

QUEST FOR ETHNIC TOLERANCE IN KENYA: *The Role of Oral History*

*Bora kujenga madaraja kuliko kujenga ukuta.
(Rather than building walls, build a bridge)*

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Abstract

Quest for enduring ethnic harmony in any society, is a desire of all rational human beings. It cannot be left to politicians, clergy and peace activists. It concerns scholars too. What drives hitherto peaceful neighbors to outbursts of bloodletting in Kenya is yet to be fully explored by researchers. I argue in this paper that this limitation is partly caused by rigid disciplinary boundaries and paucity in multi-disciplinary theoretical and methodological engagement. Using oral history as a springboard, I reflect on the selected cases of politically instigated ethnic violence in Kenya, especially in periods before or just after the elections. I deduce from my analysis that learning from our oral history that is replete with powerful messages of inter-ethnic friendship, interdependence, tolerance and understanding can help stop the tide of politically driven ethnic stereotyping, hate and violence that characterize Kenya's social, political and economic landscape.