returned each year to continue support.

The photo below shows AVP facilitators at Peace Place. **Ririn** is second from left in the back row and **Mislan** is cradling the baby doll in the front row. Both traveled from North Sumatra to Java to help facilitate the training for facilitators in 2011. FPT members are Dean and Sharon Hoover near the middle of the back row, Nadine Hoover on the far right back and Sarah Rozard, second from the right in the second row. The dolls were sewn and the books collected by members of the Alfred, NY, community. They were used in the training for developmental play and given to Indonesian participants.



*Friends Peace Teams visits Tondomulyo: Nadine Hoover and Peter Watson are in the back row, in front of the Tondomulyo school. Sunadi is in the right back row and Zumrotun is holding Aghus, standing beside Nanik on the left front row. Between Nadine and Peter is Siti Masrurroh, a preschool teacher and to Nadine's right is Hani Malihatin, a preschool teacher. On the far left front is Amat Saifudin, head of the elementary school.*

Two of the participants in the 2011 training were a married couple, **Sunadi** and **Zumrotun**, with their small son, **Aghus**, from the village of **Tondomulyo**, not far from Pati. After returning home, they committed to becoming lead facilitators and started a preschool in their home. Zumrotun tells about it in "My Name is Zumrotun" on page 6. The level of violence in their community has dramatically reduced.



Sunadi and Zumrotun invited Nadine Hoover and Peter Watson to visit Tondomulyo and see the preschool on their trip to Indonesia in January 2012. There, as Nadine relates, "The village head had become a deeply conservative, militant Muslim, but to all of our surprise, he welcomed us, asking for our prayers, 'each according to our own faith,' as he was seriously ill." This incident represents one astonishing and welcome result of a long train of events involving Friends Peace Teams and its partners in Indonesia.

*Asia West Pacific Initiative  
Indonesia@  
friendspeaceteams.org*

*Partners in Peace...*

## **My Name is Zumrotun**

By my side, in the picture below, is my husband, whose name is Sunadi. We live in the village of Tondomulyo, Pati District, Indonesia. I am 31 years old and my husband is 37 years old. Right now we live together with our father, mother and two children, Aghus and Zainuddin, so there are six of us in the house.

*Children playing with blocks.*



*To the left is our son, Aghus, with Faril and Rizki in the background playing in the nature center. They have such a great time there for hours and hours! We feel very happy when we see our child playing, comfortably, in line with his development, without any fear.*

On a daily basis, I usually take care of the house and my husband works as a farmer. We came up with the idea of making a kindergarten or preschool after we attended the Alternatives to Violence Project workshop with Ms. Nadine and saw the children who have often experienced violence, both in formal education (at school) and in their living environments. We tried to combine playing and learning, while incorporating ways of living without violence.

We were determined to make the preschool using whatever we had, so we turned a former cow stall behind the house into a place to play, which is very simple indeed, but we are very happy there and children apparently also like it and feel very comfortable there.

Thank you Friends Peace Teams and Ms. Nadine for your support in getting the blocks and for all the help that was given to us. We always appreciate the accompaniment and support that comes with Ms. Nadine. We cannot repay with anything. We

*Salwa and Dava playing house.*



can only express our gratitude and send you our prayers. We hope that Ms. Nadine is given good health and a long life and blessings on all of us, so that we will meet again and build peace together. Amen.

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## Partners in Peace...

# AVP in Honduras

By Nelly del Cid of Mercy Dream Weavers

The Mercy Dream Weaver Program was born after Hurricane Mitch, in 1998. For the Honduran people, women in particular, this period was a time of extreme distress and insecurity.

The Religious Sisters of Mercy, seeking to work in ways that reflect their commitment to Gospel values, feel led to commit their lives and their resources to act in solidarity with impoverished people, especially women. So, the Sisters founded Mercy Dream Weavers (*Misericordia Tejedoras de Sueños*) to work with women living in the slums in San Pedro Sula. They wished to empower the women in the exercise of their rights and to strengthen their spirituality.

Other programs responded to some of the basic and strategic needs of women in the neighborhoods where the Mercy Dream Weavers worked, but they realized that there was something that was actually increasing faster than they could respond to it—violence.

In many neighborhoods, youth gang violence began to be a major problem. Honduras is a country of young people—38 percent of Hondurans are between 12 and 30 years old—and the State has failed to meet youths' needs. The government of Ricardo Maduro (2002 to 2006) adopted a reform law that punishes leaders of youth gangs for "conspiracy." The sentence carries up to 30 years imprisonment. This measure criminalized youth. Violence increased.

This spiral of violence reached a climax with the coup that the corrupt political class [oligarchs] and the military perpetrated upon the Honduran people on June 28, 2009. Never before had Hondurans experienced widespread physical violence. Never before had they collectively felt the anger and outrage aroused by so many abuses. Never before had they experienced inexplicable collective pain for each brother or sister who was murdered, tortured, or raped.

In this context of extreme violence, the Mercy Dream Weavers came upon the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) and Val Liveoak, who was part of a delegation of solidarity with the Honduran people. In February 2010, the first AVP workshop was held. There have been 21 workshops to date. It was clear to us at Mercy Dream Weavers that more than ever, we needed to strengthen the spirituality

of nonviolence; we had principles but lacked the tools to work with groups.

AVP has allowed the healing process to begin, especially among women who value the opportunity to work on themselves. They have learned to recognize the parts they play in the violence they suffer and to see the ways their participation in the violence damages themselves and others. Many of them have shared their testimony that, "*With AVP I've learned a lot about myself, especially qualities that I had not seen.*" "*I'm learning to trust myself, to feel more secure and above all not to judge others.*"



*A meeting with family members of murdered women. Nelly del Cid is in the center, gesturing.*

As women who have participated in the workshops, we at Mercy Dream Weavers feel a strong commitment to bring AVP to more people. As one of the participants said, "*There are many people who do not know how to act, do not know how to give and ask for forgiveness or to ask for things in a good way. We make use of violence even in small things. That is why there is so much violence.*"

In Honduras, there are many injustices that generate violence. We consider ourselves to live in the midst of a culture of death that seeks to reaffirm the "right" of the powerful to decide the conditions of life for the powerless majority. Mercy Dream Weavers wants to offer AVP to the majority of people to build a culture of nonviolence founded on justice and a commitment to life.

AVP gives people the opportunity to dismantle violent practices, including some that can appear in the struggle for justice. AVP helps people see with new eyes, to wear special glasses, to transform the basis of power, so in spite of the culture of death imposed on the people, they can work towards a better life for individuals and for the community. ■

## Friends Peace Teams

# PeaceWays

1001 Park Ave.  
Saint Louis, MO 63104-3720  
USA



*Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) workshops in Honduras: left, an AVP Advanced group in El Progreso, Yoro; right an AVP Basic workshop in the community of Reyes Caballero in Lima, Cortés. Friends Peace Teams partner Mercy Dream Weavers (Misericordia Tejedoras de Sueños) uses the AVP training it received from FPT in its work to reduce violence and continues to conduct AVP training in Honduras. See story on page 7.*

Please contribute to the Friends Peace Teams initiatives and to the general fund. Undesignated donations to FPT go to the general fund to provide shared administrative support, publish PeaceWays, and maintain the website. Checks should be made out to "Friends Peace Teams" and mailed to the address at right. Donations can also be made online at [www.friendspeaceteams.org](http://www.friendspeaceteams.org).

Friends Peace Teams  
1001 Park Ave.  
Saint Louis, MO 63104 USA  
314-588-1122  
[office@friendspeaceteams.org](mailto:office@friendspeaceteams.org)