

Lake Victoria Peace & Sustainability Center

MY LIFETIME PASSION FOR PEACE

Mr. Peter O. Otieno, Board Treasurer
Lake Victoria Peace & Sustainability Center

In 1998, at a young age in my 20's, I happen to be the first person in my community to host the US Ambassador to Kenya, Her Excellency Prudence Bushnell... just a few days before the US Embassy bomb attack in Nairobi.

Our youth organization was selected in 1998 by the US Embassy in Nairobi, as a beneficiary of the Ambassadors Self Help Fund, in support to the youth in accessing markets and improving livelihoods.

This was quite a significant assistance among our Minority Ethnic groups, who had faced profound marginalization, political neglect, geographic isolation and economic deprivation since Kenya's independence.

The US Ambassador's visit was indeed a true source of inspiration and encouragement to a most often ignored and forgotten young people, faced by unemployment, social exclusion and discrimination.

Our youth in these impoverished and crowded small islands, lived in a squalor and abject poverty, characterized with myriad of ill health problems and minimal infrastructural development, including no electricity, piped water, schools, hospitals, police stations and law courts.

The US Ambassador's visit to this "out-of-reach minority ethnic group" was therefore highly valued and seen as our moment of opportunity... a DAWN of NEW HOPE to a marginalized minority.

Little did I know that our HOPE and hunt for opportunities to support these desperately young people could come to a SUDDEN END by an act of terror against the US Embassy in Nairobi. I became scared and lost.

Actually, I had been hearing of terrorists groups from my poor parents who had lived a life of struggle all their lives, but I never paid much attention to it. I blamed myself for

hosting such an important visitor in my community and raising high expectations, only to lose the opportunity before our dreams could come to a reality.

I started looking desperately for answers "whether peace is possible in Africa?" but never felt good enough to speak my truths and share how I really felt.

My basic answer was that too few of us, citizens and leaders alike, were passionate about peace. I became scared of trying and failing.

After years of quietly suffering and pretending to be happy, I came to understand that I must do something to advocate for peace in myself, my family, my community ... regionally and globally.

The effect this shocking act of terror continued to have on my personal life. The impact of trauma on my unfolding life, transformed my thinking, my values, my attitudes, my behavior and my future – forever.

It inspired me to pursue and create a peaceful, passionate life. My lifetime passion to live peace was irresistible, and I have been committed to bringing peace in a conflict-prone lake region, and globally.

I particularly would like to appreciate LVP&SC founder Mr. Solomon Owiti for giving me all the support and encouragement which have propelled me to the Lake Victoria & Sustainability Center Board. I feel lucky to have Mr. Peter Abwao who was the chairman of our youth organization in 1998 as the current Vice Chair of Lake Victoria Peace & Sustainability Center.

Lake Victoria Peace & Sustainability Center as the name implies is peace-driven. Its singular mission is to positively impact the younger generation as Ambassadors of peace and stewards of the Mother Earth.

I would be extremely grateful to any person or organization with a caring heart for a peaceful world to support me attend the Rotary International Peace Conference 2016. 🇰🇪