

STUDENT WORKBOOK
(SIERRA LEONE)

fambul tok

EDUCATIONAL GUIDE



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CONTENTS

SETTING
THE STAGE

[Introduction](#) . 4
[Film Synopsis](#) . 5
[Character Profiles](#) . 6

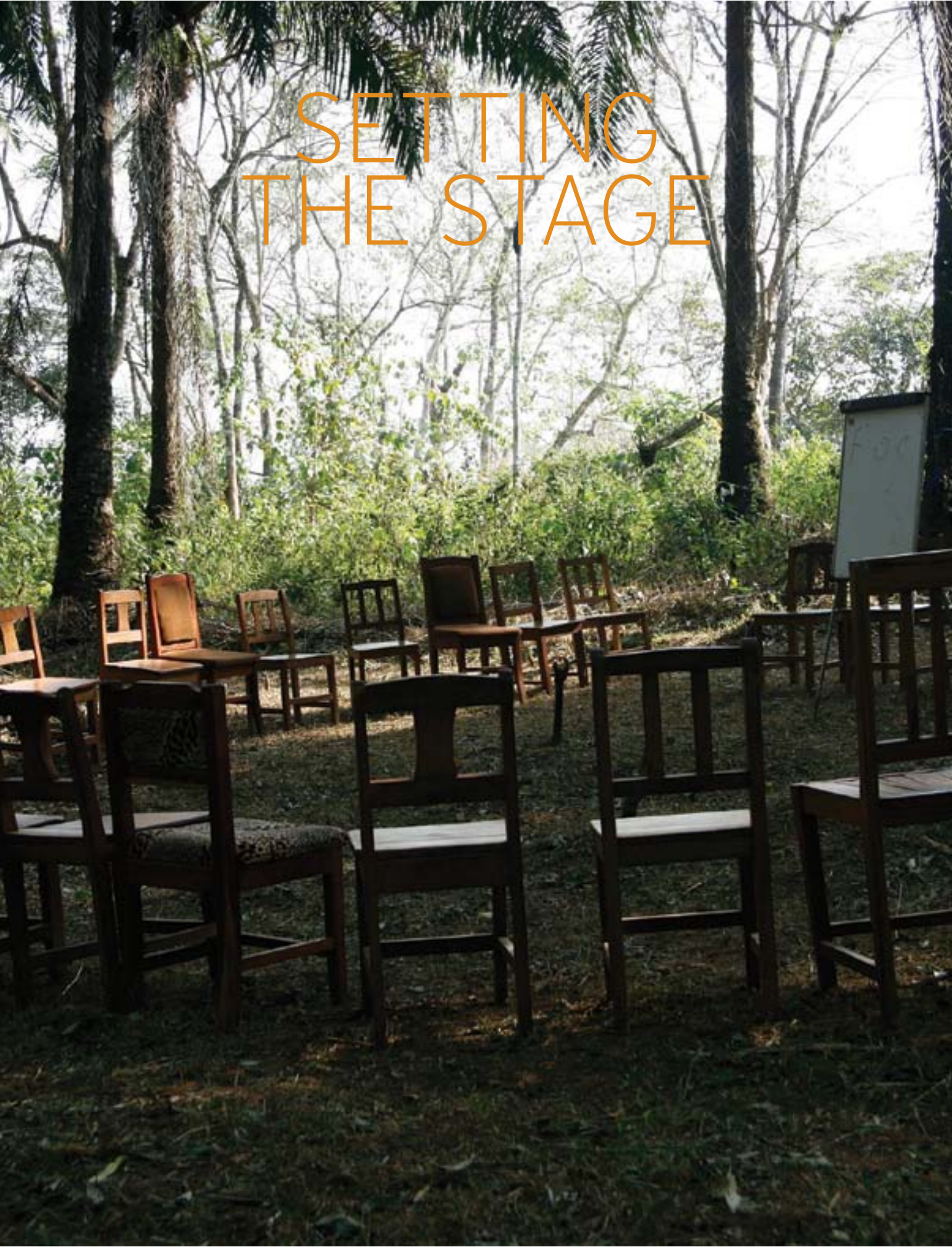
EXPLORING
SIERRA LEONE

[Map of Sierra Leone](#) . 9
[Sierra Leonean Demographics and Culture](#) . 10
[Sierra Leonean Proverbs](#) . 12
[Chronology: Origins, History and Aftermath of the War in Sierra Leone](#) . 13
[Post-War Context](#) . 22
[Transitional Justice in Sierra Leone:](#)
 [Truth and Reconciliation Commission \(TRC\) Overview](#) . 23
 [Special Court for Sierra Leone \(SCSL\) Overview](#) . 25
[Post-War Reflections](#) . 26
[Fambul Tok: An In-Depth Timeline](#) . 28

RESOURCES

[Film Note Taking Guide](#) . 33
[Film Study Guide](#) . 35
[Glossary](#) . 39
[Quotes from the Film](#) . 44
[Handout: Fambul Tok International - SL Logo](#) . 48
[Handout: VENN Diagram \(Justice\)](#) . 49
[Handout: VENN Diagram \(Urban/Rural\)](#) . 50
[Handout: VENN Diagram \(Blank\)](#) . 51
[Handout: “Y” Chart](#) . 52
[Additional Resources](#) . 53
[Bibliography](#) . 57
[Get Involved](#) . 58

SETTING THE STAGE



INTRODUCTION

It was a full circle moment.

“I wonder if Sahr and Nyumah [whose story features prominently in *Fambul Tok*] had any idea, when they were going through their reconciliation process, that they were going to be inspiring and teaching American school teachers?” said a high school teacher from inner city Miami, as she was realizing that Fambul Tok’s lessons of reconciliation held great potential for helping her address the gang violence touching her own students’ lives on a regular basis, issues that were spilling daily into the school and classroom setting.

This teacher’s comment came during a workshop on Fambul Tok at the 2012 National Forum on Character Education in Washington, D.C., a workshop that I gave with students and teachers from The Philadelphia School, an independent day school in the heart of downtown Philadelphia that has pioneered in adapting the values and practices of Fambul Tok in their classroom, school, and community. The remark brought me back full circle to the very beginning of the Fambul Tok program in 2007, when we made the decision to document the unfolding work in film, not knowing exactly what we would end up with – but having a full conviction that the people of Sierra Leone, given the opportunity to lead and run their own reconciliation program, would indeed have a great deal to teach the world. And now it’s happening.

With this Guide, and with the educational release of *Fambul Tok*, in both its feature length and 52-minute versions, we are thrilled to be inviting students and teachers around the world to join in learning from the extraordinary work that ordinary people are capable of, when given the

opportunity. It is this assumption that grounds all of our work at Catalyst for Peace. We work from the assumption that communities have within them the answers to their own problems, and when we go in not to “save” or “fix” them, but rather to walk with them and to learn from them, then we can help support sustainable, impactful work to build peace. And we can be immeasurably enriched in the process.

We invite you to join with us as fellow learners, and to dive into the rich culture and tradition of Sierra Leone through Fambul Tok, its companion book, and the resources in this Guide. The powerful understanding of community, of restorative justice, and of forgiveness that we see embodied in these stories open up new worlds of possibility for how people and countries can recover after war. They challenge us all to look at our own lives and communities through a fresh lens.

May you enjoy the journey.

–Libby Hoffman
President, Catalyst for Peace

FILM SYNOPSIS

THIS SYNOPSIS REFERS TO THE 52 MIN, INTERNATIONAL/EDUCATIONAL VERSION OF
FAMBUL TOK (FAMILY TALK), © 2012 by Catalyst for Peace

Seven years after the last bullet was fired, a decade of brutal fighting in Sierra Leone finds resolution as people come together to talk around traditional village bonfires. Some had perpetrated terrible crimes against friends or family. Some had faced horrible losses: loved ones murdered, limbs severed. But as they tell their stories, admit their wrongs, forgive, dance, and sing together, true reconciliation begins. This is the story of “Fambul Tok” (Krio for “family talk”), and it is a story the world needs to hear.

In *Fambul Tok*, this story is told by the people who are living it. Our guide is human rights activist John Caulker, a Sierra Leonean with a vision of peace for his country. Village by village, Caulker and his team organize a grassroots program to help communities hold reconciliation ceremonies – and hold fast to the new peace. They find people eager to turn ancient customs towards healing contemporary wounds, and the result is stories viewers will never forget.

Bonfire to bonfire, dark memories move into the light. Sahr and Nyumah, childhood friends torn apart when Nyumah was forced to cut Sahr’s father’s throat. Esther, raped as a child by a group of soldiers – among them her uncle Joseph, just 13 years old himself at the time. The radical forgiveness they request or receive is shocking – and inspiring. Their stories challenge Western perceptions of justice and provoke new ways of thinking about crime and punishment, conflict and community.

Never is this truer than when Captain Mohamed Savage, the notorious rebel commander believed to have committed some of the worst atrocities in the war, is onscreen. A defiant, menacing voice in his first encounters with Caulker, Savage travels a great personal and physical distance to the region where he allegedly committed his worst atrocities. As he listens to his victims speak and begs for their forgiveness, we see how Sierra Leoneans have turned personal pain into the power to heal their country.

Fambul Tok raises questions about the international community’s efforts in Africa to create peace through Western-based traditions of crime and punishment, and it challenges the neo-colonial concept that Africa needs to be “saved” by the West. By illuminating a successful peace process that is based on reviving communal traditions of confession, forgiveness, and restorative justice, the film encourages individuals and communities around the world to engage in the kind of grass-roots transformation that leads to peace.

CHARACTER PROFILES



JOHN CAULKER

founded and has led the implementation of the Fambul Tok program since 2007, initially as the founding Executive Director of Sierra Leonean human rights

NGO, Forum of Conscience, and then as the Executive Director of Fambul Tok International – Sierra Leone since 2009. John became a human rights activist as a student leader during the war in Sierra Leone. Risking his life to document wartime atrocities, he infiltrated rebel camps disguised as a rebel to gather information and stories that he would then pass along to international organizations. As Executive Director of Forum of Conscience, John strove to prevent recurring violence by connecting the root causes of Sierra Leone's brutal conflict to the need for rural community participation in the national decision making process and acknowledgement of wrongdoing to victims through the reparations program. As the national chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Working Group, John pressured the government of Sierra Leone to implement the recommendations of the TRC's 2004 report. Specifically, he fought to ensure that some of the revenues from the sale of Sierra Leone's natural resources benefit a special fund for war victims. As part of this effort to raise awareness and guarantee protection for the rights of victims of the conflict, John mediated an agreement allowing members of the Amputees and War Wounded Association to participate in the TRC and Special Court. John has served as one of the two civil society representatives on the National Reparation Steering Committee, which oversees the implementation of the reparations program. John was a Human Rights Fellow at Columbia University's (New York) Center for the Study of Human Rights in 2007.



NYUMAH Young man who, under threat of death by the RUF, was forced to beat his best friend, Sahr, and kill Sahr's father. Despite living one mile apart, Nyumah did not speak to Sahr for

years. Nyumah confessed to his actions at the Gbekedu bonfire in Kailahun District in March 2008. He now helps Sahr on his farm and helped to build a house for him. They are best friends once again.



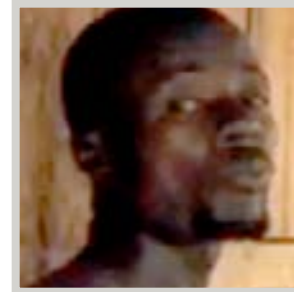
SAHR After fleeing from the RUF, Sahr was captured in the bush and ordered to kill his father. He repeatedly refused. Sahr was beaten and left for dead by his boyhood

friend Nyumah, who killed Sahr's father. Severely disabled as a result of this beating, Sahr told his story at one of the early Fambul Tok bonfires in Gbekedu, in Kailahun District. He and Nyumah reconciled at their village's bonfire ceremony, where he resides and works as a blacksmith.



ESTHER At age 12, Esther was captured by rebels and raped by 15 men. Among them was her uncle, Joseph, who Esther had believed would protect her from the attack. After years of

living uncomfortably in the same village, Esther confronted Joseph at the Fambul Tok bonfire in Gbekedu, in Kailahun district, in March 2008. Now reconciled, Esther and Joseph live next door to each other.



JOSEPH was captured as a teenager by rebel forces and forced to participate in the gang rape of his 12-year-old niece, Esther. More than a decade and a half later, Joseph apologized to Esther in

the presence of their community. They now live peacefully as neighbors.



SAHR FOENDOR

witnessed Tamba Joe, one of his neighbors, kill and behead 17 members of his family in the village of Foendor. After a community consultation, Sahr Foendor decided

he would forgive Tamba Joe if he returned to acknowledge and apologize for his actions. Sahr Foendor came forward and testified at his community's Fambul Tok bonfire ceremony, and accepted the apology Tamba Joe's family members made on his behalf.



NAOMI JOE is one of Tamba Joe's sisters, living among the families of the very people her brother massacred. With two of her sisters, Naomi apologized to Sahr Foendor on behalf of

her missing brother at their village's bonfire, and they were forgiven. Her message to her brother, "Don't be afraid. Anything can happen for us. And everything has an end. I believe you are forgiven," was shown to Tamba Joe's commander at the time of the massacre, Mohamed Savage, where it played a critical role in convincing him to acknowledge his role and make his own reparations.

TAMBA JOE is one of Foendor's native sons who was abducted by rebels and returned to brutally massacre a large number his own people. His commander was Mohamed Savage, and the heads of those he is accused of beheading were dumped

into the body of water known as "Savage Pit," a mass grave in neighboring Tombodu.



MOHAMED SAVAGE is a former Sierra Leonean Army commander who later joined forces with the RUF/AFRC junta and became a leader of the West Side Boys. He is alleged to have

committed some of the most gruesome atrocities of the war. He earned the nickname "Mr. Die," and if that is how he was introduced to anyone, their fate was sealed. While he was in his home district of Kono, the dumping grounds for his victims became known as "Savage Pit." For his participation in the West Side Boys, Savage served over eight years in prison. When he was introduced to Fambul Tok after his release, he denied his identity. He later admitted who he was and decided to return to Tombodu and apologize, risking international prosecution. His journey was delayed 18 months since Fambul Tok staff thought the potential for prosecution could put the program's credibility at risk. When the risk of prosecution subsided, Fambul Tok laid the groundwork in the communities for Savage's return, and in November 2010 he came to Kono to reconcile. Mohamed Savage now works for Fambul Tok, where he leads programming for other ex-combatants, helping them commit to nonviolence and apologize for atrocities they committed.



PARAMOUNT CHIEF AIAH MELVIN NGEKIA

Chief Melvin is the Paramount Chief of Kamaa Chiefdom in Kono, which hosted Captain Savage's reconciliation bonfire. He was initially

opposed to Savage's return but his community's demand for it changed his mind. After the ceremony, he became a leader in supporting Fambul Tok in Sierra Leone and has even promoted it in the United States.

EXPLORING SIERRA LEONE

MAP OF SIERRA LEONE

BY DISTRICT

- Districts waiting for Fambul Tok
- Districts where Fambul Tok is active



IN AFRICA



SIERRA LEONEAN DEMOGRAPHICS AND CULTURE

For a more in depth look at Sierra Leone's history, see [Chronology: Origins, History and Aftermath of the War in Sierra Leone](#) (p. 13). Here we present a window into the population and the culture to get a sense of daily life in the country.

The West African nation of Sierra Leone measures 27,925 square miles – about the size of the state of South Carolina. It is bordered by Liberia to the south and southeast, Guinea to the north and northeast, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. Sierra Leone's official language is English, and the unofficial 'lingua franca' is Krio, a dialect primarily used in conversation. Mende and Temne are the most widely spoken ethnic languages. Sierra Leone's population is estimated at roughly six million, the majority under the age of 21. Just over a third of the population resides in urban areas, such as the cities of Freetown, Bo, Makeni and Kenema. Much of the country's infrastructure was terribly damaged by the 11-year civil war that engulfed the country from 1991-2002. This damage continues to limit opportunities for development, growth and education.

Sierra Leone's government is led by a democratically-elected President, who then selects a Cabinet of Ministers. The government is also comprised of a 124-member Parliament (112 voted for from single-member constituencies plus 12 Paramount Chiefs chosen by an electoral college on non-partisan basis, to represent each of the 12 provincial districts) and local councils led by elected chairpersons and councilors.

The basic unit of administration is the Chiefdom. There are 149 chiefdoms subdivided into sections, towns and villages. The Paramount Chief is the administrative and cultural head of the chiefdom and is assisted by a Chiefdom Speaker. Each section, town or village is headed by a section, town or village chief, respectively.

Attempts at implementing social welfare programs in postwar Sierra Leone have proven difficult as the result of corruption, international skepticism and a lack of domestic sustainability, but with every election cycle (the most recent being November 2012), hope for progress grows.

Despite there being 17 documented ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, the country has avoided conflict based on ethnic tensions for the most part. The largest ethnicities are the Temne and Mende, which combine to make up almost 2/3 of the population and are widely influential in the political sphere, typically supporting the All People's Congress and Sierra Leone People's Party, respectively.

Sierra Leone is approximately 60% Muslim, 20-30% Christian and 5-10% indigenous believers, with remarkable religious tolerance and fluidity between faiths. It isn't uncommon for members of the same family to explore different religions or attend ceremonies and services at places of worship other than their own. Holy leaders and indigenous diviners both play an important role in the culture of Sierra Leone, as they are believed to contact the spiritual world in different ways. Because of the deep ties Sierra Leoneans have to their families, there is a large emphasis on cultivating and maintaining relationships with ancestors. This can be done through prayer, ceremony and ritual offerings. Although many of these rituals were nearly lost during the civil war, they have been revived largely through Fambul Tok and used for individual and communal cleansing, especially after reconciliation

ceremonies, to purify areas affected by the widespread violence.

Sierra Leone's economy relies heavily on mining, especially diamond mining. It is one of the world's largest producers of titanium and bauxite, and a major global producer of gold. Even with this natural wealth, however, over 70% of the population lives in poverty, and the country is consistently ranked at the bottom of the UN Human Development Index.

With the majority of the population living in rural areas, it is natural that the economy is also heavily dependent on agriculture (especially subsistence farming), with rice as the largest crop and national food staple. Sierra Leoneans often joke that if they haven't eaten rice that day, they haven't eaten at all -- it is their primary food source, paired with meat, greens, soup, palm oil, and even fruit. Because of rice and palm's importance in the culture and diet of Sierra Leoneans, they are national symbols, even featured on the currency. Also important, though not for dietary reasons, is the kola nut, which is highly valued for its use in diplomacy, religious and initiation ceremonies, greetings and offerings of respect. You'll see an example of this in the film, when Captain Mohamed Savage returns to Kono.

The basic household in Sierra Leone is very different from typical households in the United States, as it usually includes extended family and venerates elders. These kinship networks foster an incredible sense of community, and villages and family alike share in the responsibilities of raising children, as John Caulker explains in the film: "Your child is my child; your father is my father."

Most significant to the film, though, is the importance of forgiveness to Sierra Leoneans. "There is no bad bush to throw away a bad child" is both a popular proverb and a bedrock principle. Deeply rooted in the culture of Sierra Leone is a mandate to discuss openly and honestly and to forgive. If you wrong somebody and, in the presence of the community, you acknowledge your wrongdoing with a genuine apology, the community is obligated to forgive you. This

forgiveness is not the final step in repairing a fractured relationship or making reparations. It is a grace granted that creates a space for real change to be made. After forgiveness is granted, a shift in behavior needs to be seen and supported every day. In the film, Captain Savage's shift from human rights abuser to advocate is an example of the power of forgiveness. (See ["From Ex-Combatants to Peace Parents"](#)¹ on the Fambul Tok blog for more about Savage's personal transformation.)

The need to forgive others ties back to the strong community sensibility. Sierra Leoneans believe in living their lives not as individuals but as pieces of a larger unit, similar to members of a sports team, classroom or family. These groups can't reach their full potential without tapping into the resources that all of the members bring to the table. Sierra Leoneans believe that the nation can't progress and move forward after the war without first reuniting within its communities. This reflects an understanding of wrongdoing as not only hurting an individual, but hurting, or "breaking," the community. As a result, "justice" is defined not as merely punishing and separating the perpetrator of a wrong, but rather as making the community whole again – a process which of necessity involves both victims and perpetrators.

Forgiveness is the starting point from which communities in Sierra Leone move forward in pursuit of a common goal. Today, many of the communities seen in the film are doing just that. Many communities have started community farms, and many have more personalized rebuilding (perpetrators building houses for their victims, for example).

For more information about Sierra Leone, see the [Additional Resources](#) page.

¹ www.fambultokblog.org/program-updates-sierra-leone/from-ex-combatants-to-peace-parents

SIERRA LEONEAN PROVERBS

Proverbs provide a unique window into a country's culture, and often its history. Below is a diverse sampling of Sierra Leonean proverbs in both English and Krio.

The family tree bends but it does not break.
Fambul tik de bɛn bɔt i nɔ de brok.

There is no bad bush to throw away a bad child.
Bad bush nɔ de fɔ trowe bad pikin.

If you do not heed the roar of the thunder, you will be soaked by the rain.
If yu nɔ lisin we tɛnda krak, na ren go sok yu.

If you don't know where you are going, you should at least know where you are coming from.
If yu nɔ no usay yu de go, yu fɔ no usay yu kɔmɔt.

If you don't want the tail of a monkey to touch you, don't attend a monkey dance.
If yu nɔ wan mek mɔnki tel tɔch yu, nɔ go na mɔnki dans.

Don't use my hand to remove palm kernels from the fire.
Nɔ tek mi an pul banga na faya.

Telling your friend the truth does not damage the friendship.
Tɛl frɛn tru nɔ pwɛl frɛn

Do not bite the finger that feeds you.
Nor bet de finger way de feed yu.

Kill a dog in the presence of another dog so it knows death is real.
Kill dɔg bifo dɔg leh dɔg no say die de.

The head of a goat is different from that of a cow.
Goat ed en sheep ed nɔ to wan.

Only in rain will goats and sheep shelter together.
Na ren mek goat en sheep de na wan place.

You don't take a blind man to look at an eclipse.
U nɔ de tak blɛn yay man go luk eklips.

When somebody pours water on you, you should scrub your back.
We den trowa wata fɔ u na fɔ krub u bak.

When elephants fight, it's the grass that suffers.
We elephant de fet, na di gras day suffer.

If a cockroach wants to die, it wanders into a palm oil bottle.
We kakroch wan die na im e de go na palmayn bottle.

However congested the house is, a chicken will find space to lay its eggs.
Os tayt tae fol de lay egg.

If you travel in an ungrateful boat, you will land at regret wharf.
If u load na ungrateful boat u go land na regret waf.

If a child wants to keep the mother awake, it will also stay awake.
We pikin say en mama nɔ go sleep, ensef nɔ go sleep.

Winds heavy enough to blow away a mortar, would not leave a fanner.
We briz blow mataodo nɔto fannah e go lef.

Your bell is being tolled, and you are asking whose funeral it is.
Den de toll u bell u de ask udat die.

CHRONOLOGY

ORIGINS, HISTORY AND EARLY AFTERMATH OF THE WAR IN SIERRA LEONE

See [Glossary](#) (p. 39) for descriptions of underlined terms.

Pre-Colonial Era

Sierra Leone's earliest known inhabitants live in small fishing and farming communities along the Atlantic Coast and scattered settlements in the interior. In the 1440s, Portuguese explorers make their first contact with the coastal inhabitants and in 1462 name the country "Serra Lyoa," meaning "lion mountains."

1787 British philanthropists and slave trade abolitionists establish a settlement in the coastal peninsular called Granville Town for rescued and repatriated slaves. A local chief attacks and destroys the settlement in 1790 in retaliation for the burning down of one of his villages by some Europeans.

1792 Blacks from Nova Scotia in Canada found a new settlement near the former Granville Town and call it 'Freetown'. These were American black slaves who had supported Britain during the American War of Independence in return for their freedom and some land after the war. They were emigrated to the British settlement of Nova Scotia in Canada after the war and subsequently brought to Sierra Leone.

Colonial Era

1807 Britain passes the Abolition Act which makes slave trading illegal for British subjects. The British Navy patrols the West African coast in search of slave vessels and those caught are brought to Freetown and their human cargoes released.

1808 Freetown with its surrounding settlements is made a British Crown [Colony](#).

1821 Freetown is made the seat of government for British territories in West Africa.

1827 The Fourah Bay College is established. For more than a century, it is the only European-style university in western Sub-Saharan Africa.

1896 Britain establishes a [protectorate](#) over the Sierra Leone hinterland. The Colony and Protectorate are administered as separate entities.

1898 Bai Bureh, a Temne Chief, with support from other prominent chiefs including the Mende Chief Nyagua and Sherbro Chief Gbana Lewis, leads a rebellion (The Hut Tax War) against British rule after the British impose a tax on "huts" (dwellings). The tax is generally regarded by the native chiefs as an attack on their authority.

1924 The Slater Constitution makes provision for the first time for people from the Protectorate to be represented in the Legislative Council.

- 1947 Antagonism between the Colony and Protectorate escalates to a heated debate when proposals are introduced to provide for an expanded Legislative Council with a majority of seats for the Protectorate.
- 1951 A modified form of the 1947 constitutional proposals is adopted. Most importantly, it provides a framework for decolonization. The new constitution ensures Sierra Leone becomes a parliamentary system within the Commonwealth of Nations.
- Sierra Leone is granted local ministerial powers. Dr Milton Margai, the leader of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), is elected Chief Minister under the new constitution, the following year.
- 1956 The Legislative Council is renamed 'House of Representatives'.
- 1957 Sierra Leone holds its first general elections under a new constitution. The SLPP is the winner.
- 1959 Dr. Margai is awarded a knighthood.
- 1960 Sir Milton Margai is appointed Prime Minister with an all-Sierra Leonean Cabinet. A Constitutional Conference is held in London and the new Constitution ushers the country into Independence. Fourah Bay College is constituted into the University College of Sierra Leone. The All People's Congress (APC) party is formed.

An Independent Nation

- 1961 Sierra Leone gains independence from Britain and Freetown is made its official capital city. The country becomes a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, and the United Nations Organization.
- 1964 A new university - Njala University College - is officially opened in the provinces. Sierra Leone's national currency - the Leone - is launched.
- 1967 General elections are held and Siaka Stevens, leader of the APC, is sworn in as the country's third prime minister on March 21. The military commander Brigadier David Lansana, declares martial law and orders the arrest of Stevens and the Governor-General. Two days later (March 23) senior army officers arrest Lansana, seize control of the government, suspend the constitution and form a junta administration, the National Reformation Council (NRC), led by Colonel Andrew T. Juxon-Smith.
- 1968 *APRIL* The NRC is overthrown by a group of junior army officers, who call themselves the Anti-Corruption Revolutionary Movement (ACRM). Colonel John Bangura masterminds the coup plot. Siaka Stevens is reinstated as Prime Minister.
- 1971 Sierra Leone is declared a Republic and Siaka Stevens is subsequently sworn in as the first Executive President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.
- 1973 President Stevens signs a treaty with President William Tolbert of Liberia establishing the Mano River Union, to facilitate trade between Sierra Leone and Liberia, with Guinea joining in 1980 under president Ahmed Sékou Touré.
- 1974 Dr. Mohamed Sorie Forna, Ibrahim Taqi (former Ministers in the APC government), ex-paramount chief Bai Makari N'Silk, ex-brigadier David Lansana and eleven others are arrested for plotting for overthrow the government.

- 1975 Forna, Taqi, Lansana, N'Silk and four others are executed at Pademba Road Prisons in Freetown. Sierra Leone joins the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), granting the country access to a development bank, coordination of natural resources, and an overall network of economic cooperation in the subregion.
- 1978 A new constitution establishing Sierra Leone as a one-party state, with the APC as the sole legal party, is adopted through a referendum. All other political parties are banned, and SLPP members of Parliament, except one, join the APC. President Siaka Stevens is sworn in for another seven-year term.
- 1980 Stevens borrows millions of dollars to host an Organization of African Unity conference, and is criticized afterward for contributing to the country's mounting debt.
- 1983 The Ndogboyosoi (bush devil) war between APC and SLPP supporters racks Pujehun District in southern Sierra Leone. Nearly five years after the APC's one-party referendum, tensions continue to rise. There is no resolution after this episode, and survivors of the killing become some of the first to join the RUF rebellion in 1991.
- Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh, commander of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, who had been hand-picked by Stevens as his successor, is sworn in as president in Freetown on the 28th of November, with Francis Minah as vice president. President Momoh is afterward often described as "well-meaning but weak, and a womanizer" with few political or leadership skills.

Democracy and War in Sierra Leone

- 1990 Due to mounting pressure from both within and outside the country for political and economic reform, a constitutional review commission is established to review the 1978 one-party constitution.
- 1991 *MARCH* 100 About 100 Sierra Leonean dissidents (including many university students), Liberian fighters loyal to Charles Taylor, and a small number of mercenary fighters from Burkina Faso invade Sierra Leone from Bomaru, in the Kailahun district. Another group enters from the Mano River Bridge linking Liberia and Sierra Leone, in the Pujehun District. Foday Sankoh, a former army corporal and professional photographer, leads the invasion to overthrow the Momoh-led APC government under the banner of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).
- In its early stages, the RUF operates as a revolutionary movement intent on overthrowing a corrupt government, and it works to bring the civilian population into the revolutionary spirit. But facing defeat by governmental forces, and with little civilian support, the RUF adopts guerilla tactics and begins targeting civilian populations it initially said it was trying to liberate. Ordinary people, such as farmers, villagers, and alluvial miners, are deliberately tortured, maimed, abused, and uprooted from their livelihoods and surroundings. As the war expands to other locations, the rebellion worsens and civilian casualties mount.
- MAY* Momoh, fearful of dissatisfaction in the Sierra Leone Army, and the threat the rebel RUF incursion presents to internal security, appeals to Britain for their intervention. With no help forthcoming from Britain, the government seeks the help of mercenary agencies. Morale in the army is very low, and as it becomes clear that elements within the army are collaborating with the rebel group.

OCTOBER A constitution re-establishing a multi-party system is approved by sixty percent of voters through a referendum. Elections are scheduled for May 1992.

1992 **APRIL** Junior army officers, led by 27 year-old Captain Valentine Strasser, stage a coup and overthrow the Momoh-led APC government. The officers came to Freetown to discuss sinking army morale but Momoh fled on their arrival, clearing the way for them to seize power. These officers establish the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) and suspend the 1991 Constitution. Momoh flees to Guinea.

Strasser is installed as head of state and appoints Solomon Musa, an even younger officer, as his number two. During his tenure as head of state he is often called 'The Redeemer' - as he was seen to be taking concrete steps to establish commissions mandated to investigate the activities of ministers, executive heads of ministries, and parastatals in the Momoh-led government. He replaces most of the military officers in his cabinet with civilian appointees, presumably to ensure the military members of the government concentrate on pursuing the war to its conclusion. Initial attempts to negotiate with RUF leader Sankoh fail, as Sankoh's preconditions are deemed unacceptable to the NPRC government.

Strasser, bowing to international pressure, announces a plan to return the government to civilian rule by 1996.

1994 The NPRC junta proposes a change in the age restriction clause in the 1991 Sierra Leone constitution, which previously stated that only Sierra Leoneans over the age of 40 are eligible for the presidency, thus excluding Strasser and others in the NPRC.

Strasser's government initiates a recruitment drive to increase the strength of the army. The army bloats from 5000 to 12,000 in one year, mainly by recruiting poorly-educated youths from city streets, including orphans and abandoned children as young as twelve years old.

OCTOBER Public and international assistance to the NPRC dissipates as the young soldiers indulge in drugs, corruption, and abuses against opponents and civilians.

1995 **AUGUST** A National Consultative Conference on the electoral process is held in Freetown. The delegates agree that nationwide presidential and parliamentary elections based on a proportional representation system should take place in February 1996.

1996 **JANUARY** Strasser is ousted in a palace coup masterminded by his deputy Julius Maada Bio. A second conference on the electoral process reconfirms the holding of elections in February.

FEBRUARY Elections are held and monitored by international and local observers. None of the presidential candidates gets the required 55% of votes in the first round.

MARCH In the second round of voting, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, leader of the SLPP, is declared the winner over John Karefa-Smart, leader of the United National People's Party.

Criticism mounts at the slow pace of reform under Kabbah. The situation worsens when Kabbah announces a retraining program and dramatic reduction of the army.

NOVEMBER A peace agreement between the Kabbah government and the RUF is signed in Abidjan, the capital of Côte d'Ivoire.

1997 **MAY** The SLPP government is overthrown in a coup by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), led by Johnny Paul Koroma. Koroma suspends the constitution, bans demonstrations, and abolishes political parties. Days of looting follow the coup, as soldiers commandeer cars and persecute members of the SLPP, including the former Minister of Finance who was arrested and tortured.

An attempt by Nigerian troops to oust the Koroma junta ends in fiasco after junta forces trap Nigerian troops and other foreigners at the Mammy Yoko Hotel. Some South African soldiers working with Lifeguard fight alongside the Nigerians, trying to force back the junta soldiers. The British High Commissioner, Peter Penfold, is instrumental in negotiating the release of the trapped foreigners.

Foday Sankoh gives interviews to the BBC while under house arrest in Abuja, praising the overthrow of Kabbah. Koroma declares Sankoh the leader of his coup, and Nigerian officials move Sankoh from the Sheraton Hotel to a local security installation.

JUNE Koroma extends an invitation to the RUF to join his junta. RUF fighters heed his call call, marching into Freetown and adopting the name "The People's Army."

JULY Sierra Leone is suspended from the British Commonwealth. UN Resolution UNSC1132 is passed, imposing a ban on arms shipments to all parties in Sierra Leone. Sandline, a private military company based in London, nonetheless supplies "logistical support," including rifles, to Kabbah allies. Nigeria moves 4,000 troops from its operations in Liberia to Freetown.

OCTOBER Nigeria's Foreign Minister Tom Ikimi steps up his country's diplomatic role after the Nigerian Navy and Air Force tighten the embargo on Freetown. The Koroma junta accuses the Nigerian Air Force of bombing civilian targets. Liberian soldiers detain a plane at Spriggs Payne Airport, Monrovia, found carrying several South African mercenaries working for EO, Kamajor militiamen, and assorted arms and military equipment. After pressure from Nigerian troops in the ECOWAS peacekeeping operation in the country, Liberian officials release the plane.

Peace negotiations between the Koroma junta and ECOWAS on the 23rd conclude with a promise by Koroma's ministers that the junta will hand over power to a civilian government by the 22nd of April 1998. Nigeria lauds this as a great diplomatic breakthrough and requests an invitation to the Commonwealth Conference in Edinburgh on the 24th-27th October, Nigeria's membership of the Commonwealth having been suspended in November 1995 after its military government executed Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists. Kabbah attends this Commonwealth meeting, but it is evident that most officials at the meeting have no knowledge of the Nigerian-brokered deal with Koroma and are skeptical about its viability.

1998 A Nigerian-backed offensive by ECOMOG (a military coalition of ECOWAS states), Civil Defense Forces (mainly Kamajors) and loyal soldiers and police officers, begin an offensive and ousted the AFRC regime. Liberian president Charles Taylor accuses ECOMOG of transporting South African mercenaries across territory.

MARCH Kabbah makes a triumphant return to Freetown amid scenes of public rejoicing.

1999 **JANUARY** Renegade soldiers and RUF rebels with the assistance of foreign mercenaries seize parts of Freetown from ECOMOG. After weeks of bitter fighting, the rebels and their allies are eventually driven out, leaving behind over 5000 dead and a devastated city. Sankoh is idolized

as a lion by his supporters.

APRIL A national conference on the peace process is held in Freetown

MAY The UN intervenes, and a temporary ceasefire agreement is negotiated in Freetown with cautious optimism, and hope that the civil war may soon be over.

JULY Six weeks of talks in the Togolese capital, Lomé, culminate in a peace agreement, under which the rebel leaders are given cabinet positions in an SLPP-led government, with assurances that they will not be prosecuted for atrocities and abuses perpetrated during the war.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER UN troops arrive to supervise and monitor the implementation of the peace agreement. RUF second-in-command Sam Bockarie vehemently opposes this intervention. ECOMOG troops are attacked outside of Freetown.

2000 *APRIL* UN forces come under attack in the east of Sierra Leone, with several hundred UN troops abducted and taken as hostages by the RUF.

MAY Rebels close in on Freetown. 800 British paratroopers are sent to Freetown to evacuate British citizens and to help secure the airport for UN peacekeepers. Civil society groups stage a peaceful demonstration at Foday Sankoh's residence against RUF violations of the peace accord. The RUF kill about 20 civilians. Foday Sankoh goes into hiding but is captured one week later.

AUGUST Eleven British soldiers are taken hostage by renegade militia group who call themselves the West Side Boys.

SEPTEMBER Five of the eleven British hostages are released on September 3. After negotiations deteriorate, British forces mount an operation in September to rescue the remaining hostages. Meanwhile, the Sierra Leonean government recognizes Issa Sesay as Sankoh's successor and the new leader of the RUF.

NOVEMBER A 30-day ECOWAS-brokered ceasefire is signed in Abuja, Nigeria, allowing for the return of all weapons seized from peacekeepers. Amid continuing tensions and insecurity, though, the disarmament never gets underway.

2001 *JANUARY* The government postpones presidential and parliamentary elections planned for February and March, because of continued insecurity. The RUF suffers military reversals in northern Sierra Leone, as Guinea provides continuing support to the government troops.

MARCH UNAMSIL (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone) troops begin to deploy peacefully for the first time in rebel-held territories. The RUF agrees to a renewed ceasefire following UN and ECOWAS-led mediations in Abuja.

MAY Disarmament of rebels commences, and a British-trained Sierra Leonean army is deployed in rebel-held areas.

The Post-Conflict Era

2002 *JANUARY* The Sierra Leone Civil War is declared over. The government and UN agree to set up a war crimes court. When the disarmament process is declared complete by UNAMSIL, it is estimated that over 45,000 combatants have willingly surrendered their weapons.

MAY National elections are generally peaceful, and Kabbah wins in a landslide. The SLPP secure a majority in parliament.

JULY British troops leave Sierra Leone after their two-year mission to help end the civil war. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission is inaugurated in accordance with the Lomé Peace Accord and tasked with compiling an accurate record of human rights abuses committed during the war.

2003 *MARCH* The Special Court for Sierra Leone issues its first indictments for war crimes against Sankoh, Bockarie, Sesay, Koroma, former RUF commander Morris Kallon, former AFRC commander Alex Tamba Brima, and former CDF leader Sam Hinga Norman.

APRIL Augustine Gbao, a former RUF commander, is indicted by the Special Court.

MAY Bockarie is killed by Liberian security forces. The Special Court indicts Brima Kamara, a commander of the AFRC.

JUNE The Special Court unseals an indictment against Charles Taylor. Kamajor commanders Allier Kondewa and Moinina Fofana are also indicted. Koroma is reportedly killed by Taylor's supporters in Liberia.

JULY Taylor resigns from his presidency and goes into exile in Nigeria, where President Obasanjo initially agrees not to hand him over to the Special Court.

RUF leader Foday Sankoh dies of natural causes while awaiting trial.

AUGUST President Kabbah tells the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that he was not involved in the operations of pro-government militias during war.

2004 *FEBRUARY* Disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation (DDR) of more than 45,000 civil war combatants is officially completed.

MARCH The war crimes tribunal opens a courthouse to try senior militia leaders from both sides of civil war.

MAY The first local elections held in more than three decades commence, and are successful as the security conditions continue to improve.

JUNE Trials begin at the Special Court.

SEPTEMBER The UN hands over control of security in Freetown to local forces.

OCTOBER The TRC publishes its final report, complete with recommendations on how best to avoid a recurrent conflict.

2005 The UN Security Council authorizes the opening of a UN assistance mission to be known as the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). Meanwhile, UNAMSIL completes the withdrawal of its troops, marking the end of its five-year mandate.

2006 Under international pressure, Liberian ex-president Charles Taylor is arrested in Nigeria and handed over to the Liberian government, who then turns him over to the war crimes court in

Sierra Leone, which had indicted him. Taylor is subsequently transferred to The Hague, due to security concerns surrounding the high-profile nature of his case.

DECEMBER Kabbah announces that 90 per cent of Sierra Leone's \$1.6 billion (£815m) debt has been written off after negotiations with international creditors.

2007 *JUNE* Charles Taylor's war crimes trial begins in The Hague, where he stands accused of instigating atrocities in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone's special war crimes court in Freetown delivers its first verdicts, finding Alex Tamba Brima, Ibrahim Bazy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu, all from the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) guilty.

AUGUST Presidential and parliamentary elections are conducted. Ernest Bai Koroma wins the presidency in the second round of voting and his APC, formerly in opposition, become the majority in parliament. In its second set of verdicts, the Special Court finds the Civil Defense Forces (CDF) defendants, Allieu Kondewa and Moinina Fofana, guilty.

DECEMBER Fambul Tok launches in Sierra Leone with countrywide, district-level consultations.

2008 *JANUARY* Charles Taylor's war crimes trial resumes after a six-month delay.

MARCH The first Fambul Tok reconciliation ceremony takes place in Bomaru, Kailahun District, on March 23, the anniversary of the day the war began.

AUGUST Local elections are marred by violence between the supporters of the SLPP and APC. The UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) is established and takes the place of UNIOSIL.

2009 *APRIL* After their February convictions at the Special Court, three former senior leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) are sentenced to long jail terms for civil war atrocities - Issa Sessay is sentenced to 52 years, Morris Kallon to 40 years and Augustine Gbao to 25 years.

SEPTEMBER The UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1886, extending the mandate of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) until September 30, 2010.

OCTOBER Winding down after seven years of investigating civil war atrocities, the Special Court holds its final hearing in Freetown, with judges upholding the convictions of three former RUF leaders. Meanwhile, Charles Taylor's trial continues in The Hague.

The Under Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Judy Cheng-Hopkins, visits Sierra Leone on the 22nd and 23rd. Sierra Leone is the first nation to be placed on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

NOVEMBER The eight people convicted by the court are transferred to a facility in Rwanda constructed to hold people convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, because prison facilities in Sierra Leone do not meet international standards for imprisoning people convicted by international tribunals.

2010 *APRIL* Sierra Leone's government launches a major initiative on the 27th for free health care for pregnant women and children. The program abolishes fees at public hospitals and health clinics across the country for a set of basic health services for all pregnant and nursing mothers and every child under five years old.

JUNE The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, visits Sierra Leone, where he highlights the success of the country in consolidating peace. President Koroma launches the "Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SiL NAP) on United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820."

SEPTEMBER The UN Security Council lifts its last remaining sanctions, which included an arms embargo and travel ban for former rebels.

2012 *APRIL* In the Special Court's final trial, former Liberian president Charles Taylor is convicted of aiding and abetting war crimes during Sierra Leone's civil war, as well as planning attacks in Kono, Makeni and Freetown. Taylor becomes the first former head of state to be convicted of war crimes by an international court since the Nuremberg Trials following World War II.

MAY Taylor is sentenced to 50 years in prison, to be served in the United Kingdom.

JUNE Taylor files to appeal his conviction. The case is currently pending.

NOVEMBER On November 17, Sierra Leone holds largely nonviolent national elections. Ernest Bai Koroma is reelected as President.

*This timeline is adapted from the book **Fambul Tok**. Ishmael Beah, John Caulker, Libby Hoffman, Sara Terry, Benedict Sannoh, and Nan Richardson. Umbrage Editions, 2011. Additional material as well as editorial and content consultation has been provided by Dr. Joe A. D. Alie.*

THE POST-WAR CONTEXT

The 11-year civil war officially ended in early 2002, but the end of war didn't necessarily mean the beginning of peace. The war had ravaged the country, destroying virtually all of the country's infrastructure, including roads and electrical lines, making rebuilding, trade and other peacetime pursuits extremely difficult - in fact, almost impossible. Entire communities had been razed, and much of the population displaced. Over 50,000 people were killed (estimates go as high as 150,000); thousands suffered the amputation of one or more limbs; ten thousand children were conscripted as soldiers; tens of thousands of women were raped, and one-third to one-half of the country was homeless. Several hundred thousand Sierra Leoneans lived in neighboring countries as refugees.

With so many people "forced" into fighting in some way, the line between "victim" and "perpetrator" is not always clear. The Lomé Peace Accord granted blanket amnesty to all but those identified and indicted by the Special Court as "bearing the greatest responsibility" for the war's egregious

human rights violations. That meant tens of thousands of former combatants returned to their communities to live alongside the very people they had terrorized. Victims and perpetrators lived side by side, but never talked about what had happened. The government instructed everyone to move on, to "forgive and forget." But because so many deep wounds from the war were never addressed, they began to fester. Communities were silently divided, and individuals lived in silent prisons of their own memories of terror.

Achieving national "justice" in these circumstances would be very difficult. The two major mechanisms adopted in Sierra Leone in the immediate post-war period, supported by the international community, were the [Truth and Reconciliation Committee](#), and the [Special Court of Sierra Leone](#).

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE:

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (TRC) OVERVIEW

Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established by the Lomé Peace Accord to "create an impartial historical record of violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law related to the armed conflict in Sierra Leone, from the beginning of the conflict in 1991 to the signing of the Lomé Peace Accord; to address impunity, to respond to the needs of the victims, to promote healing and reconciliation and to prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered." (TRC Act, 2000). Made up of a group of civil society representatives (four from Sierra Leone, three from other nations), the TRC was intended to help Sierra Leoneans constructively confront their past. After nearly two years of statement-taking, the TRC published its [report](#) on a number of topics, including:

- the causes and nature of the conflict,
- perpetrator responsibility,
- military and political history,
- external actors,
- the judiciary,
- women,
- children,
- youth,
- mineral resources,
- and the relationship between the TRC and the Special Court.

In an attempt to understand the conflict, the TRC identified a number of root causes, including:

- Sierra Leone's history and legacy of colonialism,
- isolated diamond wealth,
- external influences (especially from Liberia and Libya),
- history of military coups,
- post-colonial political instability,
- and history and legacy of local/regional conflicts.

Furthermore, the Commission made the following recommendations, marking the first time in history a government was legally obligated to implement reforms recommended by a truth commission:

- find a new commitment to leadership,
- establish an ethical public sector to combat corruption,
- protect human dignity and abolish the death penalty,
- uphold the right to freedom of expression,
- establish common and equitable citizenship,
- strengthen the forces of democracy, rule of law and accountability,
- establish a principle of National Security and pride in Sierra Leone,
- and increase accessibility of government and services throughout the country.

Despite a seemingly thorough examination of the causes, events and aftermath of the civil war, the TRC was unfortunately plagued by a number of challenges. Since the Lomé Peace Accord established a blanket amnesty for all perpetrators, there was little incentive for individuals to come forward and testify about their participation in the war. Furthermore, since the TRC was operating at the same time as the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the perpetrators had a disincentive to testify - many feared their actions would be deemed horrific enough to be prosecuted after all.

Lack of political will in the government led to delayed and noncommittal implementation of many of the recommendations. The people began to lose trust in the system. There was limited access to the Commission during the statement-taking process, as most of the hearings were held in and right outside of Freetown or in the capital cities of the districts, leaving little opportunity for residents of rural villages to take part. Only 4,000 copies of the TRC's final report were published for the entire country. Isolated from the truth-telling process and denied access to the end results, most Sierra Leoneans were overwhelmingly dissatisfied with the TRC.

Many of those who committed atrocities and other human rights violations during the conflict remained in the same communities with their victims without any atonement or accountability for their conduct. This was quietly corroding peace at all levels throughout the country. But until Fambul Tok, there was no effective, systemic, sustained reconciliation effort from the government, the international community, civil society, or religious organizations.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

SPECIAL COURT OF SIERRA LEONE (SCSL) OVERVIEW

Many of the atrocities that took place in Sierra Leone's civil war not only violated the national laws of Sierra Leone, but were war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of international humanitarian law. The war virtually wiped out the country's formal justice system, leaving the government without the capacity to arrest, detain, investigate, charge, and prosecute all who may have committed human rights violations during the conflict. Prosecuting all perpetrators would have meant incarcerating a significant portion of the most productive members of the population—young men and women who were needed for the national recovery process. Such a move could also have destabilized the fragile peace.

The [Special Court of Sierra Leone](#) is a unique hybrid court, mandated by the United Nations and the government of Sierra Leone to try those “who bear the greatest responsibility for the serious violations of international law and Sierra Leone law committed in the territory of Sierra Leone since November 30, 1996.” The Special Court issued thirteen indictments. Nine people have been prosecuted in four trials - three of the thirteen indicted died in custody or before their trials were concluded and one is missing and presumed dead. All nine prosecuted have been convicted. The total cost of the Special Court is officially estimated at over \$300 million, while a former head of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone puts it at over \$500 million.

NAME	AFFILIATION	DATE INDICTED	# WAR CRIMES	# CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY CHARGES	STATUS
Sam Bockarie	RUF	7-Mar-03	10	7	Died May 5, 2003 before trial proceedings began; case dismissed Dec. 8, 2003
Alex Brima	AFRC	7-Mar-03	8	7	Sentenced to 50 years' imprisonment
Morris Kalon	RUF	7-Mar-03	10	8	Sentenced to 40 years' imprisonment
Brima Kamara	AFRC	28-May-03	8	7	Sentenced to 45 years' imprisonment
Johnny Paul Koroma	AFRC	7-Mar-03	10	7	Fugitive; reported dead in 2003 though case is still open
Samuel Hinga Norman	CDF	7-Mar-03	6	2	Died in custody February 22, 2007; case dismissed May 21, 2007
Foday Sankoh	RUF	7-Mar-03	10	7	Died in custody July 29, 2003; case dismissed December 8, 2003
Issa Sessay	RUF	7-Mar-03	10	8	Sentenced to 52 years' imprisonment
Charles Taylor	Liberian President (NPFL)	7-Mar-03	6	5	Sentenced to 50 years' imprisonment, currently pending appeal
Augustine Gbao	RUF	16-Apr-03	10	8	Sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment
Moinina Fofana	CDF	26-Jun-03	6	2	Sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment
Allieu Kondewa	CDF	26-Jun-03	6	2	Sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment
Santigie Kanu	AFRC	16-Sep-03	8	7	Sentenced to 50 years' imprisonment

POST-WAR REFLECTIONS

In addition to the formal mechanisms for post-war justice, nations often turn to artistic and civic measures to support individual and national healing. For example, soon after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's mandate was instituted, the Commission collaborated with civil society to launch the [National Vision for Sierra Leone](http://www.sierraleonetr.org/index.php/national-vision-for-sl)¹ project. Featuring artwork, literature, essays, performance and installation by Sierra Leoneans of all ages and backgrounds, it expressed national hopes for a post-conflict Sierra Leone. The call for entries was publicized throughout the country and in the first two months, close to 300 individuals had submitted contributions. Poetry is a uniquely powerful way to document and evoke a moment in history. As examples, below are a few of the selections from the initiative focusing on peace, unity and pride of country.

I Saw by Mohamed Sekoya

I saw the atrocities in Sierra Leone
Yes I saw
I saw the people running for their lives from cities to towns,
towns to villages, villages to the bush
Yes I saw
I saw rebels, Sierra Leone Army and Kamajors shooting in the streets,
killing, attacking and looting
Yes I saw
I saw children crying for food
Yes I saw
I saw abomination between man and woman, man and man,
woman and woman, adults and children
Yes I saw
I saw a victim helping a victim
Yes I saw
I saw the United Nations peace keeping forces and I was happy
Yes I saw
I saw the rebels coming home for peace
Yes I saw
I pray never to see again what I saw in my beloved Sierra Leone.

"With the past we know the present and combined we make the future
Now is the time to move forward ever but only with oneness
Our mistakes have opened the doors of discoveries and our discoveries must lead to recoveries."

- from "My Sierra Leone", Revolutionary United Front prisoners, Pademba Road Prison, Freetown, Sierra Leone

¹ <http://www.sierraleonetr.org/index.php/national-vision-for-sl>

My Vision, My Home, My Sierra Leone by Ustina More

There's no place like home, like Sierra Leone,
Where a man in a uniform, thin to the bone,
Stops a man in the street and in god-fearing groan
Begs for cash or for bread or for transport back home

To his shack in a slum where the darkness has come
And in spite of the family each struggles alone
Through the squalor of sewage and refuse that's prone
To put anyone off from the place he calls home.

But he's not on his own, in Sierra Leone,
Where the bulk of our people are crammed in Freetown
And all over the place there are stray dogs that roam
Through the litter-strewn streets and the residue foam

From the wash of one's clothes and one's children, who moan
That they'll go to bed hungry and wake up at dawn
With their bellies still empty and food still 'don don'
And the prospect of making it all on their own.

So the Government's tone, in Sierra Leone,
Is an outright disgrace to the country that's grown
In its dishonest shadow, whose cover was blown
When it ran off to Guinea to rule by sat-phone

And then told the whole world that they couldn't have known
That their people were 'rebels' who'd reach for the gun
At the first hint of fear in the Government's tone.

These are 'leaders on loan', to Sierra Leone,
So directionless, bankrupt, corrupt in renown,
So pathetic yet wicked, devoid of backbone
That we're sick of their claims in repetitive drone

That with vision and justice we'll make ourselves one,
When the precedents set by these leaders have shown
That the President's blind to the needs of his own,
And the only man worse is the heir to his throne.

When this Government's flown, from Sierra Leone,
We'll seek those who can lead us without undertones,
Who can stop all our diamonds from turning to stone
And who won't come to power just to be overthrown.

We will drag ourselves out of this poverty zone
And we'll care for our own, our Sierra Leone,
We will raise up our hearts and our voices as one
And put people in power with some National Vision.

FAMBUL TOK: AN IN-DEPTH TIMELINE

2007 *AUGUST* John Caulker (then Executive Director of Sierra Leone human rights organization Forum of Conscience) meets documentary photographer Sara Terry and a Catalyst for Peace “Voice to Vision” Fellow, Angie Lederach, in Freetown, while they are documenting stories of forgiveness. Frustrated with the lack of real reconciliation in his country, John shares a vision for a community-level process grounded in Sierra Leone’s own culture and traditions. Recognizing a resonance with Catalyst for Peace (CFP) president Libby Hoffman’s beliefs, Sara suggests John and Libby meet.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER John Caulker arrives at Columbia University to begin a human rights fellowship. He and Libby speak on the phone, then meet at the Catalyst for Peace offices in Portland, ME (USA). Seeing real synchronicity in their philosophies of peacebuilding, they commit to working together to create a program facilitating community-led reconciliation in Sierra Leone.

NOVEMBER CFP hosts a program planning meeting in Washington, DC to chart the initial program design. John and Libby each bring colleagues, including a team from Eastern Mennonite University’s Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. The initial program design is charted, along with a commitment for Sara Terry to document the work in film as it emerges. The name “Fambul Tok” is born. Forum of Conscience (John) and Catalyst for Peace (Libby) sign the official agreement to partner on Fambul Tok, with CFP providing the funding.

DECEMBER John gives the first public talk announcing “Fambul Tok” at Princeton University on December 5, and a film crew interviews him there for the first time. On December 7, John heads back to Sierra Leone to begin implementing Fambul Tok. He begins by conducting pre-consultations with his colleagues from civil society organizations across Sierra Leone. He holds a series of meetings in the cities of Bo, Kenema, and Makeni to share and test the idea of Fambul Tok; they help articulate how official District Consultations should proceed.

2008 *JANUARY-MARCH* FOC conducts Fambul Tok District Consultations in each of Sierra Leone’s 14 Districts. Each District is asked if they wish to reconcile, how they want to go about it, and how Fambul Tok can support the process.

FEBRUARY The decision is made to pilot Fambul Tok in Kailahun District, the district where the war began and ended, and one of the districts most impacted by the war. Although initial plans called for ceremonies at each of the 161 chiefdoms in Sierra Leone, feedback from the consultations convinces Fambul Tok to hold ceremonies at the more localized sectional level. Because each section is a more intimate collection of neighboring villages, ceremonies will be easier to attend and more attuned to the people and places affected by particular atrocities.

MARCH The first Fambul Tok bonfire is held in Bomaru, in Kailahun District, on March 23 - the place and date where the first shots of the war were fired seventeen years earlier.

JULY CFP hosts a planning meeting in Vermont, USA. The KonTerra Group facilitates, inaugurating their partnership with Fambul Tok. Senior leadership reflects on the six-month pilot, culls the lessons learned, and charts the next phase in the program’s unfoldment. This cycle of action and reflection will characterize Fambul Tok’s “emergent design” approach.

JULY (CONT.) To address structural issues, an all-volunteer District Executive is created from representatives from across the district to coordinate work with support from a small local staff and Fambul Tok. Carefully trained, gender-balanced, all-volunteer Reconciliation Committees and Outreach Teams are conceptualized to help implement FT at the sectional level. FT catalogs many initial follow-up activities emerging from the pilot that will become standard sustainability initiatives, such as Peace Trees, Radio Programs, Community Farms, and Football for Reconciliation.

SEPTEMBER Fambul Tok rolls out in Moyamba District.

DECEMBER By the end of the first year, Fambul Tok has held ceremonies in 21 communities, with 268 people testifying to over 11,300 of their neighbors.

2009 *JANUARY* The second joint FOC/CFP program-wide planning meeting is held in Bo. The Fambul Tok values are articulated, and inculcating them becomes a core part of the sensitization process staff lead in each community. Fambul Tok begins to roll out in Kono.

MARCH Fambul Tok begins to work in Tombodu (in Kono District), and the decision is made to look for Tamba Joe and invite him to participate in a Fambul Tok bonfire.

MAY Tombodu holds its bonfire. Tamba Joe does not appear, but his sisters, including Naomi Joe, apologize on his behalf. John and the film crew meet with Tamba Joe’s alleged commander, Mohamed Savage, to get his perspective on the massacre at Tombodu. Savage denies who he is. After viewing a message Naomi Joe filmed for her brother, Savage admits his identity and asks John to help him return to apologize. While Savage is willing to face prosecution by the Special Court to testify at a Fambul Tok bonfire, staff decide not to risk that possibility at this time, fearing it would undermine program credibility.

JULY FOC and CFP hold a second US-based planning meeting in Vermont. They decide to turn Fambul Tok into an international organization. The new organization will combine FOC’s fieldwork and CFP’s storytelling and education.

OCTOBER Fambul Tok International (FTI) is officially incorporated as a US 501(c) 3 charitable organization on October 5.

DECEMBER Fambul Tok begins to roll out in Koinadugu district. In two years, Fambul Tok has held 51 bonfire ceremonies, with 676 people testifying, to over 22,290 of their neighbors.

2010 *JANUARY* FTI opens corporate headquarters in Portland, ME (USA), and program headquarters in Freetown, Sierra Leone. As part of ensuring equal representation in Fambul Tok programming, FTI begins formally interviewing women about their needs. Women overwhelmingly request gender-specific programming. With FTI’s support, women-only community groups form as part of Fambul Tok’s post-ceremony follow-up activities, undertaking farming and other development projects. They call themselves “Peace Mothers.”

JULY The annual FTI planning meeting is held in Maine. Staff discuss the possibility of election violence erupting in advance of the 2012 national elections.

OCTOBER John helps design and co-facilitate a global reconciliation leadership training sponsored by the Folke Bernadotte Academy in Sweden.

NOVEMBER Mohamed Savage returns to Kono and participates in a special bonfire ceremony in Tombodu to apologize for the atrocities he committed or commanded. He is forgiven.

DECEMBER Fambul Tok begins to roll out in Bombali District. By the end of its third year, Fambul Tok has held ceremonies in 88 communities, with 1,289 people testifying to over 41,540 of their neighbors.

2011 JANUARY At the annual general staff meeting in Kenema, Fambul Tok staff decide to initiate a National Unity Campaign to support peaceful elections. Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) begins an assessment of Fambul Tok in Sierra Leone. A lottery system is adopted to select new Fambul Tok communities in each district.

MARCH *Fambul Tok* (the film) has its world premiere at SXSW Film Festival, in Austin, Texas.

Fambul Tok premieres in Sierra Leone on March 23, where the screening in Kailahun serves as the launch of the Wi Na Wan Fambul National Unity Campaign, designed to help prevent election violence in the 2012 national elections. Bajah + The Dry Eye Crew combine with other artists on the campaign's theme song, "Wi Na Wan Fambul."

APRIL Umbrage Editions publishes *Fambul Tok* (the book).

SEPTEMBER The United Nations in Sierra Leone begins conversations about convening a coalition of civil society organizations to work together to more systematically prevent election violence. Libby Hoffman delivers a TEDx talk on Fambul Tok, entitled *Forgiving the Unforgivable*.

OCTOBER Fambul Tok participates in meetings at the House of Parliament in London, UK. First Run Features releases *Fambul Tok* on home DVD.

NOVEMBER The FTI Board votes to revert back to two separate organizations. Fambul Tok International - Sierra Leone (FTI-SL) will advance community reconciliation in Sierra Leone, while storytelling and education initiatives will go forward from Catalyst for Peace in the US. With a tighter focus, both organizations will be better situated as partners in peacebuilding.

DECEMBER By the end of 2011, Fambul Tok has held ceremonies in 117 communities, with 1,790 people testifying to over 54,020 of their neighbors.

2012 JANUARY Community reconciliation work in Sierra Leone is now independently run through FTI-SL, with CFP as its US funding and program partner.

FEBRUARY The CSO Platform is finalized. John Caulker is appointed National Chairman and the FTI offices host the organizing activities. *Fambul Tok* has its US television premieres on EPIX cable channel on February 22.

MARCH CFP releases *Wan Fambul/One Family*, a benefit album with musicians from conflict zones around the world donating songs of peace to raise funds and awareness for Fambul Tok in Sierra Leone. The album is headlined by Bajah + The Dry Eye Crew's theme song "Wi Na Wan Fambul" and also includes tracks by Bombino, Idan Raichel Project ft. Vieux Farka Touré, Mashrou Leila and Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars, among others.

APRIL The CSO Platform begins its first official projects, including work with ex-combatants in Waterloo, outside of Freetown. Mohamed Savage begins working for Fambul Tok.

MAY Fambul Tok holds a workshop for ex-combatants in Waterloo, with Mohamed Savage taking a lead role. The Krio version of the new Television Version of *Fambul Tok* (the film) is screened. The ex-combatants decide they no longer want to be known as "ex-combatants," and choose the name Peace Parents. Sierra Leone Broadcast Corporation begins national broadcast of *Fambul Tok* in Sierra Leone.

DECEMBER By the end of 2012, Fambul Tok has held ceremonies in 150 communities, with 2,629 people testifying to over 67,770 of their neighbors. *Fambul Tok* (the film) has now won 17 major awards all over the world, including Best of Fest or Best Documentary awards at the Global Social Change Film Festival, and at festivals in Ft. Myers, Queens, Chagrin, Portland (Maine), Rhode Island and others; the Crystal Heart Award - Heartland Film Festival (Indianapolis, IN, 2011), the Human Spirit Award - Nashville Film Festival, and the Norman Vaughan Indomitable Spirit Award at Mountainfilm (Telluride, CO).

RESOURCES

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

FAMBUL TOK NOTE-TAKING GUIDE

Note at least three significant facts, themes, and/or stories about the topics below.

The civil war in Sierra Leone:

The culture of Sierra Leone, before and after the war:

The international community's efforts to bring peace and justice after the war:

The Fambul Tok process – what it is and how it works:

Quotes or ideas that stand out to you:

FAMBUL TOK STUDY GUIDE

EDUCATIONAL VERSION

1. Post-war Sierra Leone

Describe the opening bonfire.

When John Caulker goes to Songo, what does he say about the village during the war? What does he say about the culture of Sierra Leone?

What policy did the government issue at the end of the war? How did this affect communities?

2. Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Why did John Caulker want the country to have its own Truth Commission?

How did the international community respond to his recommendations?

What gaps is John trying to fill through Fambul Tok?

According to John, what is necessary in order to know the truth about what happened during the war?

3. Kailahun District

What is the purpose of community consultations?

How does the community seem to receive this responsibility? Do they seem ready to reconcile?

4. Captain Mohamed Savage

Who is Captain Savage?

What does he say to John Caulker?

How does John treat Mohamed Savage when they speak?

What advice does John offer this man who has committed so many atrocities against his people?

5. Justice in Sierra Leone

In whose opinion was the Special Court the proper form of justice?

What are some of John's critiques about the TRC and Special Court?

How does the Sierra Leonean proverb “There is no bad bush in which to throw away a bad child” represent a contrast with the prison and criminal justice system of much of Western culture?

6. Nyumah

Who is he?

What happened to him during the war?

How did he feel afterward?

7. Sahr

Who is he? What happened to him during the war?

What does he say to Nyumah?

According to Sahr, what is forgiveness?

What is the significance of the forgiveness at the bonfire in the reconciliation process?

8. Esther

Who is she? What happened to her during the war?

How did she feel afterward?

9. Joseph

Who is he? What happened to him during the war?

How did he feel afterward?

10. The Fambul Tok Process

Besides the bonfire, what are some other key elements in the Fambul Tok healing process?

What is the purpose of the cleansing ceremonies?

According to John, volunteers are “the key to Fambul Tok’s success and sustainability.” What are some things that volunteers are doing to support the process of justice and peace in their communities?

11. Foendor

What did Tamba Joe do during the war?

How does Naomi Joe describe the community of Foendor before the war?

How have her brother’s actions affected Naomi Joe’s life?

How do community members respond to the idea of bringing Tamba Joe back to Foendor?

Who apologized to Sahr Foendor at the bonfire?

How does he react to the apology?

12. Savage’s Journey

What does Naomi Joe say in her video message to Savage?

How does he respond to the message? How does he change?

How does John Caulker respond to Savage’s desire to reconcile?

How does the community respond to the idea of Savage returning to apologize?

What happens at Savage’s bonfire?

How does Chief Melvin see Mohamed Savage’s punishment, after his choice to apologize to the community?

13. Complete the following statistics:

In the first four years of the program, nearly _____ people testified to over _____ of their neighbors at _____ Fambul Tok bonfires ceremonies. The cost: _____ million dollars.

In ten years, the Special Court has prosecuted _____ men in _____ trials. The cost: over _____ million dollars.

GLOSSARY

Unless otherwise specified, any country specific references are assumed to be in Sierra Leone.

Abidjan Peace Accord: agreement signed by RUF leader Foday Sankoh and Sierra Leonean President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah on November 30, 1996; its temporary peace was nullified by Johnny Paul Koroma's (AFRC) coup on May 25, 1997

Accountability: to be held responsible

Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC): armed rebel forces led by Johnny Paul Koroma and led the 1997 coup to overthrow President Kabbah; many AFRC fighters later formed the West Side Boys

African Union: coalition of 54 member states, established in 2002 as the successor to the Organization of African Unity

All People's Congress (APC): one of two major political parties in Sierra Leone; declared the sole legal party in 1978 and remained in power until the 1992 overthrow of Momoh; reinstated as ruling party with 2007 election and recent November 2012 reelection of Ernest Bai Koroma

Amnesty: an official pardon granted to offenders absolving them of past offenses

Amputee: a person who has had one or more limbs removed

Atrocity: a very cruel act or action

Avenge: to inflict a punishment upon as a form of revenge

Barray, or Court Barray (sometimes sp. "barrie"): a community building that serves as the meeting place as well as the social center of the village.

Bio, Julius Maada: head of state under the NPRC's junta from January 16 until March 29, 1996

Blanket amnesty: amnesty granted to an entire group

Blood diamonds: diamonds mined in a conflict zone and sold to finance a war or rebellion

Bomaru: town in eastern Sierra Leone; site of both the first shots of the civil war and Fambul Tok's first reconciliation ceremony

Bonfire: a large open-air fire used by communities for important occasions

Civil Defense Forces (CDF): Military fighters who fought against the rebels (RUF & AFRC) in support of President Kabbah's regime

Ceasefire: an agreed upon suspension of aggression and conflict

Child soldier: According to the Cape Town Principles of 1997, "A 'child soldier' is defined as any child - boy or girl - under 18 years of age, who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including, but not limited to: cooks, porters, messengers, and anyone

accompanying such groups other than family members. It includes girls and boys recruited for sexual purposes and/or forced marriage. The definition, therefore, does not only refer to a child who is carrying, or has carried weapons"

Civil war: a war between citizens of the same country

Cleansing ceremonies: Ancient community ceremonies in Sierra Leone being revived and performed as part of the Fambul Tok process, following the truth-telling bonfires, to symbolically cleanse individuals and the community from the atrocities committed during the war, providing them with a new beginning; the ceremonies typically also involve calling on the ancestors to bless the communities going forward.

Colony: an area of land under the political control of another entity

Combatant: a person who directly engages in an armed conflict

Commonwealth: The Commonwealth of Nations; an intergovernmental organization comprised of 54 member states, all but 2 of which are former British colonies

Community consultation: the process of finding out what a community wants and needs; this is the first step in any Fambul Tok intervention, and it is repeated in an ongoing way throughout the whole Fambul Tok process.

Consensus: general agreement

Coup: (coup d'état) a sudden, often violent seizure of power from a government

Crimes Against Humanity: as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, "crimes committed 'as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population,'" including rape, torture, murder, extermination and persecution

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): a peacebuilding strategy to rehabilitate ex-combatants and facilitate their reintegration into civil society.

Dehumanize: to deprive of human qualities or personality

Demeanor: outward behavior towards other

District: Geographic and political division of Sierra Leone, much like States in the United States, each with its own distinct culture, history, ethnic and political makeup. There are 14 districts in Sierra Leone, including the Western Urban and Western Rural areas. Fambul Tok is organized at the district level in Sierra Leone.

Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG): West African troops under Nigerian leadership charged with implementing a ceasefire during the Liberian Civil War, and with restoring the democratically elected government, that had been overthrown by the military, in Sierra Leone

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): an organization made up of 15 West African nations intended to promote economic independence for it's member states

Empathy: the ability to understand and identify with the feelings of another

Ex-combatants: persons who previously engaged in an armed conflict

Exploit: to take advantage of

Fambul Tok: Krio for “family talk”

Fambul Tok International (FTI): a non-governmental organization leading in community based reconciliation between victims and offenders of the 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone

Grassroots: a reference to the local or community level; often used to describe a movement spontaneously and naturally driven by a community.

Human rights: basic rights and freedoms granted to all individuals simply by virtue of being human; includes positive (right to...) and negative (freedom from...)

Impunity: exemption from punishment, penalty or consequence

Infiltrate: to gain access to gradually, with the intention of taking over

Junta: military-led government

Kabbah, President Ahmad Tejan: leader of Sierra Leone Peoples’ Party (SLPP) , served as President from 1996-1997 (temporarily overthrown by AFRC and reinstated by ECOMOG) and 1998-2007

Kamarjors: mystical fighting sect of the Civil Defense Forces who worked loosely with ECOMOG forces attempting to establish stability

Kerosene: a light fuel oil

Koroma, Johnny Paul: leader of AFRC; gained power from 1997 coup, but overthrown by ECOMOG in February 1998; fled before being indicted by SCSL on March 7, 2003 - declared dead under suspicious circumstances, but body was never found so the indictment remains open.

Krio: the most widely spoken language in Sierra Leone; an English-based pidgin dialect spoken by the descendants of freed slaves

Lansana, Brigadier David: named commander of the Sierra Leonean Army in 1964; staged coup against Margai in 1967 and declared martial law; executed for treason in 1975

Liberia: West African country along the southern border of Sierra Leone

Lomé Peace Accord: Agreed upon by Sierra Leone’s President Ahmad Kabbah and the leader of the Revolutionary United Front, Foday Sankoh in 1999. This document, signed on July 7 and ratified on July 16 of that year, included an “absolute and free pardon and reprieve to all combatants and collaborators in respect of anything done by them in pursuit of their objectives, up to the time of the signing of the present Agreement.”

Margai, Milton: Sierra Leonean politician (member of the Sierra Leone People’s Party) and the country’s first Prime Minister; primary architect of the 1961 constitution

Mercenary: group hired to serve in a foreign army

Mommy Queen: the female head of a community in Sierra Leone,

Morals: lessons or standards determining what is and is not appropriate

National Reformation Council: group of senior military officers who led a bloodless coup in 1967 to restore the APC and Siaka Stevens to power

Natural resources: materials existing in nature that have an economic value, such as diamonds, iron ore, oil, etc.

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC): established as a military government by Valentine Strasser in response to Joseph Momoh’s corruption, with the promise of restoring Sierra Leone to peace; ruled Sierra Leone from April 29, 1992 until March 29, 1996

Paramount Chief: highest level of traditional political leader

Parastatals: agencies or companies partially or wholly owned and controlled by the government

Peace Farms: farms built together by victims and offenders of the civil war, following a Fambul Tok reconciliation ceremony

Peace Mothers: female representatives of communities coming together after the Fambul Tok bonfire ceremonies to address women’s unique post-war needs and to mobilize women’s contribution to the ongoing reconciliation process.

Peace Trees: trees designated as a symbol of peace for a reconciled village; location serves as an ongoing meeting spot where villagers gather to talk, socialize, and settle disputes

Perpetrator: person who commits a violent act (offender)

Protectorate: a country or territory ruled and protected by a more powerful entity, through conquest or otherwise

Reconciliation: Re-establishment of normal relationships between former adversaries, or people who have been alienated and separated from each other; in post-war settings it is applied to various levels and activities, from individual to community to larger social or even national processes, where it encompasses those activities and processes that restore wholeness after destruction or division.

Refugee: a person who is forced to leave their home due to war, persecution or natural disaster

Remorse: regret for wrongdoings committed

Reparations: amends made in the form of monetary or material compensation

Repatriate: return to one’s country of origin

Republic: a state in which supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives, and which has an elected or nominated president rather than a monarch.

Resilience: power and ability to recover

Restorative justice: a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused or revealed by criminal behavior. It usually involves cooperative processes that include all the stakeholders.

Retributive justice: a theory of justice that believes punishment (proportionate to the offense) to be the best response to crime. The crime is seen as being done against the state, or government, rather than the individual, so the state is seen as the entity leading the process of bringing justice.

Revolutionary United Front (RUF): rebel group founded by Foday Sankoh in 1991 and supported by Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia to overthrow the Sierra Leone government; joined forces with AFRC after 1997 coup; known for widespread use of child soldiers, drug use and amputations

Sanction: action/declaration that serves as a binding force or approval

Sankoh, Foday: founder and leader of the Revolutionary United Front, or RUF; worked with Charles Taylor’s NPFL to lead the armed uprising in Sierra Leone that began the war in 1991; imprisoned between 1997-1999; arrested in 2000 and indicted by the SCSL on 17 charges including rape, sexual slavery and extermination; died of a stroke in 2003 while in custody

Scarcity: insufficient supply

Sessay, Issa: senior commander of RUF and RUF/AFRC junta, which led attacks primarily against civilians and humanitarian aid/peacekeeping personnel; indicted on March 7, 2003 by SCSL - convicted Feb. 25, 2009 on 16 charges - sentenced to 52 years in prison

Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP): one of two main political parties in Sierra Leone, dominated politics from 1951 until 1967 and again from 1996-2007

Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL): the international criminal tribunal jointly set up by the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations and charged with bringing to justice those deemed to bear the greatest responsibility for the atrocities of the war; jurisdiction only covers crimes committed after the signing of the Abidjan Peace Accord in November 1996

Stevens, Siaka: Founding member of the All-People’s Congress (APC); served as Sierra Leone’s third prime minister and was responsible for making Sierra Leone a republic, serving as its first president; retired in 1985 and chose Joseph Momoh as his successor; known for a ruthlessly repressive and corrupt tenure

Strasser, Valentine: member of group of young NPRC soldiers who overthrew President Momoh; served as head of state from 1992-1996, when ousted by own soldiers - arrested, sent to exile in Guinea, returned to Sierra Leone after brief stay in England

Taboo: actions forbidden within the customs of a community

Taylor, Charles: former President of Liberia who instigated the Liberian Civil War and, the consequential Sierra Leonean Civil War; indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone and found guilty in April 2012 of eleven counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, but currently appealing his sentence

The Hague: known as the “city of peace and justice,” and serves as the seat of Dutch government and parliament, as well as the site for the International Criminal Court, International Court of Justice, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC): established as a clause of the Lomé Peace Accord to “create an impartial historical record of violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law related to the armed conflict in Sierra Leone, from the beginning of the conflict in 1991 to the signing of the Lomé Peace Accord; to address impunity, to respond to the needs of the victims, to promote healing and reconciliation and to prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered” (TRC Act, 2000); operated from November 2002 to October 2004

United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL): created to assist the implementation of the Lomé Peace Accord in 1999 with the mandate of helping the DDR process, overseeing national elections, rebuilding a national police force and revitalizing the government and infrastructure; also contributed to the establishment of the SCSL and TRC; mandate ended 2005

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): mandated to protect and support the integration, repatriation or relocation of refugees

United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL): created in 2005 as a follow up to UNAMSIL. Replaced in 2008 with UNIPSIL.

United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL): established in 2008 to support the Sierra Leonean government’s peacebuilding and democratic capacities

United Nations: an international organization of countries set up in 1945, following the end of World War II, to promote peace, security and international cooperation

Victim: person harmed as a result of a crime

War Crimes: as defined by the Geneva Conventions, “willful killing, torture or inhumane treatment” of civilians or combatants

West Side Boys: group of young rebel army fighters, believed to be comprised of former members of the RUF and SLA known for wearing female clothing and wigs, heavy drug and alcohol use, and admiration of American “gangsta” culture; at one point, led by Commander Mohamed Savage

FAMBUL TOK QUOTES

SELECTED QUOTES FROM THE FILM:

“The family tree bends but it does not break.” - *Sierra Leonean Proverb*

“I don’t want anybody to be afraid. But if something is disturbing you, you have to speak it out. You can talk once again with your brothers and sisters. So the floor is open to everybody.” - *Chief Maada Ndolleh, Daabu, Kailahun District*

“My experience is just a tiny bit of the national story. And when I listen to the stories from people and they are willing to forgive, it tells me how much we have in our community.” - *John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“At the end of the war, the government issued a statement that everyone should go home, and live in their communities. People live in theses communities alongside their offenders and it was like a bomb waiting to explode.” - *John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“If you offend an individual, you just don’t offend the individual, you offend the family. You offend the community.” - *John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“Because a lot have come, and from my point of view, they all failed. They didn’t come down to us who were affected, especially the women.” - *Female community member, Kailahun District*

“The facts, you need to get the facts right before you say something about a person.” - *Mohamed Savage*

“The question is, whose justice are they addressing when the country is in darkness?” - *John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“There is no bad bush to throw away a bad child.” - *Sierra Leonean proverb*

“They commanded me to beat him up. I refused and said, ‘this is my friend, I won’t do it.’ Then they shot me. I beat him. But in my mind, I thought my friend would not blame me. I was forced to do it.” - *Nyumah*

“Forgiveness at the bonfire is the beginning, or a commitment by the offenders and victims to reconcile in the presence of the community, and the community agreeing to work with them.” - *John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“It was not my intention to do it. They hit me and said if I didn’t join them, I would be killed. So I joined them.” - *Joseph, Kangama*

“No, I was able to see offenders and victims sit together, embrace one another. Still, they have that passion for one another, to forgive.” - *John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“But the bottom line is, it’s the community coming together to say we are one family, and we have to deal with our issues as a community.” - *John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“As you know when someone wrongs you it is something if he comes and shows some remorse and asks for mercy. If you are a godly person, you will be able to accept that person and forget about the wrongdoing.” - *Sahr Foendor, Foendor, Kono District*

“We need to get those who committed atrocities to come out.” - *Community member*

“We used to consider ourselves as people of the same blood. We were so tight in our relationship we considered ourselves brothers and sisters, so when I reflect on such things, I don’t feel happy. We have lost a lot of people. Because of that thinking, we also lost our mother, we also lost a lot of people ... When those who used to help us, were affected by what my brother did, the relationship was broken.” - *Naomi Joe, Foendor, Kono District*

“Most times when I’d be away for a long time, the whole village would welcome me and accept me sometimes when I used to come, I brought them little gifts. And they blessed me. That blessing alone, it was more than any other thing to me. These are some of the things that were existing between us.” - *Naomi Joe, Foendor, Kono District*

“If you’re here, don’t be afraid. Come up and we will beg for you tonight.” - *Facilitator of Foendor bonfire for Tamba Joe, Kono District*

“Don’t be afraid. Anything can happen for us. And everything has an end.” - *Naomi Joe, Foendor, Kono District*

“I’m free today. But within my conscience, I’m not free because there are things pointing at me.” - *Mohamed Savage*

“He has killed so many people. What can be done to a man like this, who has done so many bad things? Can you imagine? Things beyond human understanding, this is what, some of the things this guy did. So for him to come down and say ‘I’m sorry,’ I don’t believe it’s going to be enough. But what else can you do?” - *Paramount Chief Melvin Ngekia*

“It’s a very compelling argument that people like Savage should be in prison. But I think we should also be mindful of the fact that what he will go through tonight could be even more painful, because he’s going to face his victims. He is going to see them for the first time.” - *John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“Fambul Tok, and this bonfire, is reminding us of our past and is telling us that these things used to work ... It takes a man - after all that Savage did - to say he wants to come to his people and apologize ... The punishment that Savage is undergoing is not something that you can see with your naked eyes.” - *Paramount Chief Melvin Ngekia*

“What led to all this madness? What do we mean, when we talk of justice? In whose interest do we administer the criminal justice? What’s the outcome of such a process? Where is the space for victims in that type of justice?” - *John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“I ask myself questions. Who did we fight for? What did we fight for? What have we gained today? Nothing.” - *Mohamed Savage*

END CARD: In the first four years of the program, nearly 2,700 people testified to over 60,000 of their neighbors at 150 Fambul Tok bonfires ceremonies. The cost: 2.5 million dollars. In ten years, the Special Court has prosecuted 9 men in four trials. The cost: over 300 million dollars.

SELECTED QUOTES FROM FAMBUL TOK PARTICIPANTS IN SIERRA LEONE:

“We shed a lot of blood in our community, so after the bonfire, we were fortunate to have the opportunity to go and pour libations to our ancestors, so that we can have peace in our community. And after that libation, there is peace on our community. Even our children obey us again.”–*Musu Swarray, Bunumbu, Kailahun District, Sierra Leone*

“Most of our brothers and sisters played an active role during the war. Some of them amputated hands, some of them slaughtered women, some split women open to see what baby was in their stomach, but at the ceremony most of them came forward and confessed and asked for forgiveness and we have forgiven them. We have encouraged them, embraced them, we do things together. Even myself, my elder sister was killed during this war. Those that killed her, I knew who they were, but when they confessed, I forgave them.”–*Hawah Wurie, Bunumbu, Kailahun District, Sierra Leone*

“Any wrongdoing you do to anybody, come out plain – ‘Madam, I have wronged you. Forgive me.’ That will make me feel happy. Without a cent, I will accept it. But when you have wronged me, you roam around, I see you, I know what you have done to me, it pains me. But when you voice it, reconciliation will go and I will be very peaceful. This is what we need here.” –*Isata Ndolleh, Mommy Queen, Kailahun District, Sierra Leone*

“Since the end of the war, we were unable to come together as a community and plan development because of our individual differences. The simple fact that Fambul Tok is attempting to reconcile my community, I appreciate their effort in forging unity.” –*Elizabeth Lebbie, Kamaa chiefdom, Kono district, Sierra Leone*

“I am sure community reconciliation will help us fight poverty.” – *Sahr Ngaoja, Lei chiefdom, Kono district, Sierra Leone*

“Most of us do not have the opportunity to face the TRC to tell people what happened to us. With Fambul Tok, we can now share our stories and have the opportunity to forgive and reconcile.” –*Hawa Koroma, Moyamba town, Sierra Leone*

“I am proud that we can now solve our own problems without going to chiefs. I thank Fambul Tok for this great initiative.” –*Marie Sesay, Moyamba District, Sierra Leone*

“Fambul Tok has revived our culture and traditions. We have not had any ceremony for the past 10 years and now the project is here we are determined to appease our ancestors.” – *Samuel Caulker, Rotifunk, Moyamba District, Sierra Leone*

“Women suffered a lot during the war and now with Fambul Tok in Moyamba, all of us will work together for sustainable peace in our communities.” –*Sarah Gbanie, Women’s Leader, Moyamba, Sierra Leone*

“The youth owe an apology to this nation.” –*J.C. Vanjah, Youth Chairman, Moyamba District, Sierra Leone*

“We don’t believe in punishing somebody. Because if we say we’re going to punish, there were so many, we would end up punishing everybody.” –*Musu Swarray, Bunumbu, Kailahun District, Sierra Leone*

“The idea is to give civil society an opportunity to facilitate dialogue at community level with victims and offenders to really discuss what wrong ... so that it won’t happen again in the history of Sierra Leone.” –*John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“I believe the international community will learn a lot from Fambul Tok because the initiative is locally driven.” –*John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“Collectively, we will find a way out.” –*John Caulker, founder, Fambul Tok*

“It was not my wish to be with the rebels. It was not an intentional act.” –*Mariam, ex-girl soldier, Sierra Leone*

“When you have done something wrong to someone you don’t know, someone you don’t even remember, how can you ask for forgiveness? Who can forgive you in that sense?” –*Mariam, ex-girl soldier, Sierra Leone*

OTHER RELEVANT QUOTES:

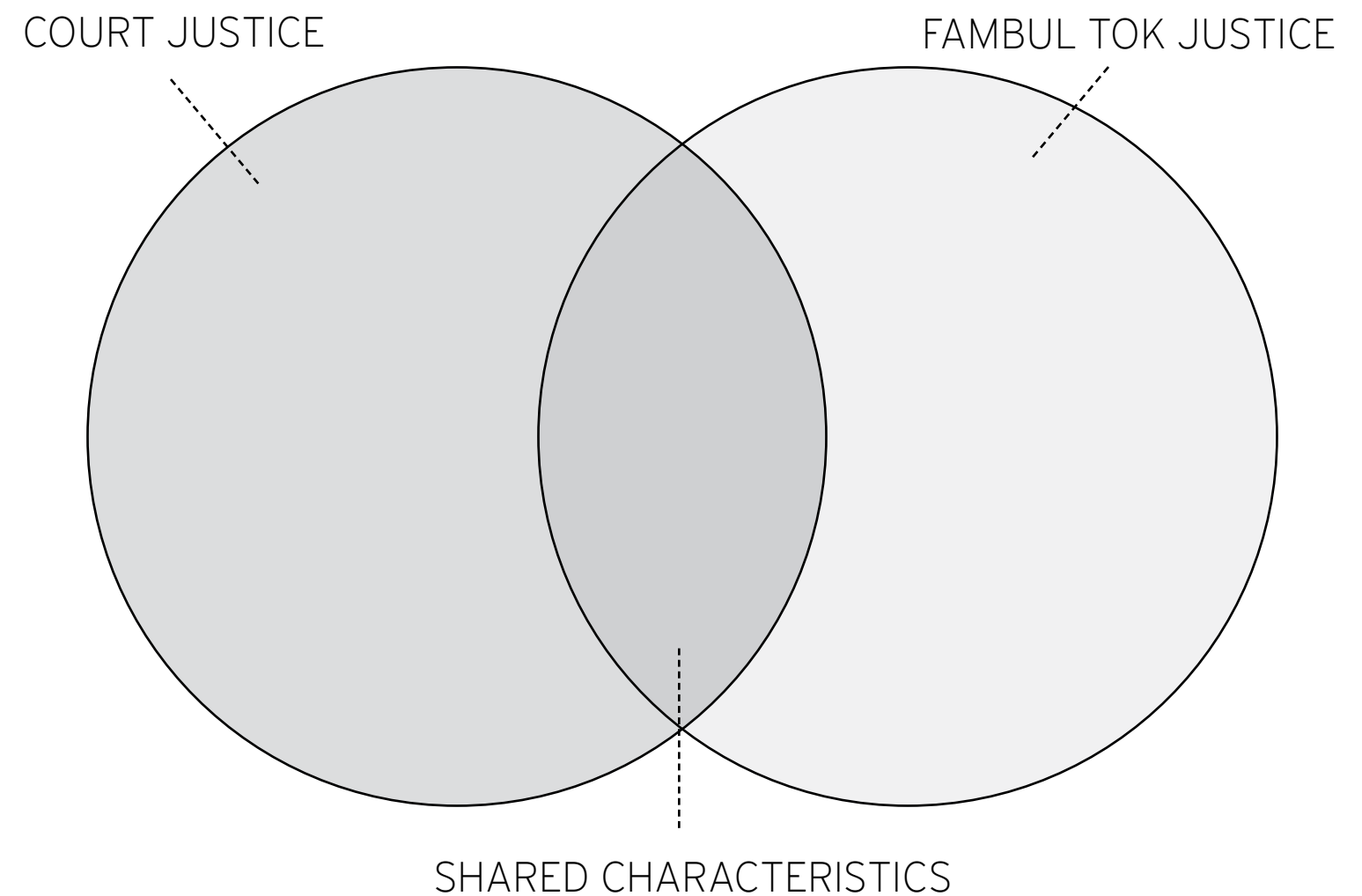
With its “uncomfortable commitment to bringing the perpetrator back into the family, Africa has something to say to the world.” –*Alex Boraine, deputy chair of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission*

“We have to re-discover Africa. The first discovery of Africa by Europe was the wrong one. It was not a discovery. It was an act of misperception. They saw, and bequeathed to future ages, an Africa based on what they thought of as important. They did not see Africa. And this wrong seeing of Africa is part of the problems of today. Africa was seen from a point of view of greed, of what could be got from it. And what you see is what you make. What you see in a people is what you eventually create in them. It is now time for a new seeing. It is now time to clear the darkness from the eyes of the Western world. The world should now begin to see the light in Africa, to see its sunlight, to see its brightness, its brilliance, its beauty. If we see it, it will be revealed... Only what we see anew, is revealed to us. Africa has been waiting, for centuries, to be discovered with eyes of love, the eyes of a lover. There is no true seeing without love.” –*Ben Okri, Nigerian writer, and winner of the Booker prize in literature*

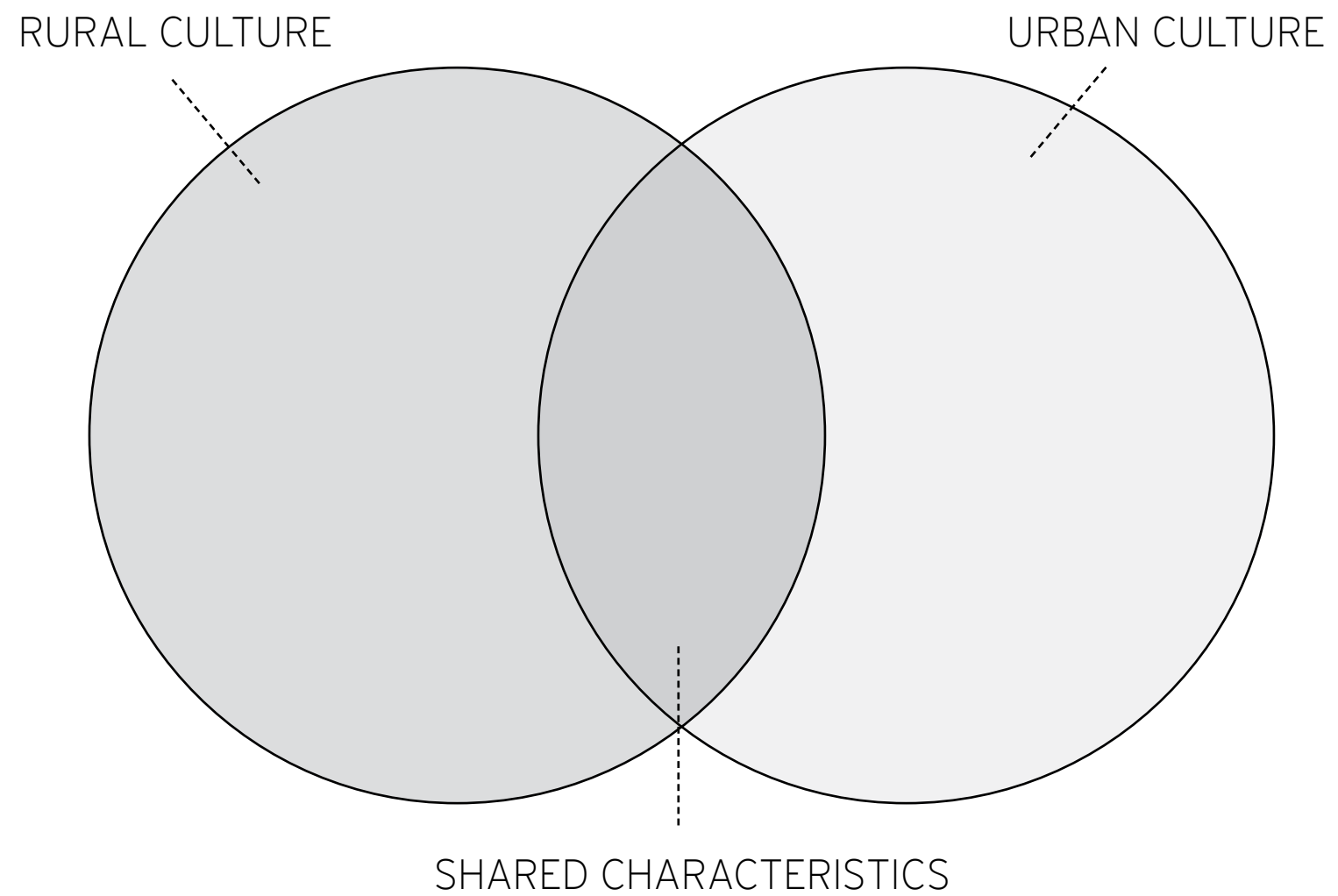
FAMBUL TOK LOGO



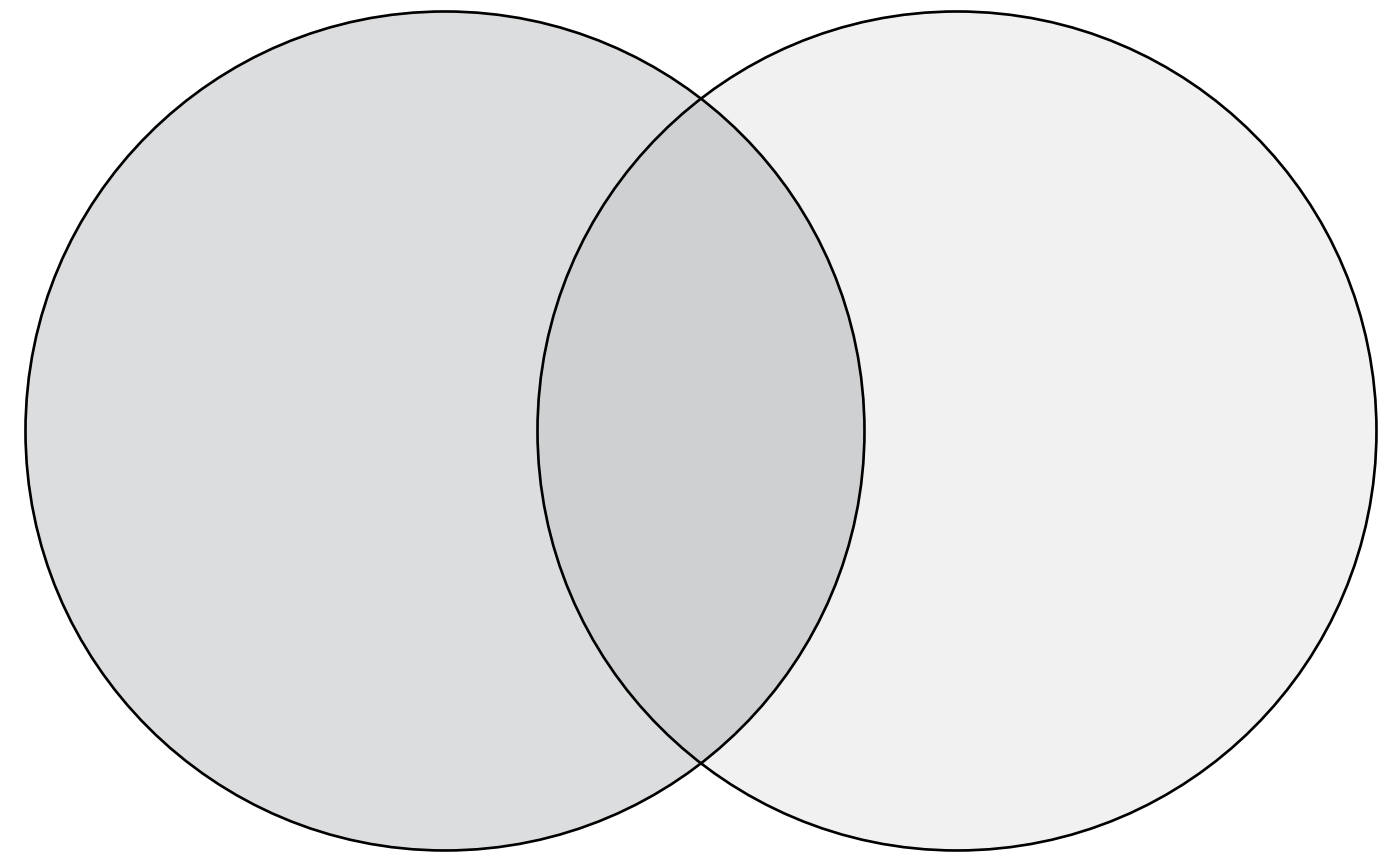
VENN DIAGRAM



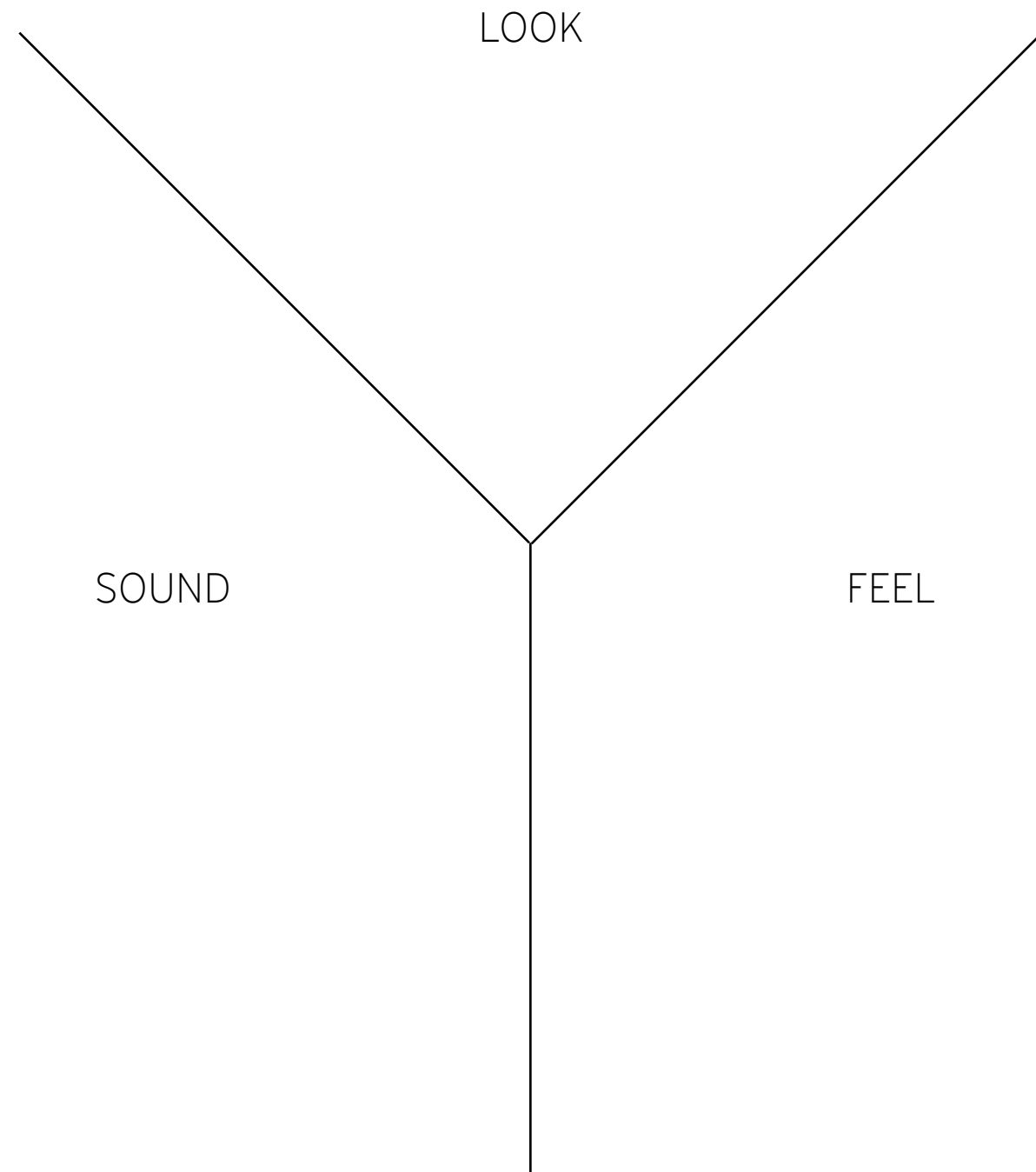
VENN DIAGRAM



VENN DIAGRAM



"Y" CHART



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ishmael Beah, John Caulker, Libby Hoffman, Sara Terry, Benedict Sannoh, and Nan Richardson, **Fambul Tok** (Umbrage Editions, 2011).
A 144-page, hardcover book with in depth exploration of the Fambul Tok origins, stories, process, and significance in essays and photographs. Includes an extensive chronology and bibliography and original source documents from the peace process.

RELATED VIDEO AND AUDIO:

[The Woman Who Forgave Her Rapist](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01452h0). Radio Interview. BBC World Service - Outlook. February 13, 2013. www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01452h0 Radio interview with Satta Joe, a woman who, with the help of Fambul Tok, forgave the man who raped her during the war.

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[Introducing Fambul Tok: Community Healing in Sierra Leone](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIIEnuPMe2g), March, 2008. www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIIEnuPMe2g An early introduction to the groundbreaking Fambul Tok (Family Talk) program of community reconciliation in Sierra Leone, before the ceremonies even began. FTI Executive Director John Caulker talks about the origins of the work in Sierra Leone, illuminating a unique approach to bringing justice and peace after civil war.

[Fambul Tok Filmmaker Interview - Complete](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIDrIq78E9U), January 5, 2012. www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIDrIq78E9U Producer/Executive Producer Libby Hoffman and Director/Producer Sara Terry talk about their motivations in making Fambul Tok (the film), the approach they took, and their hopes for the impact it can have in the world.

["Reconciliation in Sierra Leone."](http://thestory.org/archive/the_story_082511_full_story.mp3/view) Interview with John Caulker. The Story - American Public Radio, August 25, 2011. thestory.org/archive/the_story_082511_full_story.mp3/view

John Caulker, Libby Hoffman, Sara Terry, Mariama Jumu, and Michael Momoh. ["Forgiving the Unforgivable: Community Reconciliation in Sierra Leone."](http://www.goodpoliticsradio.com/?p=2366) Radio Interview. Good Politics Radio. A World of Possibilities, November 16, 2010. www.goodpoliticsradio.com/?p=2366 Radio interview with the filmmakers, Executive Director of Fambul Tok International - Sierra Leone, and two participants in the Fambul Tok reconciliation process in the village of Daabu.

[Trailer for the Documentary Film Fambul Tok](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQsBy7b1Prc). YouTube, March 9, 2011. www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQsBy7b1Prc

[Stories of Forgiveness: Ndaabu Village, Kailahun District, Sierra Leone](http://www.fambultok.org/what-is-fambul-tok/stories/musa-fatamah-and-). Story in slides and audio. Prod. Jina Moore. June 15, 2010. www.fambultok.org/what-is-fambul-tok/stories/musa-fatamah-and-

musa-jomo *The village of Ndaabu suffered terribly during Sierra Leone's civil war. During a Fambul Tok reconciliation ceremony, Musa Fatomah, a woman from the village, told her story of heartbreaking loss for the first time. Her fellow villager, Musa Jomo, confesses to having wronged her, and the two embark on a moving journey of reconciliation.*

[Seeding Peace: Fambul Tok Peace Farm, Kono District, Sierra Leone](#). Story in slides and audio. Prod. Jina Moore. June 15, 2010. www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7pdwxtYc9w&feature=plcp *Torn apart by the Sierra Leone civil war, the village of Kunduma came together for a community-led Fambul Tok reconciliation ceremony. Around the bonfire, perpetrators and victims shared their stories. Forgiveness was asked for, and given. To nurture the new peace, the people of Kunduma founded a community farm. The villagers work side by side—and as this video shows, they are enjoying a bountiful harvest.*

SELECT POSTS FROM THE FAMBUL TOK BLOG:

[“From ‘Ex-Combatants’ to ‘Peace Parents’”](#), May 21, 2012. www.fambultokblog.org/program-updates-sierra-leone/from-ex-combatants-to-peace-parents *Following a screening of the International/Educational version of the film, former rebel leader Mohamed Savage led a workshop for other ex-combatants to move forward with their country's peace processes.*

[“Civil Society Platform Engages Waterloo Community on Non-Violence”](#), May 20, 2012. www.fambultokblog.org/program-updates-sierra-leone/fambul-tok-cgg-and-slyeo-engage-waterloo-on-non-violence *Sierra Leone's Civil Society Platform on non-violence, consisting of Fambul Tok, the Campaign for Good Governance and the Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization, hosted a football (soccer) tournament in order to promote violence-free elections.*

[“Fambul Tok Peace Mothers resolve to assist vulnerable communities”](#), March 9, 2012. www.fambultokblog.org/program-updates-sierra-leone/fambul-tok-peace-mothers-resolve-to-assist-vulnerable-communities *Fambul Tok Peace Mothers work to create a space for women to discuss pertinent issues and ideas and learn from others' experiences and obstacles.*

[“Fambul Tok review makes the connections to our lives.”](#) February 14, 2012. www.fambultokblog.org/program-updates-sierra-leone/fambul-tok-review-makes-the-connection-to-our-lives *This review from October 2011's Heartland Truly Moving Pictures Film Festival, at which Fambul Tok was awarded the Crystal Heart Award, explores the ways in which Fambul Tok's lessons have universal significance.*

[“African premiere of Fambul Tok \(the film\)”](#), April 2, 2011. www.fambultokblog.org/program-updates-sierra-leone/african-premiere-of-fambul-tok-the-film *Fambul Tok premiered in Bomaru, Sierra Leone on March 23, 2011, exactly 20 years after the war broke out in that same village.*

[“Former Commander Mohamed Savage apologizes to the people of Kono”](#), November 26, 2010. www.fambultokblog.org/in-the-news/former-commander-mohamed-savage-apologizes-to-the-people-of-kono *Mohamed Savage returned to Kono, where he committed some of the most gruesome atrocities of the war, to apologize to the community and ask their forgiveness.*

[“Fambul Tok profiled on VOA News”](#), June 8, 2010. www.fambultokblog.org/in-the-news/457 *Fid Thompson of Voice of America featured the unique work of Fambul Tok in Sierra Leone on his internationally-renowned radio program.*

[“Overview of Fambul Tok ceremonies”](#), September 26, 2008. www.fambultokblog.org/program-updates-sierra-leone/explanation *A brief introduction to the process and work behind the Fambul Tok reconciliation program.*

OTHER ARTICLES AND FEATURES

Tim Hoiland, [“A More Sustainable Peace.”](#) *Prism Magazine* July-Aug. 2012. prismmagazine.org/a-more-sustainable-peace/ *This cover article provides a detailed examination of the Fambul Tok process and how the program is paving the way for a more lasting, approachable reconciliation for Sierra Leone.*

John Caulker, [“Fambul Tok: Reconciling Communities in Sierra Leone.”](#) *Accord* 23 (2012): 52-54. www.c-r.org/sites/c-r.org/files/CON1222_Accord_23_11.pdf *Fambul Tok Executive Director John Caulker, explains the motivation behind and future of the peacebuilding organization's work in Sierra Leone.*

Elisabeth Hoffman, “Reconciliation in Sierra Leone: Local Processes Yield Global Lessons.” *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 32:2 Summer 2008: 129-141. *Fambul Tok co-founder and President of Catalyst for Peace Libby Hoffman writes about the Fambul Tok process and its significance for global reconciliation processes.*

Three-part feature from *The Christian Science Monitor* on Fambul Tok:

1. Jina Moore, [“Sierra Leone's ‘family talk’ heals scars of war.”](#) July 7, 2008. www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2008/0707/p20s01-woaf.html
2. Jina Moore, [“Sierra Leoneans look for peace through full truth about war crime.”](#) July 8, 2008. www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2008/0708/p20s01-woaf.html
3. “Jina Moore, [“A former rebel faces the Sierra Leonean farmer he maimed.”](#) July 9, 2008. www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2008/0709/p20s01-woaf.html

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND MATERIAL

SIERRA LEONE CIVIL WAR AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE:

Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (Harper Perrenial, 2008). *Ishmael Beah's firsthand account of his time spent as a child soldier during Sierra Leone's civil war.*

Gberie, Lansana, *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone* (Indiana University Press, 2005). *The author's experiences as a journalist during Sierra Leone's civil war - examining the links of corruption, conflict and violence.*

[TRC Report: A Secondary School Version](#), published in Sierra Leone in 2005 by the TRC Working Group, http://www.sierra-leone.org/Text_book_Sierra_Leone.pdf

Ibrahim Tarawallie, “Sierra Leone: Govt Reminded About TRC Commitment.” *All Africa*. N.p., 17 Oct. 2010. *The reasons behind the government's hesitation and delay in implementing the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are explored and analyzed.*

[Website of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission](http://www.sierraleonetr.com). www.sierraleonetr.com/ The full report and other relevant documents are now available for download. This site was most recently updated in May 2012.

[Website of the Special Court of Sierra Leone](http://www.sc-sl.org). www.sc-sl.org/ Summaries of court cases and other relevant documents are available online. This site was most recently updated in July 2012.

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GET INVOLVED

EDUCATORS: Want to connect with other teachers using Fambul Tok in their curriculum? Visit fambultok.com/classroom to exchange ideas and experiences with educators from around the world.

STUDENTS: Walk the *tok*. Start a Fambul Tok club and see where these powerful ideas can take you, your school and your community. Email info@catalystforpeace.org to request a free start-up kit with all the information and materials you'll need. We'll also invite you to join our student Facebook group to connect you with clubs all around the world.

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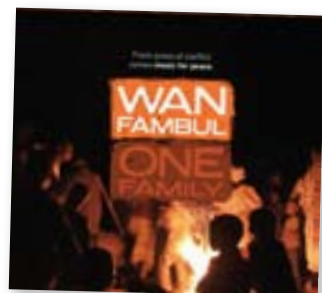


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