

Greetings, All!

I wanted to share a classic "USIP moment" I experienced recently. With colleagues in Doha, I led a group of a dozen students last week on a study trip to Rwanda, where we met with representatives from government and civil society about their efforts to adjudicate genocide crimes, rehabilitate the genocidaire, memorialize atrocities, and promote dialogue and reconciliation. This is part of a non-credit course I run with a colleague on "Zones of Conflict, Zones of Peace" about peacemaking and conflict resolution in divided societies. It was an intense and memorable trip, punctuated by gut-wrenching stories from survivors, jarring visits to the gruesome memorials, and hopeful signs of ongoing peacemaking efforts--all amidst the lush, rolling hills of the countryside. (What a contrast from the desert!)

As part of the agenda, we visited one of the gacaca proceedings, the genocide courts that were developed and formalized from indigenous dispute resolution practices. I drove up to the small courtroom in Kigali ahead of our contingent to scope out the arrangements. I was greeted by our hosts and immediately introduced to the only other obvious foreigner in the group. He turned out to be Mark Geraghty, one of the 2007-2008 Peace Scholars. Mark continued his work in Kigali after the USIP fellowship, now under a National Science Foundation grant.

He was there to observe the same court proceeding (one of scores he has observed during his time in Rwanda). He agreed to join our group later during an evening "debrief" session where we reviewed the day's activities with the students. Drawing from his deep ethnographic skills and experience, he provided an independent assessment of the gacaca process from the point of view of participants and "average" Rwandans. His comments were a perfect complement to the presentations we heard from officials earlier in the trip. This provided a stimulating exchange among students about the challenges of meting out justice under difficult circumstances.

Anyway, he made USIP proud that evening. I can highly recommend him as someone to bring to Washington next time you need a Rwanda specialist or for work on transitional justice issues.

I expect you are staring at stacks of Peace Scholar applications about now. The experience with Mark reminded me again just how important that program is!

Take care,

John T. Crist  
Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs

School of Foreign Service in Qatar, Georgetown University