

## **Grieving for Jos...Again**

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I am grieving for the young woman in Cameroon who is adjusting to life as a widow. She doesn't know what happened to her husband. He wasn't Nigerian, but he disappeared after arriving in Jos for school. I am grieving for the young girl who, when hearing gunfire close by, said, "I don't fear. I'm used to this." I am grieving for the large business owner who thinks he might have to close his business in Jos because the business loses too many work days to violence and tension. I am grieving for the young father working at that large business who might soon lose his job and then will have no way to pay his children's school fees.

I am grieving for the infant who will never know her daddy's face because he was a machine driver who accidentally ventured into the wrong area. I am grieving for the parents who pray with tears as they watch their sons, eaten by bitterness, turn into terrorists. I am grieving for the youth who are learning their morals, not from their God, but from the barrel of a gun. I am grieving for the students who fear attending class because they have to pass through "No Go" areas to get to school.

How much can students learn if they fear that they will be the next victim of silent killing on their way home? I am grieving for the intelligent girl in senior secondary school who, despite going to a very good school, has been robbed of almost an entire term of education because of tension. I am grieving for the young man lying in excruciating pain on a hospital bed because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time and was left for dead. I am grieving for the young boy who described crawling on the ground to avoid gunfire as if that was an ordinary occurrence.

I am grieving for the father who cannot return to work because his workplace is in the wrong area of town. He has received texts that his life is in danger if he returns to work. I am grieving for the farmer who lost two days wages because she could not transport her produce to the market because of violence. The cabbage rotted in her farm.

I am grieving for the child who has gone hungry for days because no market was open for his mother to get food. I am grieving for the woman who has to swallow fear every morning on her way to her market stall. She has had to flee many times, and has already had her stall burned once, but how else will she earn the money she needs to feed her children? I am grieving for the businessman whose livelihood was burned. He never participated in violence, but because of the way he prays, his business was an easy target. He wonders how he will take care of his family.

I'm grieving for the woman whose house has been burned twice now because her neighbors say people of her religion are no longer welcome in their area. I am grieving for the young man who has a bullet in his leg because he allowed his peers to convince him that he must march with the mob. I am grieving for the young man who lost all of his friends because he had the courage to stand up and say that revenge violence is wrong. I am grieving for the young children who, for the rest of their lives will be replaying the images of their parent hacked to death.

I am grieving for the children who have known nothing but crisis in Jos. How will they learn to be peaceful, productive citizens if their entire lives have been filled with violence? I am grieving for the mothers and fathers who have lost their children. I am grieving for the sons and daughters who will have to grow up without a parent. I am grieving for the widows and the widowers who face a lifetime of loneliness. I am grieving for every person who knows more of fear and violence than they do of peace.

I am grieving for the place that was once called “The Home of Peace and Tourism.” People now fear coming to Jos for business, let alone tourism. I am grieving for the community that I love. With every additional violent act, the wound in Jos becomes deeper. With every additional violent act, the wound will be more difficult to heal. These are the stories I have heard. Readers can add to this with theirs. The victims I grieve for are not all Christians, and they are not all Muslims. The people who suffer most in these crises are innocent people on both sides of the conflict.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, the great American peacemaker, said “we will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people.” Let us use Dr. King’s words to examine ourselves, because the only people we can change are ourselves. Have we spoken hateful words? Have we engaged in hateful actions? Or are we the good people who have kept our mouths closed for too long about the hateful words and actions of our own people, resulting in immeasurable pain and suffering for ourselves and others?

I am tired of grieving. We all are. Let those good people who are suffering speak out and condemn the hateful words and actions of those who engage in violence, regardless of what side they are on. It’s enough and must stop.