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**In Search of Appropriate Peacemaking/Peacebuilding Paradigm in
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Lederach's Faith-based Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding
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Abstract

With conditions created by Western colonialism and the dynamics of the Cold War bipolar global rule, the inability of governments to rise beyond corrupt and imbalance political order, and, hence, the resurgence of ethnic, religious, and ideological identity consciousness and identification, Africa has been a bleeding Continent since the end of the colonial era. Contemporary Africa's conflicts are intrastate, with many protracted. This paper argues that to deal adequately with such conflicts there is a need for an inner-oriented, indigenous-based, organic, and long-term sustainable nonviolent process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding aimed at constructive holistic change. It demonstrates that this is core to the peacebuilding paradigm Lederach develops and so apt for dealing with today's Africa's conflicts.

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Introduction

Africa's intrastate violent conflicts represent a shift in the dynamic of social conflict, globally, from interstate to intrastate conflict and a global historical turn, one in which we no longer live in a state-centric world. There is rather a rededication to local customs and identities spurred, particularly in Africa and other developing nations, by failure of the state to provide essential amenities, services, and security to its populace, and to equitably represent and carry along the interests of the multiethnic, religious, and ideological groups that constitute the country. Contemporary Africa's violent conflicts owe primarily to the resurgence of ethnic, religious, and ideological consciousness and identification, whose social homogeneity and psychological identity are profoundly dependent upon the specter of a common enemy.¹ Whereas bad government gave the resurgence of identity consciousness and class identification its immediate momentum, they owe their underlying factor to the conditions created by Western colonial rule, which the dynamics of the Cold War power tussle helped to shape. Among the contributions of colonial rule to the present Africa's conflicts are long time structural injustices, oppression, flagrant exploitation, neglects, the way the people were separated and fussed together, and the difficult legacy of corrupt and unbalanced political order. Today, many multiethnic African nations groan under the difficult task of dealing with the identity conflicts. Because today's African conflicts are identity-rooted, asymmetric in nature, taking place between proximate parties who engage together in the daily business of live, and supported by unabated arms deal even into the hands of non-state players, many are protracted. Thus the populations of conflict societies live with unhealed wounds and

¹ See Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), pp. 60-61.

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painful memories and constantly look at each other with deep-seated animosities, hate, and urge to revenge.

As Africa's conflicts are localized and complex the search for peace has to be localized and complex. Some people think that Africa has actually grown more peaceful in recent years. Indeed, the twenty-first century has witnessed the end of some protracted armed conflicts. Eritrea and Ethiopia came to formal agreement that has allowed them some peace in 2000. In 2002, Angola's 27 years of civil war and Sierra Leone's 10 years of civil war ended. Liberia's 14 years of civil war ended shakily in 2003 and the process was completed in 2005 with a democratic election that has produced the first-ever female president on African soil. Congo's five years of civil war ended in 2003. That same year Congo-Brazzaville witnessed a ceasefire between rebels and government forces, although not completely observed. In 2004, peace agreements were signed in Senegal to bring peace in its Casamance conflict region and in Sudan. But there are also big stories of armed conflict from 2004. These include the genocide in Western Sudan, war in Burundi, religious related and oil (political) related conflicts in Nigeria, and communal displacement in northern Uganda. There is still tension and record of violent conflict in Angola, Rwanda, and Algeria, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Niger, Uganda, and Sudan. Nigeria is still facing ethnic tension to date in addition to the violent opposition of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). There is war in Chad and a resurgence of the Somali war.²

The situation is rather ambiguous. There is neither a steady fall nor a steady rise of armed conflicts in Africa as new ones spring up, including some old ones thought to have been decisively resolved, and some old ones cease. The situation where old conflicts thought to have been resolved reemerge and serious tensions and sporadic violent

² See Robert Guest, "The Good News in Africa," *The Economist*, (2004), p. 78; Lotta Harbom and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflict and Its International Dimensions, 1946-2004," *Journal of Peace Research*, 42, no. 5 (2005), pp. 623-635; Lotta Harbom, Stina Hogbladh, and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflict and Peace Agreements," *Journal of Peace Research*, 43, no. 5 (2006), pp. 617-31; Lotta Harbom, Erick Melander, and Peter Wallensteen, "Dyadic Dimensions of Armed Conflict, 1946-2007," *Journal of Peace Research*, 45, no. 5 (2008), pp. 697-710.

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conflicts still exist in countries that have once been involved in armed conflict or war reveals that the underlying causes of the conflicts have not been properly addressed. If we compare this African situation with that of Central and South America where armed conflict has decreased and more enduring peaceful situation exists because of successful processes of nonviolent conflict resolution we have one conclusion to draw. Contrary to the hierarchical statist diplomatic or military approach, what Africa needs is a moral trajectory of reconciliation at peace. In other words, its needs an inner-oriented complex and creative nonviolent process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding, the dynamics of which can penetrate into the complex web of relationships the conflicts are entangled to address both their immediate presenting and underlying issues. It also requires working towards the change of the peoples' hearts, restoration of relationships and sustainable holistic change over a long time.

John Paul Lederach, who played a vital consultative role in the conflict resolution process between the Sandinista government and the Miskito Indians on the east coast of Nicaragua in 1988 and has provided consultative roles, direct mediation, and peacebuilding training workshops across five Continents has developed a conflict transformation model, the framework and dynamics of which the paper argues is apt to deal with the nature of today's Africa's conflicts. Remarkably, his approach, based on practice rather than grounded theories, is elicitive in character, supporting the concepts and mechanisms for conflict transformation that can be found in the local cultures and society involved in conflict. It is also faith-based. I will first show the conceptual framework of his peacebuilding model. Next, I will elucidate its structural framework and then demonstrate the organic approach his model suggests as appropriateness to deal with Africa's intrastate conflicts.

The Conceptual Framework of Lederach's Faith-based Conflict Transformation Peacebuilding Approach

Lederach's definition of conflict transformation "is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships."³ This definition informs us that to resolve conflict one must first understand the nature and dynamics of conflicts and from there envision and direct one's effort to a desired change. Here is the logic of the conceptual framework of Lederach's conflict transformation and peacebuilding approach and its constitutive elements. The conceptual framework is based on two fundamental concepts of conflict as good and change as a constructive human endeavor and three basic working assumptions that embody and uncover the fundamental values in genuine conflict reconciliation. The working assumptions include the centrality of relationship, reconciliation as encounter, and reconciliation as embracing place of paradoxical values. In what follows, I will describe these elements, pointing out their salient points as relevant to understand the dynamics of conflicts in Africa and what is needed to properly address them.

Conceptual Pillars of Lederach's Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding Approach

The Concept of Conflict

Lederach's idea of conflict transformation is based on a fundamental concept of conflict as natural, inevitable in human existential dynamism, and good, as a motor of change.⁴ To be sure, it is the classical idea of conflict as intrinsic and an inevitable aspect of social change that generates new heterogeneity of interests, values, and beliefs against

³ John P. Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation* (Intercourse: Good Books, 2003), p. 14.

⁴ Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, 18; John P. Lederach, *Journey toward Reconciliation*, with a forward by Harold H. Saunders (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1999), 110-17.

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inherited constraints that have shaped conflict resolution thinking and practice.⁵ Both Edward Azar, Deusdedit Nkurunziza and Tom Frame share the view that conflict is an inseparable part of human social interactions. Indeed, conflict can be a sign of basic pathology, but as Clark observes, “stability in itself may be a symptom of social stagnation and potential decadence. If so, social tension would be seen in a more positive light as a symptom of the dynamics of social change and as an inevitable factor in social progress.”⁶ Although conflict is fundamental to human nature, behind the positive notion of social conflict is a social constructionist view. From this perspective Lederach defines social conflict as “a phenomenon of human creation, lodged naturally in relationships. It is a phenomenon that transforms events, the relationship in which conflict occurs, and indeed its very creators. It is a necessary element in transformative human construction and reconstruction of social organization and realities.”⁷

The central point in the above references, which is that conflict does not just happen to people, but is a human creation, is important to understanding the dynamics of conflicts in Africa. The point of departure of this constructionist view of conflict, according to Lederach, “is the fundamental idea that social conflict emerges and develops on the basis of the meaning and interpretation people involved attach to action and events.”⁸ In other words, social conflicts are rooted in the peoples' culture – their accumulated and shared knowledge and scheme of interactive process and response to social realities. As Earl Conteh-Morgan says, “constructivism as an approach is a useful theoretical lens in understanding the true nature of things such as collective violence,

⁵ Hugh Maill, Oliver Ramsbotham, and Tom Woodhouse, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflict* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 5; Edwards E. Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases* (England: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1990), p. 5; Deusdedit R. K. Nkurunziza, “Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding in Africa,” *African Ecclesial Review*, 45, no. 4 (2003), pp. 296-297; Tome Frame, *Living the Sword: The Ethics of Armed Intervention* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004), p. 115.

⁶ Kenneth B. Clark, *The Pathos of Power* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 60.

⁷ John P. Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995), p. 17.

⁸ Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*, p. 8.

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class, gender, and racial issues, among others.”⁹ It focuses on socio-cultural facts – power relations and relations to power, linked to modes of thinking and cognition in a given society. The identity-rootedness of today's Africa's conflicts demonstrates this. It is because they involve specific grievances that spread to like-minded groups or larger cultural and ideological identities that makes them volatile and protracted. The social constructionist view is a grounding influence to Lederach's elicitive and indigenous-based peacebuilding model. The logic is understandable. To deal adequately with conflicts that are rooted in the construction of a people's common memory and identity requires peace actors with the peoples' cultural epistemology. Nevertheless, Lederach does not suggest that the social constructionist view provides a single sufficing theoretical approach and only mechanism of understanding social conflict. He supports the need for multidisciplinary perspectives to conflict.¹⁰

Let us not have a lopsided notion of conflict. The idea that conflict is good does not mean that it always produces positive changes. It can affect our “physical well-being, self-esteem, emotional stability, capacity to perceive accurately, and spiritual integrity.”¹¹ Also, there can be serious ethical issues involved in social conflicts. However, the nature of conflict depends on how we handle it. The positive notion of conflict correlates with a proactive and constructive approach to it. According to Lederach, “The key to transformation is proactive bias toward seeing conflict as a potential catalyst for growth.”¹² The emphasis on the need for proactive vision and approach to conflict is important, given that human life is a living-with-conflict life. It is the positive and meaningful way to embrace our humanness and transform conflict into positive energy, social change, and progress.

The positive notion of conflict supports the idea of conflict transformation seen or rather approached from the perspective of process reality. The process school of thought

⁹ Earl Conteh-Morgan, “Peacebuilding and Human Security: A Constructivist Perspective,” *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, no. 1 (2005): p. 73.

¹⁰ Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*, p. 9.

¹¹ Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, p. 24.

¹² Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, p. 15.

is another grounding influence on Lederach's model of conflict transformation.¹³ At the heart of the understanding and approach to conflict transformation as a process is that it is an endeavor that stretches over a long time and demands the involvement of many peace actors with different repertoires of practices and roles. This idea challenges the overly-rationalized approach of conflict resolution practitioners that focuses on short-term goals.

The Concept of Change

The idea of conflict as integral part of human existential dynamism correlates with the idea of change as also an inevitable part of human life. The conflict-generated change, as we have already seen, can be positive or negative, depending on how we approach conflict. Here we can understand conflict transformation as an endeavor to transform and channelize social conflict to produce or support positive dynamic growth and stability and to prevent the undesired and undirected effects of conflict from reaching a critical point of tension that destabilizes society and afflict peoples' lives. What captures this notion in Lederach's construct is the idea of constructive social change as the goal of conflict transformation. His working definition of constructive social change is "the pursuit of moving relationships from those defined by fear, mutual recrimination, and violence toward those characterized by love, mutual respect, and proactive engagement. Constructive social change seeks to change the flow of human interaction in social conflict from cycles of destructive relational violence toward cycles of relational dignity and respectful engagement."¹⁴ In practical effect, what this understanding calls for in transformative endeavor is to approach the change happening with conflict descriptively

¹³ Lederach draws his inspiration on process thinking primarily from what he calls the new sciences – "the developments in physics, biology, and environmental studies that in the latter half of the 20th century produced quantum and chaos theories, among others." Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, p. 72n. From this science perspective he endeavors to hold process and reality together, thus, "process-reality," which is one of the concepts the field of science uses to describe natural phenomena that are both process and structure at the same time. In this way he tries to overcome the greatest temptation and weak point of process thought, which is the neglect of human experience.

¹⁴ John P. Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 42.

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and prescriptively. In Lederach's construct, two questions direct this approach: What changes are occurring as a result of conflict and what changes do we seek?¹⁵

It is apparent from the above passage that the human person is at the center of the orientation and praxis of conflict transformation and the change it seeks. What must be explicitly noted here is that the human person is fundamentally a relational being, bounded in relationship that spans across all dimensions of human life as a life with others in community. This anthropological understanding undergirds Lederach's conflict transformation and peacebuilding approach that in his view the constructive social change it seeks should cut across the personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of human life and relations. This is crucial in such contexts as Africa where diverse factors that include domination, oppression and exploitation, lack of basic life amenities, agonizing poverty and suffering, among others, contribute in generating violent conflict. Because these factors are inimical to human integral well being and dignity change must be holistic.

One of the most important insights Lederach brings into peacebuilding endeavor is the need to adopt a nonlinear approach to the issue of change. The flow of change is not always lineal, but linear and circular. Understanding change in both perspectives, as he points out, is of dual importance. First, understanding change from a circular perspective reminds us that its processes are not one-directional; thus, no one point at a time determines the broader pattern. Second, understanding change from the linear perspective helps us to think of its overall direction and purpose. Evidently, in Lederach's construct, change itself has a feel of a process-structure.¹⁶ Also the idea of holistic change supports the idea that conflict transformation requires various actors who carry out constructive change activities at different levels of the society involved in conflict at the same time. This is critical for the case of Africa's intrastate conflicts.

¹⁵ John P. Lederach *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), pp. 82-83; Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, pp. 23-24.

¹⁶ Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, pp. 41-45.

The Basic Working Assumptions of Lederach's Faith-based Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding Approach

The Centrality of Relationship

The central working assumption of Lederach's conflict transformation is that relationship is the *locus* of conflict and its long-term solution.¹⁷ As noted at the beginning, such conflicts as Africa's intrastate conflicts, lodged in relationship, are complex. To adequately deal with it requires creative and complex approach that can penetrate into the web of the relationships in which the conflicts are entangled, bring genuine reconciliation, and be able to produce a better and wider set of interdependent relationship. Thus, Lederach rightly asserts that for such conflicts involving parties that share the same geographical space, reconciliation or transformation "is not pursued by seeking innovative ways to disengage or minimize the conflicting groups' affiliations, but instead is built on mechanisms that engage the sides of a conflict with each other as humans-in-relationship."¹⁸ Invariably, peacebuilders must appreciate the importance of relationships and conceptualize them in terms of social space, the "know who" in conflict society that discerns an "invisible web of social relationships."¹⁹ This centrality of relationship in conflict transformation and peacebuilding underscores the importance of moral imagination, which is one of Lederach's most useful contributions in the cutting edge practice of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. As he bluntly states, "If there is no capacity to imagine the canvas of mutual relationships and situate oneself as part of that historic and ever-evolving web, peacebuilding collapses. The centrality of relationship provides the context and potential for breaking violence, for it brings people into the pregnant moments of the moral imagination: the space of recognition that ultimately the quality of our life is dependent on the quality of life of others. It recognizes

¹⁷ Lederach, *Building Peace*, p. 26.

¹⁸ Lederach, *Building Peace*, p. 26.

¹⁹ Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, pp. 75, 78.

that the well-being of our grandchildren is directly tied to the well-being of our enemy's grandchildren."²⁰ With this understanding we are in the position to draw out further facts regarding relationship from the eyes of Africans who are noted for their strong relational or community sensitivity and praxis, even as protracted violent conflicts try to ravage their peoplehood.

Relationship is the wellspring, the fulcrum, and the gravitating point of the African peoplehood. Contrary to the modern Western individualism, the African world is a world where to live is to be united with others in a social context; either by bonds of family, or of kindred, village, or clan. The whole way of life lay on fidelity to the demands of relationship. The centrality of relationship in dealing with today's African conflicts makes the ethical concerns once regarded as the province of theologians and philosophers critical in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. To put it in the perspective of Donald Shriver, if we are to answer in the affirmative the question whether African society will survive, that answer must be in terms of demonstrated human potentials that God's presence in the realm of humanity is now the hope on which the continuing survival of Africa critically depends. At the heart of the moral invitation the Scriptures give us for this survival is Micah 6:8: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"²¹ Lederach also alludes to this same biblical passage together with Psalm 85 to show that the ethical concerns once regarded as the province of religion and theologians is a realistic basis for hope in any peace process today.²² Specifically, he introduces into peacebuilding the religiously affiliated concepts of truth, justice, mercy, peace, and hope as the fundamental concerns for enduring peace. It may be important to note further here that he expounds a faith-based peacebuilding approach the religious

²⁰ Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, p. 35.

²¹ Donald W. Shriver Jr., "The Terror in Ourselves," in *Surviving Terror: Hope and Justice in a World of Violence*, eds. Victoria L. Erickson and Michelle L. Jones (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002), pp. 114-15.

²² See John P. Lederach, *Journey toward Reconciliation*, with a forward by Harold H. Saunders (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1999), pp. 59, 94-96.

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ethical framework of which “understands peace as embedded in justice. It emphasizes the importance of building right relationships and social structures through a radical respect for human rights and life. It advocates nonviolence as a way of life and work.”²³ This religious moral element or framework adds to the aptness of his conflict transformation and peacebuilding approach for dealing with Africa's conflicts, realizing how religiously rooted Africans are and how critical the ethical values are to healthy relationship or community.²⁴

The determinants of a continuing healthy human relationship and community include justice, kindness, decency, equality, compassion, love, and nonviolence. A peacebuilding process appropriate to deal with identity conflicts must be able to define these ethical imperatives and abstractions and to transform them into concrete and fundamental realities. As Clark says, “An inability of individual human beings to free themselves from the more primitive demands of their constricted human egos and expand their egos to include sensitivity for the predicament of their fellow human beings; a pursuit of the goals of the past with the perspective of the past and the methods of the past – these are the mocking, leering, cruel dilemmas of the human joke, through which the relentless human spirit may find the will to live.”²⁵ The moral trajectory of nonviolent conflict

²³ Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, p. 4.

²⁴ To say that Africans are religiously rooted is not an overstatement. Religion is one of the major defining elements of the identity of an African. But the statement should not be seen as a claim of lack of ambivalence in the Africans' religious beliefs and practices. Empirical evidence suffices to convince one of the persistent attachments of Africans to religious faith. But ironically, one of such empirical as well as scientific evidence is the role religion is playing in the cause of today's Africa's violent conflict. For instance, in Rwanda, Burundi, and Somalia, among other places, war atrocities are committed under the canopy and dominance of religious affiliation and belief. Thus, while it may be said that Africans are religiously rooted, the ambivalence of religion among them is also a challenging phenomenon to the authenticity of their faith with respect to adherence to the fundamental ethical principles and teachings of the religions. The path to redeeming this situation is not one of promoting irreligiosity among the people, but one of helping them to live authentically by the ethical principles and mores of the faith they profess. Scott Appleby grappled with the ambivalence of religion and rightly suggests that this “paradoxical legacy” of religion lies primarily in the “ambivalent character of human responses to it.” Scott R. Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), p. 19. Authentic religious faith and practice is a veritable means of peace. It requires helping the people acquire the ethical background necessary to make critical choices in their ongoing relationships.

²⁵ Clark, *Pathos of Power*, pp. 15-16. Clark's comment is in consonance with what has been regarded as a sound and balanced anthropology, which was given birth in the twentieth century by personalist

transformation and peace and the centrality of relationship require that we be guided by the understanding of the human person and dignity as towards whom the only appropriate response is love.

Reconciliation as Encounter

Lederach is a user of metaphors. Contrary to the idea or opinion that the use of metaphor is a way to escape from certain reality, he uses metaphors to get to certain crucial realities or truths about reconciliation. Drawing insight from biblical stories he explored to understand the complex landscape of conflict and reconciliation, he describes reconciliation in different metaphors: as a journey, encounters, and a place.²⁶ The metaphor of encounter is closely linked to the idea of relationship, which is central in the process of reconciliation. Encounter in the process of reconciliation is not only about who and who encounter themselves, let us say the conflicting parties and the third-party mediators. It is equally about how they encounter themselves. Critical to encounter as reconciliation are the activities involved in creating the appropriate environment for the encounter and the disposition, disciplines, attitudes, and behaviors the parties put up in the encounter. Only a proactive encounter in which the parties see and approach their conflicts issues as issues to be solved and not issue to be won can produce genuine reconciliation. This is the crux of the matter; how can those who live under serious pain, psychological trauma, deep-seated hate and animosity, and urge to revenge make the turn needed to approach their conflict issues proactively as problems to be solved? Here the spiritual element in conflict comes to fore. Here is where religious role or rather faith-based peacebuilding practitioners are critically needed to assist the parties transcend their

philosophers and theologians within the broad existentialist current. The human person is a relational being who realizes his or her personality in self-disclosure and responsibility relationship with the other. This anthropology provides the necessary corrective to the one-sided extravagant liberal individualism, complemented the Christian traditional anthropology, and provides the framework upon which contemporary ethical constructs build.

²⁶ Lederach, *Journey toward Reconciliation*, pp. 22-26.

fears, pains, anxieties, and selfish orbits. The result is that encounter as reconciliation involves encounter with oneself, with the other, and with God.²⁷

To be sure, the idea of proactive encounter or rather of the conflict parties approaching their conflict issues as issues to be solved and not issues to be won does not suggest sweeping what had transpired in the cause and course of the conflict under carpet. The dynamics of encounter as reconciliation entails the meeting of the conflict parties where the past is probed in an atmosphere of acknowledgement of truth without getting locked into the vicious cycle of mutual exclusiveness that characterized the past, healing of wounds, forgiveness and restoration of broken relationship.²⁸ Evidently, encounter as reconciliation correlate with the paradigm of restorative justice, the aim of which is not to punish, but to correct and restore broken relationship.

The place or rather importance of moral imagination in peacebuilding is as equally apparently evident with this idea of encounter in Lederach's construct as with that of relationship, for the central challenge for peacebuilding entails the creation of the social space where a proactive encounter can take place. Encounter, which invokes moral imagination and creativity, is at the heart of the possibility of reconciliation and transformation of protracted conflicts as existing in Africa, which are based on the construction of collective memory and identity. Dealing with such conflicts demands overcoming a self-defeatist attitude that lets conflict or war be with frequent statements that they are inevitable and difficult to solve.²⁹ As Lederach says:

Providing space requires a predisposition, a kind of attitude and perspective that opens up, even invokes, the spirit and belief that creativity is humanly possible. Fundamentally, this requires a belief that the creative act and response are permanently within reach and, most importantly, are always accessible, even in

²⁷ Lederach, *Journey toward Reconciliation*, pp. 23-25.

²⁸ Lederach, *Building Peace*, p. 26.

²⁹ Peter Wallensteen, *Understanding Conflict Resolution: War Peace and the Global System* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 13.

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settings where violence dominates and through its oppressive swath creates its greatest lie: that the lands it inhabits are barren.³⁰

In other words, moral imagination and creativity are conceptual categories of conflict transformation that enable us to have the conviction to say that conflict is solvable and to work with that optimism. They enable us to “embrace the possibility that there exist untold possibility capable at any moment to move beyond the narrow parameters of what is commonly accepted and perceived as the narrow and rigidly defined range of choices.”³¹ Here is the new consciousness and functional optimism needed to deal with Africa's protracted conflicts.

Reconciliation as Embracing Place of Paradoxical Values

From the demonstrations of the paper so far, it is more or less apparent that in protracted intrastate conflicts, the emotive, perceptual, socio-psychological, and moral elements are not peripheral, but core concerns in conflict transformation. At the heart of moving human relationship in conflict beyond issues and toward encounter, healing and restoration of better justice-full and peaceful relationship is the spiritual dimension of conflict, the pursuit of which transcends the political, economic and psychological.³² It is this spiritual dimension – transforming relationship – that makes the overly rationalized approach of secular peacebuilding practitioners and traditional statist procedural technique of peace technocrats' alone insufficient to deal with today's identity conflicts. To deal with identity conflicts call for innovations, concepts, and mechanism, which, as Lederach says, their answers could only be found in philosophical and religiously biblically-based concepts that have traditionally been seen as either irrelevant or outside

³⁰ Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 38.

³¹ Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 38.

³² John P. Lederach, “Remember and Change,” in *Transforming Violence: Linking Local and Global Peacemaking*, eds., Judy Z. Herr and Robert Herr (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1998), pp. 188-89.

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the competency of international diplomacy. It is remarkable that such moral concepts as truth, mercy, justice, and peace have incarnated in the political arena in truth commission, national amnesty, war tribunals, and national reconciliation process, respectively.³³

The concerns, voices, and dynamics of these moral concepts deserve a space in the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding. They embody indispensable values for genuine reconciliation and healthy relationship. However, by their nature they constitute pairs of paradoxes – seeming irreconcilable contradictory ideas.

Truth is the longing for acknowledgment of wrong and the validation of painful loss and experiences, but it is coupled with Mercy, which articulates the need for acceptance, letting go, and a new beginning. Justice represents the search for individual and group rights, for social restructuring, and for restitution, but it is linked with Peace, which underscores the need for interdependence, well-being, and security.³⁴

In Lederach's view, an appropriate and adequate peacebuilding approach and genuine reconciliation in identity-rooted violent conflict case must embrace these paradoxical religiously affiliated concepts.

Among other paradoxes that Lederach identifies as related to the fundamental values of peace and which conflict transformation and peacebuilding process need to embrace are the paradox of open expression of the painful past and the search for the articulation of the long-term, interdependent future, the paradox of personal and systemic change, the paradox of empowerment and interdependence, and the paradox of process and outcome.³⁵ The central idea of some of these paradoxes are clear enough in the description of the elements of the conceptual framework of Lederach's conflict transformation and peacebuilding approach already given. For instance, the paradox of

³³ Lederach, *Building Peace*, p. 29; Lederach, *Journey toward Reconciliation*, p. 64.

³⁴ Lederach, *Building Peace*, p. 29.

³⁵ Lederach, *Building Peace*, p. 31; Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*, pp. 19-21.

personal and systemic change is evident in the analysis of the concept of change. This paradox is fundamental to the whole orientation of conflict transformation as a process that upholds and pursues awareness, growth, and commitment to change at personal and systemic levels. The paradox of open expression of the past and articulation of the future is evident in the above analysis of reconciliation as encounter and defines the paradigm of restorative justice and relationship. At the heart of the paradox of empowerment and interdependence, which can be discerned in what is said of relationship, is the idea that the empowerment of the individual is embedded in the empowerment of others in community. Empowerment involves mutual dependence. Logically, therefore, conflict transformation and peacebuilding must nurture community and work for the empowerment of the people to be active and full participants in the decisions and environment that touch their lives. The paradox of process and outcome suggests that peacebuilding must understand process as a way of life and outcome as a commitment to truth and restoration.³⁶

At this point, the paper will pay attention to the structural framework of Lederach's conflict transformation and peacebuilding approach.

Structural Framework of Lederach's Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding Approach

From the points elucidated so far of the identity-rooted and intrastate nature of today's Africa's conflicts and of conflict and change as the conceptual pillars of Lederach's conflict transformation, certain points appear obvious. Among them, dealing with today's Africa's conflict requires third-party insider-partial mediators with the cultural epistemology of the people. This, however, does not suggest that external mediation and mediators have no significant role to play in transforming African conflicts, but they have to work in collaboration with the indigenous third party

³⁶ Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*, pp. 20-22.

mediators. Among other reasons, it is important to ensure the sustainability of the peace process of which critical to this is to build a peace constituency or rather anchor the peacebuilding process around indigenous peace actors or mediators. Even as the peace process is indigenized, critically needed to deal with today's Africa's conflicts, and which is at the heart of Lederach's elicitive approach, is that it needs to be organic, requiring multiple actors and roles across all levels of the society involved in the conflict. Here, then, are the critical questions: Around what level actors within the population classes or levels of society are best situated to build a peace constituency? Which level of peace actors is best situated to connect the network of relationships in which the resolution of the conflict is lodged? Which level of actors has the strategic edge to link and integrate the roles, activities, and actors of and from other levels of the population? Which level of actors possesses the promising strategic position for continuing the constructive change process over time? These are the questions Lederach has given a powerful examination to develop the practical or structural framework of his conflict transformation and peacebuilding model.

One of the most influential conceptual pieces that Lederach introduced into the field of peacebuilding is his pyramidal conceptual analytic structure of levels of actors and their peacebuilding roles across the levels of the population in society involved in conflict. He identifies the population of society as existing along three vertical divides and levels and with it three categories of peace actors or leaders and their different roles. They include the top level, middle-range, and grassroots leaderships and actors.

At the apex of the pyramid – the top-level actors - is the elite group who are of military, political, and religious extraction. Whereas this group does not have the same numerical strength like the lower two groups, they enjoy a high profile and visibility in society, with constant focus of the media. Their peace approach is one of official diplomacy or negotiations, engaging the high-level leaders of the parties in conflict with the aim of achieving a settlement and a cease-fire in an on-going violent conflict. In the dynamics of their process, dealing with broader political and substantive issues in the

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conflict depends upon the success of a cease-fire. In like manner, the success of these leaders determines the involvement of the population at the lower levels. Thus, Lederach describes this approach as 'top-down,' or 'trickle-down' approach.³⁷

In the middle-range level are actors of considerable personality, who still command authority within their setting, but are not directly controlled by government authority or structures or major opposition movements. These actors include ethnic and religious leaders, academicians, and humanitarian leaders of nongovernmental organizations. While these leaders do not enjoy the same wide visibility and publicity of the top-level actors, they enjoy more freedom and flexibility, since they are not constrained by the political attachment and calculus that govern the top-level actors. Their status and influence in the setting come from ongoing relationships – some professional, some institutional, some formal, others matter of friendship and acquaintance. Remarkably, this group has greater numerical strength than the top-level actors. Also, while they may well have contact and relationship with the top-level actors and official process, they are significantly linked with the grassroots population and engage with the development of the civil society. Yet, they are not encumbered by the survival needs of the poor masses

³⁷ Lederach, *Building Peace*, pp. 38-40, 44-45; John P. Lederach, "Where do I fit in?" in *A Handbook of International Peacebuilding: Into the Eye of the Storm*, eds. John P. Lederach and Janice M. Jenner (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), p. 38; Lederach, "Remember and Change," 183-185. The media can be effective collaborators in peacebuilding. They can act as intermediary between the top officials and the populace in communicating the outcome from the official negotiation table and letting the official know what is going on at the grassroots. As such, there is need to emphasize the need for objective and constructive role of the media. As Gadi Wolfsfeld opines, "One cannot separate the influences the press will have on peace talks from what is happening outside the negotiating room. When the news media are playing a generally constructive role in the process, and the talks are being held in a mostly supportive environment, press coverage is less likely to have a negative influence on the negotiations. If, on the other hand, the news media are playing a relatively negative role in the overall process, they are also more likely to have a negative influence on talks. Policy-makers who focus exclusively on the technical issue of how to keep the talks secret are in danger of missing the bigger picture." Gadi Wolfsfeld, "The Role of the News Media in Peace Negotiations: Variations over Time and Circumstance," in *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes*, eds. John Darby and Roger M. Ginty (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 87.

at the grassroots level. Their peacebuilding activities and roles include problem-solving workshops, training in conflict resolution, and peace commissions.³⁸

Finally, at the grassroots level are the masses who are encumbered with daily survival needs. Leaders at this level are those who engage in local initiatives that aim at cushioning the effects of violence. They include local leaders, leaders of indigenous nongovernmental organizations, local health officials, and refugee camp leaders. These leaders more or less operate at the pressure of the real pathetic situation of the masses – their fears, deep-seated hatred, and animosities – to bring about structural changes that advance mutual accommodation. Though encumbered by daily survival needs, practical ideas and initiative can generate from this level and bubble up to produce a peace process that embraces the different population level and actor and produce concrete result. A typical example is the case of El Salvador, Ethiopia, and especially Somalia, where local peace conferences with representatives of the different clans achieved a series of agreements that generated a similar process at the higher levels. In Somalia it gave rise to the Grand Borama Peace Conference.³⁹

At this point, the paper will reflect on the organic approach of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the light of Lederach's construct, as required to deal with today's Africa's intrastate conflicts.

The Organic Conflict Transformation Approach as Needed for Africa's Intrastate Conflicts

The above analytic structure captures so well the picture of the African society and lets us see that different level peace actors and different roles, which no one level peace actors can provide alone, are needed to deal with today's Africa's conflicts. Also, the anthropology, creative nature and dynamics of conflict and change, the fundamental

³⁸ Lederach, *Building Peace*, pp. 41-42; Lederach, "Where Do I fit In?" pp. 38-39. The paper will take up again later the place and role of this group.

³⁹ Lederach, *Building Peace*, pp. 43, 52-53.

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values that authentic reconciliation and peace require, and the collective roles needed to deal with today's conflicts, as they emerged from the paper's explication of the frameworks of Lederach's conflict transformation and peacebuilding approach, are in line with the African context, the nature and dynamics of its conflicts and the approach needed to deal with them. Drawing out the implications of the collective elements the framework builds on and envisions for the peacebuilding approach to deal with intrastate identity conflicts in relation to Africa's, what is most evident is that we cannot continue with intellectually convenient fractionation of reality or isolationist hierarchical peacemaking/peacebuilding approach. In other words, the nature of today's Africa's conflicts and the framework of Lederach's conflict transformation and peacebuilding paradigm, which the paper finds apt to deal with such conflicts, challenge us to a functional approach to interdisciplinary conflict study and analysis and a collective and sustainable process of conflict transformation involving all sociological authorities – the government, all religions and religious groups, nongovernmental organizations, institutions, and peace technocrats. To put it in Lederach's words, the new approach we need to address today's Africa's conflicts requires that we must move beyond a number of frontiers. "We must move beyond a short-term, crisis orientation and toward development of our capacity to think about social change designs in terms of decades. We must move beyond a hierarchical focus on politics and toward the construction of an organic, broad-based approach that creates space for genuine responsibility, ownership, and participation in peacebuilding. We must move beyond a narrow view of postconflict peacebuilding as a political transition and toward the formation of a web that envisions a whole body politic, whole persons seeking change in a radically changing environment."⁴⁰ Given its centrality, this point needs further elucidation.

Appropriate approach in dealing with today's Africa's conflicts cannot afford to neglect moral issues, personal transformation, the agonizing and pungent cesspool of dehumanizing poverty and urgently needed relief aids or the neglect of systematic and

⁴⁰ Lederach, "Remember and Change," p. 189.

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strategic study and approach to social problems, policies, actions, and change. Social scientists have a key role to play in the study and understanding of conflict, of “intensification of conflicts; and the pseudo resolution of conflicts through emotional catharsis. Social psychologist might ask even more fundamental questions such as: What do we mean by social change? What are stable criteria by which the idea of progress can be demonstrated as a fact in human social interaction? To what extent is perceived change or verbalization of change a reflection of the reality of change? Does significant change occur under conditions without conflict?”⁴¹ But as obvious as is the need for their role and of the practical peace technocrats’ is that no promising peace process can afford to overlook the soft elements of peacemaking/peacebuilding such as changing the peoples’ minds and hearts, the quality of relationships, the peoples’ attitudes, behaviors, perceptions, ideas, and value orientations. No such peace process can neglect issues of immediate relief aid to cushion the biting effects of the violent conflicts. Evidently, the peace processes in today’s Africa’s conflicts need, must provide space for the participation and role of religious peace actors, nongovernmental organizations, and other sociological authorities, together with secular peacebuilding practitioners and technocrats’.

Simply put, what dealing with today’s Africa’s conflicts need is an organic or community nonviolent process of conflict transformation, the single most important thing needed to support it of which is to create a genuine sense of participation, responsibility, and ownership in the process across the different levels of the population.⁴² As Lederach describes it, organic peace process “envisions peacemaking as a web of interdependent activities and people. The web links and cuts across levels, types of activity, and time. It creates a binding effect, holding people and processes together. It is systematic in orientation, understanding that changes in one component of the system affect the whole system, but no one component controls the process of change in the whole. This calls for

⁴¹ Clark, *Pathos of Power*, p. 89.

⁴² Lederach, “Remember and Change,” pp. 185-186.

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building an infrastructure for peace, particularly at the middle and grassroots levels.”⁴³ Indeed, the inclusion of grassroots level in the new peace process to resolve Africa's conflicts is a far cry from the logic of the traditional hierarchical statist management approach. The logical assumption in anchoring the peace process on the middle and grassroots levels is “that changes in attitudes, perceptions and skills, and relationship- and trust-building within a small group can translate to the level of policy-makers who have a role in making decisions relating to conflict behavior.”⁴⁴ This is a bottom-up approach.

However, it is precisely the middle-range actors that are strategically positioned to have the transformative platform of vertical and horizontal integration of all the actors, roles, and relationships across the identity divisions in creative response to the progression of conflict built around. We can understand the logic further from the point of view that in the grassroots leadership bottom-up role successful consultations and peace initiatives need to be transported from the micro level to the macro level. It is the middle range actors that are strategically positioned to transfer new ideas and relationships to the macro level, linking top-level actors. The same can be said of transporting of and involving of the grassroots population in the peace initiatives of the top-level actors. But their capacity for horizontal connection – linking the different conflict parties – presents a strong logic.⁴⁵

⁴³ Lederach, “Remember and Change,” p. 185.

⁴⁴ Sandra Cheldelin and Terrence Lyons, “Facilitation and Consultation,” in *Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention*, eds. Sandra Cheldelin, Daniel Druckman, and Larissa Fast (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 263.

⁴⁵ According to Lederach, “Horizontal capacity ... refers to relationships among people and groups that cut across the identity divisions that may exist in a given location, be those ethnic, religious, racial, or linguistic. Integration is the space where vertical and horizontal linkages come together, at the center of things.” Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, pp. 79-80. In his early works, especially, his classic text, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Lederach dubs the approach of the middle-range actors the “middle-out” approach. See Lederach, *Building Peace*, p. 46. With his recent work, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, he sees this name as unsuitable. As he says, it connotes the idea of leaving the location of the conflict to find answer to its challenges outside, whereas his true intention is about networking within the setting – finding resources based on relationships, connectors, and social spaces within the conflict society or setting that is capable of generating processes of change. Hence, he renames this approach “the web approach.” Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, pp. 78-80.

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Having stated this idea of organic indigenous grassroots-based peacebuilding approach in the light of Lederach's construct, certain points need to be specified here. First, the building of peace constituency around the middle range actors responds to the need to operate with a long-term framework toward sustainable process of constructive holistic change. At the heart of sustainability and successful transformation of conflict into increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships is availability, presence, or accompaniment. Accompaniment is essential to protecting the vulnerable, achieving a sense of justice for the victims of injustice, purifying their memories and healing their wounds, and fostering and maintaining relationships. Accompaniment is also needed for those accused of crime. As this paper has tried to show, restoration of relationship is an ultimate goal of Lederach's paradigm of conflict transformation it espouses. The paradigm of restorative justice and relationship entails a process of encounter and reconciliation that neither neglects the rights, dignity and wellbeing of the oppressed nor overlooks the dignity of the oppressors, but helps to lift both parties beyond their conflict issues into a more justice-full ongoing interdependent relationship. Here the role of religion or religious peace actors or practitioners is critical to help produce the kind of environment needed for successful encounter of the conflicting parties to transcend their conflict issues.

Second, with the need to build a local peace constituency around the grassroots population, precisely the middle level actors, the need to integrally involve religious role and peace actors in the new peacebuilding approach to address today's Africa's conflicts cannot be overemphasized. To name more specifically (in addition to those already identified in this paper) the factors and roles that distinguish the involvement religious peace actors as invaluable resource in peacebuilding; religion commands a significant influence, or rather constitutes an important element in the lives of people. It has a strong power and capacity of molding peoples' worldviews, ideas, identity, value orientations, and character. It has the unique power of middle range peace actors' productivity and the ubiquity that reaches to the deepest grassroots level. These are vital for committed and

credible accompaniment and to deal successfully with specific conflicts in the context of the overall relationship. Furthermore, Religious leaders enjoy a broad respectability and trust and so the capacity to secure relationships of respect and trust across the parties or societies involved in conflict.

Third, an appropriate organic process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding to address today's Africa's conflict, anchored around the middle range actors, should not be driven by the concern for quick solution. The tendency of such peace processes driven by concern for quick solution is to concentrate on the immediate presenting issues without addressing the deeper layers of the conflict to improve the long-term relationship. This is a colossal error of our fast-paced world in dealing with identity conflicts. It is one of the reasons many African conflicts that were thought to have been successfully resolved keep reemerging. Unfortunately, when the unaddressed issues that lay at the deeper levels of the conflicts begin to generate new tension or conflict the governments often try to suppress them with force. Contemporary Africa's intrastate identity violent conflicts are embedded in a web of other deeper factors that call for long-term engagement, elicitive approach, and networking. They demand that mediation and peacebuilding should be an open-ended commitment. They demand an organic process that is rather driven by the concern of how to "create and sustain platform capable of generating adaptive change processes that address both the episodic expression of the conflict and the epicenter of the conflictive relational context."⁴⁶ Dealing with today's Africa's conflicts needs a new collective consciousness and conviction that the resources necessary to resolve the conflicts exist within Africa.

Conclusion

The paper has tried to show that Lederach's elicitive and faith-based conflict transformation and peacebuilding model, oriented toward restorative justice and

⁴⁶ Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, p. 47.

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relationship and a holistic change, and which calls forth community participation, provides a suitable approach to deal with Africa's intrastate conflicts. From the analysis and reflection of this paper, working with this approach requires that African states, all sociological groups and authorities, and all peace technocrats and actors should be committed to producing, seeking out, and engaging the middle-range peace actors in an organic nonviolent peace process anchored around them. Invariably and practically, this means generating a process of conflict transformation that seeks active participation across the broad spectrum of the population of African societies involved in conflict. It is important to note that this approach is such that must seek to address both the immediate and the underlying factors involved in the conflicts and pursue holistic change over a long time commitment. It is the conviction of this paper that such an organic and sustainable process of conflict transformation over a long time will produce a more peaceful African society.