



## Podcast 20: Challenging hope: surviving conflict, building peace

Munyurangabo Benda, Oded Adomi Leshem and Emma Pavey

Transcript by Otter

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Speakers:

Munyurangabo Benda, Oded Adomi Leshem, Emma Pavey

Emma Pavey 00:05

Hello again.

Munyurangabo Benda 00:07

Hi.

Emma Pavey 00:07

I hope you are both well.

Munyurangabo Benda 00:10

We are. We hope you are well as well. Hi Benda, good to see you. Good to see you, Oded I am speaking to you actually from Copenhagen,

Emma Pavey 00:21

Right.

Oded Adomi Leshem 00:22

Nice.

Emma Pavey 00:22

Thanks for making the time to do this. I think our conversation in the conference was excellent and short, and so I'm hoping that we can dig a little deeper into some of the things that we were talking about. So this is a little bit of a different podcast. We're going to encourage people to have a look at your YouTube videos from our conference of the presentations that you gave, so that they can get an overview of what you said there before listening to this podcast. But nonetheless, I think it would be helpful if you could both give just a brief introduction of yourselves. If that's okay. Oded you want to go first?



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Oded Adomi Leshem 00:59

Yeah, thanks. So my name is Oded Adomi Leshem. I'm a Senior Research Associate at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I'm a political psychologist. That means that I'm studying the psychological regions of political processes and political phenomena. And for the last decade, I've been really interested in this idea of hope, both as a philosophical idea, as a psychological construct, but mainly as a political and social phenomenon.

Emma Pavey 01:31

Thank you. And Benda,

Munyurangabo Benda 01:33

I'm Benda, Munyurangabo. I think I identify as a philosopher of religion and politics, although I can also be known as a theologian, I teach Black Theology and ethics at the Queen's foundation in Birmingham, but I also specialize in researching post conflict, especially researching the post or the aftermath of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

Emma Pavey 02:09

Thank you. So welcome to both of you. So what strikes me is that you both work in and out of conflict situations, so that's, in a sense, the overlap, although there's a lot of distinctives in the way that you approach that which will be interesting to explore. There's a part of a poem that I just wanted to read by Naomi Shihab Nye. 'Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside, you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing. You must wake up with sorrow. You must speak to it, till your voice catches the thread of all sorrows and you see the size of the cloth, then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore'. What I'm wondering that's about kindness and sorrow is if there's a parallel with hope and despair or hope and conflict situations. So if the hope that you get arising out of conflict is, has a quality that is different or distinctive.

Munyurangabo Benda 03:10

Do you want to go first, Benda? I think, I think so. I think from the presentation I made at the conference, you get the feeling that I was trying to in so many ways, it almost felt as if I was focusing on the despair of conflict. But actually, I was trying



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to say that to live through this sort of conflict, I mean, this sort of desperate, life-threatening on a sort of second [by second] basis, situation requires a different kind of hope. And when you have felt that profound level of despair, and when you have seen it, I think, in other people's eyes, the people who were in the same situation as, as you and as you think, as you think, of the mechanisms that made you survive from one second to the next, from one day to the next, and the sort of desperate hope or clinging to, to life, hoping that there's going to be the next second, not necessarily the next year or the next month, not that there is going to be a project, or that just life will endure in the next second is, it's a tremendous view or understanding of what hope is, is which is absolutely not a romantic thing, which is not any sort of rosy or green pastures beyond that the fact that life will endure. And I think, what, what your question, when I was listening to your question, I was thinking, it's when you have really contemplated that sort of despair and you see, maybe other people living through that kind of situation, there is something that it's almost like a spiritual communication. There's something that goes from you that says, Look, I lived through what I lived through. I want to believe. And I know you sort of almost know the extent to which our resilience, the resolution of life, can stretch to face desperate situation. So, yeah, it's a different kind of hope. It is. It's a hope born of resilience, and I think born of hope beyond hope, like, like in Romans, I think, you know. When you reach the limits of hope, and then you you hope beyond and it's, yeah, it's unique in in that respect, and you need it. I'm waffling on, but I think, and you when you see desperate situations, then you have something to draw on, and something that maybe allows you to think, to pray, to, to be in communion with people who are going through the same situation. Oded.

Oded Adomi Leshem 06:37

Yeah, so I think, you know, I could answer this question. I love the poem, by the way. It's very beautiful, and I totally agree that there is a very strong connection between despair and hope. And we could look at it in two ways. First of all, you know more philosophically, the idea that hope comes with, comes from pain and is originated by suffering. Is something you know. Erich Fromm talked about it a lot, and others have talked about it as well. And it and it makes sense, you know. When, when we're, when we feel good about ourselves, we're in a good situation, the future is, you know, is full of prospects, then hope is, you know, marginally, it's when a situation is bad and everything looks like it's falling apart and the future



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is unknown and we're in bleak situation. Then suddenly, hope becomes relevant, right? Hope becomes powerful. Hoping becomes meaningful. We could think about a person that, you know, we all hope for good health, right? We all hope. We have, I hope to have, you know, a healthy life. But people who are sick hope for it more, right, and the more sick the person is. And, you know, sometimes in severe illness and severe diseases, sometimes this hope is so profound, it's so strong, the hope to, to feel better for recovery. But you know, going back to, to the context of conflict, one of the differences between the conflict in Rwanda and what's happening here in Israel Palestine is that, no I envy Benda and others that are talking about post conflict. We are inside currently one of the, probably the worst episode in the history of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. We are at a war, as it's, you know, evolving around us. I'm speaking now from, from Tel Aviv, you know, 60 kilometers from here is the Gaza Strip. I could definitely say that, you know, for myself, first, certainly, in the first weeks of the war, in October, it was very frightful being here. We were in the shelter rooms. We were heard explosions over our head. Of course, many Israelis were killed and attacked on the seventh of October and the aftermath. But of course, in the Gaza Strip now, the price that Gazan civilians are paying is so terrible. And you know, the atrocities of war and the atrocities of the seventh of October are really, you know, mind blowing in the extent of violence and aggression. And so these are really, really bleak times here in Palestine, Israel. And so when we think about okay, is it? What's happening with hope in these circumstances? And I think one way, or one helpful way to look at it as is this bidimensional model of hope, which looks at hope as something that has two dimensions. The first dimension is what we call the wish dimension, and that pertains to how much we want something, desire something, and like Benda said, in these that dreadful situations, your desires to live, to endure, are so strong, are so profound, are so real, are driving people, you know, forward in the most terrible circumstances. And so this wish dimension, the wish for peace, the wish that this conflict will end, is actually increasing. So hope, in that sense, is increasing. The hope to end, end violence is increasing in times of conflict and despair. But the expectation dimension, which pertains to how much we think that what we, you know, want is going to happen, that is in the decline. So people want peace more, but think more that it is impossible, and that kind of helps us understand this very elusive part of of how hope, you know, is is connected with reality and the harsh reality of conflicts.



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Munyurangabo Benda 11:04

Yeah, yeah. Just to finish, it's just to say in I think hope becomes so powerful in this situation, Emma, because I think the proximity between life and hope becomes more tangible, or the interdependence, I think, between life is this thing that, yeah, conflict brings to life - excuse the pun - conflict brings to life the importance and the significance of life, this thing we take for granted so much because actually you begin to see, on a day to day basis, the end of life, the ending of life, it becomes a reality. And therefore, I think what I have observed is that because life and the continuation of life live in the same neighborhood as the persistence of hope that really becomes, it makes this interdependence between hope and existence and life and life and existence itself very much something that is in the foreground, and therefore in the same way that fear and death are clear and present, hope also becomes very much clear and and present in those circumstances. I will just leave it there.

Emma Pavey 12:33

Yeah, thank you. I think it's interesting then to think about how hope is generated. I mean how much you can, in a sense, instrumentalize it, politically or theologically, without killing it or making a different kind of hope. I mean, it's, you can almost weaponize it, couldn't you? So how do you draw that line between generating an environment that nurtures hope and sort of forcing it on people in a sense, which can have implications for addressing justice and things like that.

Oded Adomi Leshem 13:05

Yeah. So first of all, it's important to say that you, people hope for different things, right? So, so it's not only, hope is one thing that is important to understand, but also it depends what you hope for. There are some people, for example, if I'm talking here in the, you know, in the Middle East, there are some people that their hopes are to, you know, eliminate the other side, right? They are extremists on both sides. And their hope and their desires is to be a, to have a, an exclusive control over land, and then, you know, expelling the other side. So we don't, we're not talking about that, that kind of hope. But still, we need to recognize that. And I will say that extreme, extreme ideologies and extreme groups have very, their hope is very clear. They, in many ways, they out, you know they they say it, and they work with hope a lot, right? They say we're going to live in a place where we are, we have exclusive control over the land. Our enemy is going to be wiped, wiped out, or just expelled from this, from



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this area. And they articulate this hope. And I think one of the most important thing that you know, advocates of peace need to do is have a very, very clear vision of that, of the hope that they are looking for, the kind of future that they aspire for, and to articulate it clearly and put it front and centre in the public discourse. One of the things that are missing currently in the public discourse, both in the Israeli society and the Palestinian society, is that both, you know, the fact that people want to end the war and reach some agreement and, and reach a resolution is not spoken loud enough, is not put at the, you know, centre of public discourse. So this hope is kind of hiding. And if you're talking about hope as a political tool, you know, saying what you want, saying it loud, knowing how to say it also in a simple and compelling way. You know, not the in, you know, policy oriented way, say it in a compelling way. Now, you know, in a simple and compelling way is something very important, because the more this kind of hope resonates, you know, and circulated in the public discourse, it becomes a reality. So I think hope should be used as a political tool, hope for the things that we aspire for, peace, justice, reconciliation, etc, and that there are some ways to do it really like tools to use hope in, you know, in politics.

Munyurangabo Benda 16:04

When I was listening to Oded speak, I just, you just realize that the way we conceptualize things, because, you know, for me, I always associate, and I think because I operate from a Christian theology kind of perspective, you associate hope with this positive virtue of hoping for the best and for the most people or for everybody, and therefore it's just it's jarring to be reminded that in situations of conflict, there is this sort of divergence of hopes and what people what kind of hopes people have. And it is really interesting from a philosophical point of view, whether those hopes and how, how, how, how they relate to the virtue, probably what in Christian thought we call the virtue of hope, so. But speaking from the perspective of the Christian understanding of hope, I think there is room for preaching, and I think there is really room for words of hope, because after all, how will they hear, and how will they believe if nobody speaks? And how would they understand and hear if nobody's preaching? So there is, I think, there is, there is room for for words. The tricky part, I think, is that most of the time, more often than not, those who preach or who speak aren't necessarily those who need the hope they talk about. And maybe it is that belief that those who are communicating the words of hope are necessarily the best at doing hope. But I think sometimes those who listen to words of hope



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are like a plant that is growing in the desert and needs those, you know, a drop of water, and they do a great deal of that bit of water because it's it meets them at at the point of their need. So I think, I think that there is room to to speak those words, but but to acknowledge that as as as Oded said, people have different hopes and and the words will meet people at different points of need. I think it's the words we speak are not unidirectional. They will have different significance for different people depending on where they find themselves. So I think, I think it is, yeah, it's really important to create those places where where hope can grow. There is, there is absolutely need for words of hope, for messages of hope, strong, whether they are political, whether they are theological, whether they are sermons. Those are needed because there is a a creative and prophetic aspect to hope. There is something that really is transcendental about about hope, and then it is it is a matter of being able to listen and to see how the words we speak help hope to germinate in creative and diverse and diverse ways. And sometimes it really is important for even those who speak those words of hope or preach those words of hope to see how the people will grab the words of hope and turn them to their benefits. And sometimes we lose point of how creative people can be. When we give them an ounce of hope, and how they can surprise you by doing so much with with little. So I'm all for words. I think politically hope is a political thing for me, even when it's theological, and I have always understood politics as the encounter between powerful words, words of life, the logos of life, and the actions that embody that hope.

Oded Adomi Leshem 20:36

Yeah, I could, I could give perhaps an example. Two weeks ago, there was a huge event of the Israeli peace movement. This event was the first in 25 years, because it was a bit out of character of the peace movement of Israelis and also Arab citizens of Israel who are working for peace partnership reconciliation out of character to speak, you know, with pride and out loud. And you know, you know, with media coverage, etc. What did we do as peace activist? Or, you know, we did our small gatherings, 20 people here, 30 people here. Nothing extravagant, nothing big. And that's a this is a mistake. You need to speak big. You need to inspire. Completely agree with Benda's idea of preaching it, coming strong, coming proud, you know. And the event, there were more than 8000 people there. It was in a big auditorium, huge auditorium, and it celebrated this idea of peace, reconciliation, Arab Jewish partnership inter-religious connections. There were religious people, from Muslims and Christians and Jews



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there, and we're talking about, and that's just a small example of thing that must be created more so speaking it loud, speaking it clear, using all the platforms possible, social media, traditional media, you know. The world is, is, we're in a jam now. Okay, so many problematic processes, political processes, are happening around the globe, right? And if we want to counter them, we're, it's not enough just to say how awful they are, but if we provide a coherent, compelling and simple idea of what we want, what, how beautiful the fruits of peace, of the fruits of human partnership, how beautiful the fruits are, how tasty and sweet the fruits are, and talk about it and preach about it, it captures people's heart, and you want to be there. You want to kind of join these people. And so it's just an example of something that was, again, very out of character, but very strong and profound, and something that I, you know, I want to see more, and I'm cooperating with others to see more of these types of things and incorporate hope. You don't need to use the word hope, by the way, when you're preaching hope, you don't have to use the word itself, but providing a strong, compelling vision of a beautiful future that you are offering and asking people to join you in that journey, you know, to reach these beautiful fruits and taste these beautiful, that's that's hope.

Emma Pavey 23:48

It's interesting, isn't it? I know our colleague from the conference, Elin Kelsey, has looked at evidence-based hope and promoting these kinds of stories. Because often in the media, even though it's so clear that we need hope, we get story after story of of a lack of hope, of despair, and in a sense bad news stories. And you know, they say hope is the best medicine, but we don't always want to take it. I wonder why you think that is that we often don't see these stories of hope represented.

Munyurangabo Benda 24:21

A culture of cynicism, culture of cynicism. But also in some places, I suppose it's been too much experience of being let down, I think, being disappointed. And I think somewhere our minds, our souls, our our bodies have been so abused by the the merchants of hopes that you become wary and you become suspicious and you become guarded. It's, the image that comes to my mind is like a hungry person. You're hungry. You are, you need something to eat, and you see this piece of meat or fruit dangling on a string, and there is a hand pulling, pulling the fruit on the lead. And the more you pursue the meat or the fruit, the more it pulls away. But there





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is always the possibility of reaching it. And then when you reach it and you stretch your hand to grab it, the string becomes a snake and bites your hand. Yeah, I think too much disappointment in many ways can that's one of the spectrum. The other side of the spectrum, obviously, is that maybe the illness, the illness is, is, feels a lot, much better than the medicine itself. You know, the you know, I think all that spoke about people saying, Well, we hope for this. But deep down, there is a sense of saying, okay, we can, we can manage. We are managing fine without so part of it is how you rescue the, I'm going to call it a ministry, the ministry of those who are entrusted with communicating hope, and communicating hope. I mean, Oded put it more powerful and poignantly than I can but it is those who communicate hope. There is a sense of anyway, that they have to be reliable to be trustworthy, that what they communicate is actually a a working mechanism. It's a deliverable thing, but it's also a place they inhabit. It goes back to what I said before. It's this feeling that maybe those who speak to us about hope aren't necessarily those that are in need of hope and waiting. I keep going back to Martin Luther King Jr, the sort of conflict he used he always had with liberal white Christians. You know, when they said, Just give, you have to hope. It's going to come. It's going to come and and you just realize that there is a place of despair and a place of pain and itch. There is an itch that is not really bothering people who preach, who preach that hope So part of me is, yeah, there is, there is too much disappointment and the lack of of of belief, of trust, of confidence, that the people who speak of hope, who are selling us hope believe that that hope is the remedy we need, and actually is a remedy that works for them, so there is room for experience and for shared, for embodied, really, for an embodied prophecy of hope. Yeah.

Oded Adomi Leshem 28:12

What you said is very interesting, because I completely, first of all, I completely agree that if you talk about hope, but you are not coming from the pain or coming from, you know, the trouble, then it's just a catchphrase. You know, it's something that you sell. This is once. The second thing is that hope does not necessarily, if we work with it correctly, does not necessarily come with promises. It's not something you say, if you do that, we'll achieve that for sure. You know these types of, this is kind of, you don't have to be very high on the expectation dimensions and say, sell to people things that you cannot actually provide. But again, going back to the wish dimension, the dream, the aspirations, making them real, making them live,



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put them, putting them front and centre. Now I'll say two things, and we see it, you know. I'm sure you see it also in Europe, but certainly in the US and in Israel, people that are fighting populism, right? They are. We have very powerful populist forces everywhere in the world. They are using, they are trying to make people hate one another. They are trying to, you know, inflame the conflict and intergroup, uh, hostilities, and they're using that right? Some of them are extremely racist or, you know, chauvinist, etc. And many times, the people who are fighting these phenomenon say, Hey, look at that awful person. He said something so chauvenistic, or he said, she said something so racist, etc. And we're always pointing towards the bad things that are happening and that that this is quite tempting, right? Because, indeed, these people are doing and saying awful things, right? But if you are obsessed with your political rival, if this is all you do, and say how bad this, you are not providing your own hope. You are not providing and then the public discourse is filled only with these people and what they do. So certainly people who strive for peace, equality, you know, human partnership across borders, inter religious connections, etc. We need to talk about that, not only vis a vis the people that we are fighting or the forces we are fighting, but as our own vision, as our own dream, as our own hope, and talk about it clearly and again, front and centre, and put it as much as possible in, you know, in the public discourse, not always be tempted to to the wrong doings of of the people who are trying to, you know, make this world a bad place. And just, I'll give two examples. I am a very much connected and involved in the struggle for democracy in Israel. The current government in Israel is pushing forward an anti-democratic agenda, very right wing, nationalistic, hawkish, extreme agenda. We can see it in the war also. And you know, excessive use of violence against Palestinians, but also we see it as as Israeli citizens, we see it also we are more and more being oppressed by by our own government. And when you go to these demonstrations, sometimes these demonstrations begin with the awful things that happened this week, you know, with this government, this corrupt government, and you know, the awful things that the leaders are saying and doing right, vis-a-vis the war, the hostages, the, you know, so many things that are happening and how bad they function. People see that, and they're down. They're saying, Ah, I know this is so bad. I've seen the news throughout the week. I don't have to see it again. And then you see that the kind of, the demonstration is strong, and people are angry. But sometimes the demonstrations begin with, you know, the



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strong movement for democracy, our heroes and heroines and others, you know, who made the difference. And it's like a lively video clip of, you know, all the struggles and the demonstrations that happened this week, etc, and then you see this kind of, whoa. People are, kind of, there's an uplifting feeling, right? And people know the situation is bad, right? And we're fighting something that is difficult to fight. But this is more like what I'm saying. When you talk about your vision and what your values in a, you know, compelling and simple way, in an exciting way, then you start to talk about, you use hope as a political tool, right? You use hope to make that change. So getting people angry is important, but always, always making people, you know, hopeful and proud about their vision and about their values is also, you know, very, very important. We shouldn't neglect it. Sometimes we neglect this. I don't know if that answered your question.

Munyurangabo Benda 33:42

Yeah, there is always something that maybe makes us less inclined to take, you know, the medicine it's, yeah, I think what you're saying is there is this sense that even the hopes that are being communicated, you realize that there is another side to it, that it's going to make other people hopeless in many ways. So there is this ambiguity about, you know, about what is sold out as hope, but what, I think, what, what, what we struggle with, what I struggle with, is a, as you say, Oded, communicating a positive view of hope. It's communicating actually something that is, is taking people beyond themselves and and hoping for the others, and being as passionate about the hope for the others as you're passionate about the hope for yourself. So I mean, Oded you're in Israel, but we've just, we've just had a general election in Britain and and this is happening across Europe and a great deal of people, politicians, and there has been a great fear of the far right making eruptions in our politics. And it has been interesting for me, as as a descendant of migrants living in Britain to see how much migration, immigration is at the, at the core and heart of European politics. It's not even, it's not even immigrants now, it's tourists. It it's it's tourists in in other countries, it is this sense that the hope that people have for their future to be better depends on alienation of other people, and that, I think, for me, compromises a great deal of messages of hope.

Oded Adomi Leshem 34:34

Definitely.



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Emma Pavey 35:28

It comes back to what we were, what Oded was saying before, about, of course, hope, the capacity to hope, is different from the content of what, what we hope for, which can be positive and negative. I'm interested, too, in this communal aspect of hope, and maybe this is a methodological question for Oded, but in terms of researching hope, because it's so communal and communally felt, when you research hope, do you just do individual interviews, or how do you sort of capture that communal sense of what's happening when people hope?

Oded Adomi Leshem 36:05

Yeah, so I let's, I'll start with a methodological issue. So I do large scale studies, usually samples of around 1000, 1500 people. This is not in interviews. These are, you know, surveys or large scale experiments. But I'm asking questions on the individual level and but hope for collective issues like peace, like equality, like conciliation. So I asked, How much do you and you know how, for example, how much do you wish for a peace that will address the needs of both people, and how much do you expect that to materialize? Right? So these two dimensions, and, for example, in Israel and Palestine, I run this study, studies simultaneously among Jewish Israelis in Israel and Palestinians in the occupied territories, and data collection is very difficult in the occupied territories, in the West Bank, in the Gaza Strip. Needless to say, now in the Gaza Strip it's almost impossible. So data collection is difficult. And then I have, you know, I can aggregate the hopes for peace of Israelis, of Palestinians. I could compare them. I could compare the dimensions. I could compare the gap, for example, between wishes and expectations. So just as an anecdote, when you look at the Palestinian sample, there is a difference between West Bankers and Gazans. Gazans, and this is that I collected before the war, but Gazans have been living in in very, very difficult conditions of conflict, also West Bank Palestinians, but less so, right? And what we see is that the gap between, so Gazans wish for peace more than Palestinians, but expect it less to materialize. So there are these Gazans desires for a peace that will or, you know, and this is, of course, to make sense, you're living in terrible conditions of conflict. You want peace considered, you want something, this conflict, this nightmare to end. So the desires are higher, but the expectations are lower compared to their fellow countrymen in the in the West Bank. And this this different in gap. So when you subtract the expectations from the wishes, you



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see the gap. And this gap is frustration, right? The more you want something, and the less you think it, it will materialize, this is frustration. This is despair. The deeper the despair, the deeper the frustration. And you see that this is different, or higher among Gazans compared to the West Bank. And so you can do all sorts of these games and, you know, statistical modeling, what predicts people's wishes for peace, what predicts their expectations for peace, etcetera. So this is the methodological issue, but I want to go back to this thing that you said about the idea of community, how hope is so intrinsically tied to this idea of community, you know, because one of the things we know very strongly is that you know, the greatest, you know, predictor of people's happiness is a strong community, strong family, strong social ties, neighbours, it doesn't really matter, but this idea of belonging, this idea of being part of a social circle with strong social bonds with other people, is the most important thing for people, by far, that what makes them you know, that's what makes us tick in many ways, but you know for good and bad, right? And so this idea that hope is something that is shared by a community is something that you feel and you see very strongly in in situations of conflict, in situations of political turmoil, people get together, want to be with like minded people. That kind of inspires them again. You see people when you I don't know how many protests you have been, you have, you know, participated, I've been in 1000s. Okay? And this idea, when you're marching with other people and chanting with other people. It's such a strong feeling, you know? So it's definitely something that is communal and perhaps contagious. So and we could use this contagiousness to to uplift people, but Benda, please, I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Munyurangabo Benda 40:35

Yeah. I mean, from Oded said earlier that you don't have to use the word hope to be preaching hope and you don't also have to use hope to be researching hope. And from a qualitative perspective, I think the best project I've been involved in was a was in Rwanda, and it was a sort of project ready of intergenerational hope. It was a bringing together of the children of perpetrators, the children of survivors, or the children who survived genocide, or the people survived genocide as children in Rwanda themselves and and my methodology was one of participant observation, so I was part of the group, and I was observing, and it is absolutely astounding to see hope emerge out of those those spaces, to see it blossom. So you know, to see you talked about frustration, Oded, as a subject of those wonderful measurements



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of, it was in the room. I was there just observing. But this is an idea that this young generation, so community, for me, has many dimensions, and one of it is a generational community. So communities of generations that have shared interests, that are wrestling with complicated pasts, inherited legacies, wrestling with those legacies, but trying to chart their own paths towards what they called a future of peace without machete in Kinyarwanda, machete and peace rhyme. So machete is umuhoro, peace is amahoro. So they wanted a future of amahoro without umuhoro. So, but they were wrestling with this complicated, inherited legacies and most, so some of them were sitting with scars in their bodies. But it started with artists, artists, and I think there is an aspect of emotion to the idea of hope. There are people who pour their souls into trying to find this sort of living together. And artists, poems and musicians, are always at the forefront, but they were at the forefront of that attempt to chart out a generational a generational hope for their generation. So this were guys between 18 and 35 without being burdened by the legacies of the past. So they reached out, and they felt that they were working on something that was really good, and so they reached out to the to the First Lady of Rwanda. First Lady of Rwanda has really been involved in in the in the future of young Rwandans, and how children from both sides of the conflict have been tremendously affected by the by the conflict. And the first lady thought this is a brilliant idea. So he she, they give her her foundation, Imbuto Foundation, gave them money to go and meet other people like them throughout the country. So that's where I come in. And they used to organize what is called Youth Connekt dialogues. So it's the Connekt was with a K and T as well to make it trendy and to make it very niche. And these were places where around 700,000 young people who, and the research on the on the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda tells you that any child who was in Rwanda in 1994 saw an act of extreme violence. All children, both perpetrators and the children of perpetrators, children of perpetrators and children of survivors, or children who survived the genocide. They all saw acts of extreme violence. So this, this is a generation that knows what it is to live through what they had lived through, but they organized this massive space, and this is where I was there as a participant or observer to because I've been really trying to pursue this idea that after the genocide in Rwanda, there is the possibility of living together. And I thought that the hope, maybe, is in the generation that was less affected. But the more I listened to these young people, I realised it was they were as affected



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as we were as adults. It's just that they had more questions, more anger and more frustration. Um, so I used and those conversations, those meetings, those dialogues, were intense. It was 10 hours of story-sharing, frustration-sharing, um, asking hard questions to politicians. Um, there was a lot of tears, a lot of explosion of of angers and calling names and and saying, yeah, the children of this and children of that. Um, but sometimes, and most of the time, after those 10 hours, those conversations ended in dances, and sometimes they ended in in music and they ended in these young people on a circle. And what it taught me is that hope emerges out of those dangerous spaces where people take phenomenal risks to open up, to speak. And observing that was an astounding so, I mean, those, those dialogues took place over, I think, four months throughout the country, and they were so potent, so powerful, that out of the those Youth Connekt dialogue emerged what is known in Rwanda as Ndi Umunyarwanda, which is I'm Rwandan, which has become the national vision, the national policy, a shared vision, a shared nation and a shared identity. Ndi Umunyarwanda literally means I'm Rwandan, so which, which is getting away from ethnic politics. So I'm not a Hutu, I'm not a Tutsi, I'm Rwandan. And that vision that has, it's now has it's part of the Constitution now emerged out of these young people having the audacity of meeting and sharing their frustration, sharing their fear, and sharing their anger. And and to have seen it, to have seen how it evolves over the 10 hours of each dialogue, it used to leave me so exhausted, emotionally, but also very hopeful. But to have seen it evolve into a national program that is what is now taught as our civic virtue, that, you know, we can be one nation and we can be one people. And talking of powerful messages, I think that is the kind of message that Rwandans needed. And I think it's so powerful that it came from the grassroots, from these young people, rather than being something that is parachuted from from above. So methodologically, it is this participant observation, but also looking at initiatives, this inductive processes of coming from the bottom of something massive, a momentum building from a group of artists communicating it to a group of young people and then communicate to the to the entire nation. It is a very difficult now to listen to a one and a politician, politician speak of the future of Rwanda without speaking of Ndi Umunyarwanda. And when you have been at the beginning of that moment when the word itself, when the phrase itself was tossed out because people are saying, so what if we are not children of killers, and if we are not just survivors, if we are not Tutsi, if we know who to who are we



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to demand? Who are we? And they say we are. And there is agency in that. I think there is ownership and there is agency and there is sustainable hope. In my opinion, I'm talking too much. But anyway, there is, it's just a joy to be involved in those places where you can see hope germinate and to see the possibilities or the obstacles that can kill hope as well. Because I was in many of the meetings where, you know, when a situation reaches a crescendo, and you know, it can go either way. And I remember some some police officers and officials saying, no, no, this is too much, this is too early to be talking about this, but the people who believe in this project said, No, it's let it arrive, let it evolve. Let's, let's see what comes out of this. So I like the idea of risk taking to see, to see hope, political hope, emerge. Sorry, I'm talking too much, but I get passionate remembering those moments.

Oded Adomi Leshem 50:01

This is really, you know, a great story, and I know we need to to end, but I will say my hopes is that these types of processes are going to happen here in my region, and that, and that, you know, through the pain and through the enormous suffering will come such such thing, which is a future oriented, right? We're kind of, what we want to do is throw the weight into the future, not into the past, throw it, you know, and then slowly pull ourselves to this thing that we that we aspire for. And so the only thing I have to say now is that, you know, I want to take this and pray for the quick release of the hostages and the ending of this terrible war that is happening in Gaza. And wish you know fellow Israelis and fellow Palestinians you know, well being and safety through these very difficult times.

Emma Pavey 51:05

Um, we, I speak for myself in joining you in in wishing and hoping for that. I'm sure we could continue to speak for many hours. But I do also want to respect your time, and I hope that you will continue to be in communication and sharing ideas. But thank you very much for joining.

Oded Adomi Leshem 51:27

Thanks for inviting us. Emma, it was a pleasure to talk.

Munyurangabo Benda 51:32

Yeah, it's just just to finish this. In those, those conversation I was involved in what I talked about, moving from rear view mirror perspectives to windshield perspectives.



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And we didn't get a chance to talk about hope and time, but those are conversations that will continue. And sure, but there is, there is there is, there is a hope that there is, yeah, we can, yeah, you know, we can mine the past, but also have the ability to look, to look ahead to the windshield.

Emma Pavey 52:06

Yeah, we are our worst enemy, but also we are the we can be the solution. So thank you very much. Both of you.

Oded Adomi Leshem 52:13

A pleasure talking. Thanks. Emma, thanks. Benda.

Munyurangabo Benda 52:16

Thank you very much. Have a lovely day.

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