



Research Article

Embodied Partnership: Supporting Survivors of Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda through Dance/ Movement Therapy Principles and Body-Mind Strategies

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Abstract

Embodied partnership is a multicultural arts-based framework aimed at enhancing the health and wellbeing of vulnerable communities in Rwanda. Genuine embodied partnership from a body-movement based orientation includes four main principles: kinesthetic awareness, expanding movement repertoire, attunement and empathy, and meaning making; all towards therapeutic healing. The uniqueness of the partnership described in this chapter is how body-mind strategies and the creative arts from an American cultural orientation, are collaboratively integrated into a cultural landscape where these elements are already embedded across Rwandan culture and lifestyle in everyday experiences. Avega, an organization in Rwanda that was established to support widows in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, and Ease Stress Holistically, an American based therapeutic healing arts program, is such an example. Ease Stress Holistically is a train-the-trainer model that integrates dance and dance/movement therapy principles to empower, ease stress, and to promote healing for Avega counselors and genocide survivors alike. Structural aspects of dance, meditation, relaxation strategies, and other body-based practices are all incorporated within a dynamic interactive model that responds to moment-to-moment shifts and relationships. It is the nature of ongoing subtle awareness of bodily sensations and nonverbal qualities that hierarchical power

structures dissolve. When all partners are predominantly focusing on the same priorities and goals at hand, particularly as it relates to “in the moment” body movement dynamics during interactions, power differentials are diminished, and therapeutic health outcomes are achieved.

At the heart of cross-cultural embodied partnership relationships are somatic experiences, oftentimes not quite so conscious. These vibrant bodily and nonverbal elements illuminate potential for relationship building, mutual awareness, creativity, and healing. Integrating these reciprocal nonverbal dynamics guide participant-centered learning. Body-mind strategies and the creative arts from an American cultural orientation, are collaboratively interwoven into the context of healing and resilience among post 1994 genocide survivors in Rwanda who are supported by AVEGA-AGAHOZO programs. In addition, integrating embodied elements is also applied to the partnership relationship itself. Concrete and metaphoric exploration in experiential learning can be demonstrated through metaphor, stories, rituals, and other creative body-movement expressions. References such as these are “cultural carriers” that help illustrate meaning making based on the cultural code that is embedded in deep-rooted memory and ongoing everyday experiences. Embodied practices facilitate new dimensions of collective memory and provide the scaffold to enable traumatized individuals and communities to feel more grounded and better prepared to restore human connection [1].

About 1,070,014 Tutsi were killed in only 100 days as shown by the Ministry of Local Government in its 2002 research, a huge number of ordinary citizens were involved and killed their neighbors and their church mates. The killers and those being killed shared the same cultural values and spoke one language. People killed their relatives; government institutions and religious institutions were involved in the killings. The international community especially the United Nations and other human international human rights organizations stood aloof and abandoned Rwanda. During the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, genocide planners and perpetrators used sexual torture, mutilation, and enslavement as weapons of genocide against Tutsi women and girls, estimates suggest that 250,000 to 500,000 women were raped. Women and girls contracted HIV during rape, thousands of children were born of this violence, no one knows how many exactly, these children were largely raised in families of survivors, and they do not know the families of those who raped their mothers, both the children and activists contend. It is against this backdrop collective trauma ensued.

After the genocide ended in July 1994, Rwanda was a devastated country. Its basic infrastructure was destroyed, many surviving Tutsis had lost their families. Many women suffered the consequences of rape and sexual violence. Thousands of children were orphaned and had to fend for themselves. Countless survivors developed long-term psychological problems and formed the backbone of survivor-based organizations. It was in this context that AVEGA-AGAHOZO was established.

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Whilst the world was coming to terms with this horrific event, a group of fifty women met in Kigali. On 15th January 1995, these survivors came together to share their experiences of the genocide. They had all been widowed during the violence and their aim was to provide care, support, and comfort to one another.

As their group grew in number, they decided to create an association to help widows and their families across the country. They called this association AVEGA-AGAHOZO. AVEGA stands for Association des Veuves du Génocide (Association of Widows of the Genocide). AGAHOZO is a Kinyarwanda word meaning 'to dry your tears.' Today, there are more than 20,000 widows and over 71,000 dependents and genocide orphans among AVEGA-AGAHOZO members. Programs also support young people experiencing transgenerational trauma and with children born to genocide rape. What began as a conversation has grown into a country-wide support network helping people to start businesses, become financially independent, reclaim lost land and property, and access mental health support. Non-binary boundaries of reciprocity between members, survivors, counselors, and leaders set the stage for equity and minimize power differentials between participants.

The organization was registered as a local non-profit on 30th October 1995, and is supported by the Government of Rwanda, President Paul Kagame and First Lady Jeannette Kagame, the Survivors Fund (SURF), and by organizations and individual donors in countries across the world. AVEGA-AGAHOZO is working to foster social justice for widows of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, as well as, for other vulnerable women, children and families affected by the nationwide conflict. These goals are met through improving access to healthcare, socio-economic opportunities and enhancing gender parity all aimed at transforming and rebuilding healthier lives. AVEGA-AGAHOZO seeks to build a nation of optimism where people lead dignified lives free from all forms of conflict and trauma. Approaches prioritize collectivism and community, as working together is seen as the only way to achieve one's full potential as human beings (www.avega-agahozo.org).

Ease Stress Holistically is an American-based train-the-trainer model that integrates dance and dance/movement therapy principles to empower, to ease stress, and to promote individual and collective healing. Improvisational aspects of dance/movement, breath awareness, meditation, relaxation strategies, and other body-based practices are all developed within a dynamic interactive model. The Rwandan cultural integration and lineage of dance, community, and healing is well documented and integral to peacebuilding and resilience. The rich potential of Rwandan dance/movement lineage, mixed with American orientations to body-mind practices and dance, form the possibility for boundless exchanges and discoveries. The fluid and non-binary dynamics of multicultural partnerships along with the healing potential of integrating body-mind elements, prioritizes the lived experiences of genocide survivors, relational reciprocity and mutuality, and the illumination of complex dynamics during in-the-moment interactions.

The mental health and wellbeing of genocide survivors, members, and leaders interchangeably within the AVEGA-AGAHOZO community, continues to be a struggle for many. The pronounced percentage of the overall population of survivors reveals enduring challenges with post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD); estimated 26.1 % of overall survivor population, and 22.7% at risk for major depressive episodes [2]. Grounded theory emphasizes the necessity of

contextualizing a person's lived experiences and the complex dynamics of exploring emotional, physical, existential, and psychosocial sequelae related to the traumatic effects of genocide over time. When an entire society is traumatized, as is clearly the context both culturally and concretely in Rwanda, healing must not only take place individually, but equally if not more importantly, collectively. Naming collective wounds, exploring healing holistically, and pursuing new understanding, are all aimed at envisioning a future free from revenge and violence [1].

Deepening self-and collective-awareness through avenues beyond cognition and the mind, offer traumatized individuals and communities, opportunities for developing awareness that include processes of body-mind awareness. Experiential learning that highlights direct in-the-moment social interactions, creativity, reflection, and experientially based insights expand the potential for wholeness and new discoveries. Sensitively attuned facilitated body-mind transpersonal experiences support efforts to restore functional body-mind connection, self-awareness, self-confidence, and greater empathy toward collective healing [1]. Potentiating living life to the fullest by engendering hope and confidence through creative expression and movement interaction highlight the ongoing richness of cultural heritage and the context of Rwandan life. Creatively based interactions offer a bridge that can span many dimensions of human existence and therapeutically link people to one another and shared common goals for the future [3]. Victim-perpetrator boundaries and roles diminish when concrete body movement activities become the groundwork for novel actions beyond the therapeutic setting. Healing arts are both ancient and contemporary. Through employing embodied experiences, stress and trauma are remediated. Rwandan arts culture and lineage, combined with American body-mind theories and practices, set the stage for transforming collective suffering into opportunities for collective resilience and healing.

Knowledge and understanding should emerge out of the local context and should privilege the voice of the participants: deeply integrating what they say, do, and feel and how they make meaning of their everyday lives [2]. Sharing collaborative multicultural knowledge and resources between American-based and Rwandan-based cultural programs is vibrant within the AVEGA-AGAHOZO community. Interrelatedness between roles and empowering resources that already exist among individuals and groups, are aimed at highlighting reciprocity. Promoting and empowering self-help strategies raise in-country participants' ability to achieve personal and community resilience and emotional relief necessary to build peaceful relationships. Survival and prosperity require collaboration. "We don't have any problems living together. But we also don't have a choice. If we don't live together the genocide will start again [4]."

These processes require a delicate balance. As shifts occur in the expression and communication articulating grievances and post traumatic experiences, shifts in the larger social balance also occurs. Individual and collective healing co-exist in the landscape of socio-political restoration and peace building. Dissolving barriers between victims and offenders requires ongoing awareness, respect, and flexibility, not only intellectually, but also through the richness of embodied somatic information. The ongoing transformative processes to repair "ethnic cleavages" must originate within communities. Encountering and dissolving barriers between victims and offenders is about establishing the trust necessary to not just tolerate but to cooperate in partnership that can survive even the threat of failure [4].

As humans, we draw on our experiences to shape narratives about our lives, but equally and mutually, our identity and character are shaped by our narratives. People emerge from and are the products of their stories about themselves as much as their stories emerge from their lives. Ease Stress Holistically and AVEGA-AGAHOZO'S approaches for resilience and healing integrate nonverbal body-mind practices and dance/movement therapy principles and practices. Revealing diffuse aspects of conflict may remain elusive in verbal and linear discourse. Offering a window into others' bodily cues, noticing subtle shifts related to opportunities or obstacles heightening cultural fluency. Somatic and kinetic awareness through neurological regulation and practice build and sustain a state of open receptiveness. Providing access to an array of physical movements has the potential to elevate mood, energy level, motivation, and self-esteem. The capacity to jolt, shake, and resonate with people on an emotional level, simultaneously accesses neural systems and unconscious processes that evade conventional conflict resolution strategies [5]. Achieving empathic understanding by mirroring physical cues, subtle qualities of posture, muscle, movement, and gesture generate resonance and synchrony. This, in turn, stimulates the limbic system and helps develop interpersonal affective resonance.

Exploring changes in self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and philosophy of life in the aftermath of genocide traumatic events is central to developing compassionate interactions, and integrated awareness for healing potential [6]. Reflecting on memory as presented through narratives as discourse in language (verbal and nonverbal) help evaluate greater cohesion or divide among groups. Promoting a balance between remembering and forgetting post-genocide trauma in Rwanda is a delicate dance. In-the-moment opportunities to share narratives that mediate between self and other can provide collective identity to help communities build common interpretations of the past. Body movement and nonverbal expressions of these stories or narratives is aimed at re-establishing wholeness and connection, extending beyond merely cognitive processes. Through mindfully facilitated programs, compassionate and empathic care responds, attends, and conforms to the vital present moment expressions of Rwandan genocide survivors' needs and emotions. Humans are living, breathing, and ever evolving beings who engage phenomenologically throughout life. Through creative holistic engagement with each other, communities reorganize their individual and shared history by exploring felt experiences in the body. Intuitive nonverbal expressions communicate heightened presence, emergence of possibility, nuances of caring-healing, and the essence of what it means to be human, love [2].

Dance throughout Rwandan culture and history has been meaningfully connected to the dynamics of Rwandan identity over time. As a means of negotiating ethnic, regional, and national identity, before and after the 1994 genocide, the symbolic nature of dance has been central. Creating and performing dances have remained rooted in ancestral stories of the past, even as post-genocide rebuilding has demanded considerations of modernity and global development. Dance is an effective domain that spotlights embodiment of a new nation over time, while continuing to honor Rwandan heritage and traditions. Dance has been a means of addressing the sudden and devastating rupture of the genocide and explore transformative properties of resilience and healing. Traditional dances aim to link the royal court and so called 'popular dances' belonging to different regions of Rwanda [7]. The desire to integrate novelty and tradition in the evolution of dance in Rwanda mirrors healing processes of past, present,

and future; all necessary to sustain integrated and balanced mental health, individually and collectively.

Many involved in conflict-resolution live in their heads and experience disconnection from the body and related somatic experiences. When integrating dance, movement, and body-mind awareness, the body becomes a critical instrument for transformation. Through improvisational dance/movement, aesthetics, and exploring access to one's physical vocabulary and "somatically braided cognition," body and brain are in constant communication [8]. Rebuilding from genocide in Rwanda is a public health concern, that requires public health solutions. To achieve health promotion goals, strategies for communities are needed to protect and strengthen existing resources, prevent future threats of discourse and violence among groups, and to address issues of power and inequalities specifically and historically.

The concept of resilience in Rwanda underscores the relevance of integrating somatic creativity based in its cultural and linguistic roots. Resilience is defined with three words in Kinyarwanda, the primary Rwandan language; *Kwihangana*: intrapsychic creative process of drawing strength from within the self and withstand suffering, *Kwongerero Kubaho*: the belief that living life is still possible after torture, rape, and terror, and *Gukomeza Ubuzima*: a sense of moving forward, despite ongoing struggles [9]. Striving for resilience and overcoming obstructive hardships become the priorities for many survivors. Courage and risk taking is involved when exploring emotional expression and interpersonal dynamics, all aimed at peace building towards the potential for something new.

Embodied collective healing practices are not only psychological and emotionally fruitful, but one can also better understand the potency of such tools through neuroscientific inquiry. Examining the embodied dimensions of cognition, emotion, and memory, the physical roots of empathy, and creative movement in the context of conflict-resolution and healing, can be particularly powerful when the body is brought into focus. Connecting bodily sensations and feelings among others in a group format through body-movement, helps raise awareness and provides the brain with a map for self-recognition and agency. Interoception (internal), exteroception (external), and proprioception (awareness of the body in space) all provide pathways that build mutual understanding and attunement. Triggering the autonomic nervous system is unconscious during times of stress, threat, or shame. Reducing these sensations with awareness promotes a state of open receptiveness and flexibility. If the body remains in an intense state of stress or threat, this provokes further entrenchment and distance. Physical sensation is not only the expression but also the source of emotion. Through this complex neural system, the brain assigns physical sensation and experience with meaning and possibilities for new discoveries and insights. Creative processes involve disassociating from the frontal lobe with its control functions so that we can take risks, make mistakes, and fuel pathways for discovery. Dance engages these processes through nonverbal, visual, spatial, expressive, emotional, embodied, and metaphorical modalities. Focusing on the present moment, quieting the chatter of the left brain and tendencies for self-scrutiny, absolutes, and divisions are naturally released [5].

Emotions begin with bodily sensations. Instinctively bodily sensations stimulate neurological processing which synchronously imbues information with affective value, predominantly occurring underneath the level of consciousness. Our brains work to holistically integrate whole body sensations, emotions, images, metaphors, a

world of interconnections and creative possibilities. The brain like other muscles is akin to rewiring itself. In conflict, we fall back on familiar patterns: trained “incapacity”. Building capacity by practicing new patterns hinges on the notion that changes in patterns of thought, action, and relations are possible. Creative movement in particular: expression, relationality, improvisation, and physical movement promote opportunities for conflict transformation as we increase understanding in the dynamics between physical movements and communication. Body-mind awareness practices support the potential for new discoveries and resolutions. Since emotionally charged stressful and conflictual experiences necessarily involve the whole body-mind system, it follows that through developing awareness in these same mechanisms, healing and change is enhanced.

Dance and body movement are themselves the subject of individual and relational expression. These resources bring to life, literally, opportunities to reshape trauma-based memories with the potential for new mental connections, all stemming from creative processes of active experientially based movement interactions. Dance/movement in these therapeutic realms is organically understood on an embodied level in Rwandan culture as communities tell their stories through dance. Identity and resilience are explored through dance/movement expression in the cultural heritage of Rwandan life. Remembering the genocide is relevant nation-wide in Rwanda, and throughout the world for that matter. There is a strong value in remembering, because if you do not remember (the genocide), then you do not have all the truth [10]. Dance is such a way of remembering, since embodied experiences bridge the span of many dimensions of human existence that also can therapeutically link people to one another [3]. Integrating creative body movement expression and interaction draw people out from self-consciousness into self-awareness, call attention to the process itself of expression, utilize metaphor and present-moment experiences, alleviate somatic distress, and contribute to new ideas and interests that support empathy and understanding. The potency of creative movement and bringing the body into the process, evokes emotions and trains the malleable mind. Embodied processes are essential foci of conflict theory and a ready resource and distinction contribution to the process of healing, resilience, and conflict resolution.

Entrainment, temporarily coupled synchronized systems, integrates bodies within themselves, and in relation to the outside world. People commonly entrain with each other, through postural swaying, coordinated rhythmic movements, breathing, and even heart rate may spontaneously arise. Conscious and unconscious entrainment provide avenues that develop a sense of group belonging. Whether among humans or other species in the animal kingdom, entrainment has been present since early on in our evolutionary history. When these practices are facilitated intentionally, mirroring and joining others in synchronized movement dynamics of others’ shapes, emotions, thoughts, and actions, the expressive interest of the emerging collective is augmented. Sharing an attentional focus on interpersonal entrainment can lead individuals to perceive each other as part of a common group, valuing the collective beyond individual interests [11].

Prior to entrainment, traumatized genocide survivors have their own personal stories of suffering and distress that require attention. A sense of safety must first be acquired, starting with the basic control over one’s body, and then working progressively toward collective healing in the larger social environment. Through body-based experiences that explore breath awareness, self-other spatial boundaries,

self-touch, and grounding movements that stabilize the body, inhabiting one’s own body again is more possible. Once the body is under some semblance of control, genocide survivors need a ‘safe refuge’ from harm from which individuals can begin to re-establish attention toward group and community healing. Healing is a long, complex, and non-linear process. Assumptions, knowledge, and expectations of suffering individuals concerning the behaviors of others has been shattered and rebuilding connection and trust is complicated. Developing the capacity to integrate others’ experiences takes time and care. Severely traumatized individuals are unlikely prepared to readily empathize with others without a sense of physical security (starting with the body), before developing the capacity to connect to others in social environments. Expressions toward other people, mercy, or forgiveness, are all building blocks toward reconciliation and healing. It is harder to undertake community development without a minimum of mutual trust [12].

Rwanda as a collectivist culture holds the notion of togetherness in great value. Resilience and healing in individuals naturally leads to priorities of community. Like in other African countries, the togetherness among Rwandan people is expressed in suffering together, celebrating together, and caring together. Individuals relate to themselves through their relationships with community [2]. The 1994 genocide against the Tutsis pierced and destroyed collectivist values and ways of life. The destructive and divisive ethnic slaughtering harshly disrupted community wholeness. Periods of reconciliation and healing take time and a commitment to the delicacy of rebuilding peaceful communities. Developing a common identity, a “we feeling,” is shared between people who recall the same past, rendering their social interactions ultimately meaningful, reconnect to hope and the potential for something different in the future. As the author Robin Wall Kimmerer of *Braiding Sweetgrass* writes,

“If one tree fruits, they all fruit—there are no soloists. Not one tree in a grove, but the whole grove; not one grove in the forest, but every grove; across the country and all across the state. The trees are not individuals, but somehow as a collective. Exactly how they do this, we don’t yet know. But what we see is the power of unity. What happens to one happens to us all... All flourishing is mutual (p.15).”

Collective healing is multi-layered, to say the least. Many diverse and overlapping elements co-exist, explore new shapes, and find dynamic resolutions over time. Nothing is fixed and a sense of hope is necessary to fuel collective healing processes and potential. Imagining renewal and positive perspectives about the future is core to collective endeavors toward healing. Building resilience and reconciliation in a context of communal trauma cannot be achieved through individual structures or approaches [13]. Facilitating group and community gatherings that facilitate expressive and creative messages of hope builds positive future-oriented experiences that correspond to believing in favorable outcomes. Restoration of hope and purpose is central to coping, leading to a life worth living. Reciprocally sharing positive stories through body movement improvisation and creativity promote the capacity to increase social engagement and cohesion. Exploring themes of hope as a collective encourages development of cooperative communities built around shared ideas or opinions.

Hope leads to cognitive reappraisal and emotion regulation. Perhaps most of all, at a collective level, one can feel hope for the future of one’s own minority or ethnic group, as well as hope for the future of the Rwandan nation. Expressions and relationship building of hope

are not unidimensional. Hope or trust, *icyizere* in Kinyarwanda, requires ongoing interdisciplinary collaboration [14]. A strong will to live, hope for the future, and positive psychological attitudes are anchors for healing and resilience for many genocide survivors. While the will to survive and endure is a predominant theme, it should not overshadow the need for all organizations and programs, government, and nongovernment, to provide long term care and support for survivors [15].

In addition to themes of hope, collective healing processes require embodied expression and communication. Experiences of trauma deserve full collective attention among survivors to create a space to communicate stories, memories, and emotions. Opportunities to share genocide trauma in “dynamic words” [12] is best conveyed through creativity, in-the-moment interactive experiences, and communal dance/movement celebrations. Collective healing is ongoing and takes time and practice. Without collective healing, the capacity for post-conflict communities to build peace is weakened, if not threatened. Rwandan music and traditional Rwandan dances are mixed with body-mind practices and theories that respect the resources that are already sourced in Rwandan culture. Engaging in creative processes that link past, present and future, along with traditional practices (music, drumming, chanting, dancing, and other body-oriented activities), weave contemporary and ancient body-mind and dance modalities as pathways toward health and wellbeing. Through facilitated body-mind and dance/movement practices, feelings and affect within people to celebrate each other and share coping with life’s highs and lows more naturally occurs.

When we are joining together in social engagement, we are performing together, and “when we start dancing all rise up and we dance in unison” [3]. Compassionate and empathic care is central to collective healing. This type of communal environment responds best when survivors cross over binary lines of “victims” and “perpetrators.” True collective healing requires that survivors respond to each other as a living, breathing, evolving experience. Collective healing is a fluctuating phenomenological experience of engagement. Embodied approaches in collective healing must integrate the history, stories, narratives, and presence of the community over time, not only in words, but through active present experiences among the collective. Reflecting upon the practice of dance in Rwandan culture augments how cultural expressions can shape national pathways toward greater understanding among groups. Traditional dance and dances performed in local communities promote re-imagining a unified Rwanda, while honoring stories and memories of the past. Reworking traditional dance forms that reconfigure recovery themes of healing, provide an essential language to the unchanging substance of Rwandan identity and unity [10].

Collective healing from collective trauma of this magnitude in post-genocide Rwanda ideally integrates body, mind, and spirit. The process is integrative and involves naming collective wounds together, processing them together, interpreting their meanings together, all towards envisioning a future free from revenge and violence. Experiential healing that involves shared somatic experiences emphasizes learning from direct experience. The values of present-moment learning are enhanced when engaging in body-mind and dance/movement interactions. Focusing on present-moment expressive movement structures of direct experience offer reflection, identification of insights, and possibilities for action all within creative improvisation and movement activities. Moving together in facilitated or

coordinated ways has been shown to promote prosocial effects among the entire collective such as increasing liking, helping and cooperation [10].

Collaborative programs with *Ease Stress Holistically* and *AVEGA-AGAHOZO* emphasize what has been learned by early evolutionary theorists about group behavior and from ancestors, long ago. When groups, of humans and/or animals, are engaged in common coordinated rhythms, internal stability, increased cooperation, enhanced bonding, and greater collaboration within the group all emerge. Resilience and healing are embodied when these somatic experiences are conveyed through direct interactions, with present attention to the same focus. One person’s traumatic triggers undoubtedly influence the experience of others within groups and collective communities. Group structures and formats offer space for people to build trust towards sharing intimately what is haunting them and assured that the environment will promote deep listening. Loneliness, depression, anxiety, and feelings of isolation are curtailed when the focus and goals of group experiences highlight interactive support and expression [16].

The use of rituals, body-mind awareness and kinesthetic movements activate the senses and augment the real-time sensations of building relationships and healing. Members of the community engage in experiential learning holistically. Communal somatic interpersonal explorations transform social experience through direct real-time moments, identifying new capacity for transforming the opinions, beliefs, actions, and relationships of the collective [1]. Through directly learning about emotions through associated physical processes, genocide survivors are better able to manage and respond to emotions in conflict. Learning how gesture, posture, and cognition interact may generate new approaches to conflict intervention that shift attitudes and behaviors more effectively than reason or talk alone [5].

In the heart of the partnership between *AVEGA-AGAHOZO* and *Ease Stress Holistically* is an embodied dynamic that emerges out of real-lived direct experiences of mutuality and reciprocity. Ongoing flexible awareness of and respect for the complexity of each other’s cultures forms the foundation for immense gratitude and opportunity. The partnership collaborative spirit emanates from the holistic qualities that are represented in programmatic structures and goals. Primary attention is given to creative processes, awareness of real-time dynamics and needs, and the flexibility needed to maintain reciprocal ease and connection. Traditional and formal counseling and psychotherapy services have not been very effective disciplines for healing and social transformation. Partnerships that maintain and sustain body-mind awareness in their own dynamics are well prepared to generate the potential for healthy communities. When this potential is present, the whole community can release tension in their bodies and minds, creating a much more relaxed and healthy community atmosphere. In turn, when relaxation and ease increase, members of the community are more respectful, non-judgmental, and in the end, feel more balanced, open, relaxed, and energized [17].

Resisting domination or imbalanced power dynamics is critical. Power distributions are not static; they can change, and that change starts with awareness. This includes attending to partnership power dynamics, power dynamics within oneself regarding changes in roles post-genocide, and power dynamics when addressing the potential cleavage between ethnic groups or victim/perpetrator relationships [6]. Rather, the context of embodied partnership draws ongoing attention on humility, respect, and mutual awareness. Sustaining partnership in

this way enhances how understanding and empathy impacts how our culture's expressed themes and values interface with the complexity on society and communities. Through attunement and shared creative processes of embodiment and awareness, all partners in the collective develop an appreciation for the beauty, wisdom, and resources of our cultural backgrounds. Through mindful consideration present in creative experiences and communication, affect within people comes to the surface which can be tapped when collectively celebrating and coping with life's highs and lows [3].

The train-the-trainer model is central to the curriculum and processes of collaborative programming. Training manuals, handouts, and direct experientials are translated in Kinyarwanda and distributed country wide. All participants in community-based programs are empowered to lead and guide each other, both during the programs themselves, as well as, providing community-based support otherwise. When members and counselors share stories in a non-binary and hands on way, it is much more impactful than fictional characters or stories delivered by high-profile individuals. Hands-on experiential learning through mutuality and reciprocity enhances wellbeing for survivors to recover and thrive over time. Vulnerable people helping vulnerable people has psychosocial benefits. Empowering people who traditionally receive assistance (formal counseling, institutional programs) to transform their self-perception from being passive recipients of support to active providers of it, lies at the essence of collective healing and resilience [13].

We began this chapter by underscoring the heart of the matter as it relates to the centrality of integrating somatic experiences in healing and recovery from genocide in Rwanda. Embodied explorations enhance healing, dismantle barriers that separate people, and promote multi-cultural attunement and empathy. Another core premise is to recognize the unmistakable beauty and challenge in embodied partnership when bridging the essential magnificence of the physical body and its nonverbal presence for individual and collective healing.

“Only this I know: The philosopher's soul dwells in the head, the poet's soul is in the heart, the singer's soul lingers about the throat, but the soul of the dancer abides in all of her body,” [18].

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