

# THE AFTERMATH PROJECT

## FAITH IN CHAOS

PEP BONET , 2008 AFTERMATH PROJECT GRANT FINALIST

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### INTRODUCING "FAITH IN CHAOS"

Pep Bonet's project about young people rebuilding their lives in post-conflict Sierra Leone focuses on those most affected by the war — amputees, the blind and the traumatized.

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### SOCCER TEAM

War amputees soccer team. Murray's Dream Team is a football team entirely made up of players with one leg. This soccer team was established in February 2001 and is made up of 22 players, all residents of Murray Town Camp for Amputees in Freetown. Most of the players were amputated by roaming rebels with machetes and handsaws. Their powerful football skills transform them into true athletes. A player kicks the ball during the game. June 2002.



- What is the subject of this photograph? What does the photographer want you to notice?
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### MURRAY'S DREAM TEAM

Football players from Murray's Dream Team training on the beach.

What does the central figure's body language communicate? The players on the team are all victims of forced amputations. Do they look like victims?



## CELEBRATING A GOAL

A football player from Murray's Dream Team is seen here celebrating a goal scored during a match being held to mark the team's commemoration day.



- Where are your eyes drawn in this photograph? As you examine the picture, what stands out?

The title of Pep Bonet's project is "Faith in Chaos," and he notes in his artist statement that these images capture "the lives of youth in Sierra Leone as they create chances for themselves in a land where opportunities are rare."

- In viewing these three photographs together, what words or feelings come to mind to describe these young men, given Bonet's title and description of the project?
- How does the composition of each image speak to the idea of "faith in chaos"?
- Pep Bonet suggests that "these images shed light on a side of Sierra Leone (and Africa) that we don't often see—of stamina, pride, and self-confidence." In your view, what are the ways in which these images explore or convey those characteristics?
- How does the common theme of football (soccer) in these photographs help to explain something about life in the aftermath of civil war, violence, or genocide?

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## TAMBA NGAUJAH

Tamba Ngaujah was the first amputee of the war in Sierra Leone, which featured brutal amputations of civilians by all three fighting forces. Rebels from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) captured Ngaujah on November 21, 1992, and cut off both of his hands. He has chosen to forgive the perpetrators because he believes that taking revenge would lead to generational conflict.



- Consider the significance of being recognized as the first amputee of the brutal, decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone. How does knowing this fact about Tamba Ngaujah impact your viewing of his portrait?
- In the caption for this portrait, photographer Sara Terry notes that Tamba Ngaujah "has

chosen to forgive his perpetrators because he believes that taking revenge would lead to generational conflict.” What do you think of his comment—does it fit with your understanding of justice? In what ways might forgiveness help prevent generational conflict? Some would argue that forgiveness without punishment lets the perpetrators off too easily. Do you agree?

- Do you believe that there are specific elements of a community or characteristics of an individual that impart the capacity to forgive or the inability to forgive? What might these be?
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### NGAUJAH GOES TO “WORK”

Six days a week, eight hours a day, Ngaujah goes to “work”—standing on the streets of downtown Freetown. He does not beg. He waits, hoping that those who recognize him will slip a few thousand Leones (50 cents) into his pocket. Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world.



- What do you think that Tamba Ngaujah is doing in this image?
  - How does this photograph challenge your idea of “going to work”?
  - In the caption, Sara Terry notes, “He does not beg. He waits, hoping that those who recognize him will slip a few thousand Leones (50 cents) into his pocket.” What does the image tell us about Tamba Ngaujah? What do we learn about him by reading the caption?
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### BANDAGES

One of Ngaujah’s sons wraps his father’s arms with the white bandages that he wears when he goes out in public. His wife makes sure that his navy blue suit is always clean and carefully pressed.



- How would you describe what is happening? How might Tamba describe the same scene?
  - The caption for this photograph offers information we would not otherwise know from viewing the image. How do these new details impact the way you look at the photograph?
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## A RARE DRINK

Ngaujah takes a break at a local restaurant, where he often rests during the day to escape from the heat on the streets. Usually he does not eat or drink during the day, saving the money he receives for his family. The only reason he is having a drink on this day is because a visitor bought it for him.



- What elements of this photograph stand out to you?
- Do you think the photographer chose the background deliberately? What does it mean to take a picture of Tamba in front of advertisements for Coca Cola, a product marketed with such slogans as “It’s the real thing” and “Things go better with Coke”?
- What does this image suggest about the aftermath of violence in Tamba Ngaujah’s life?
- What might the photographer be suggesting about the aftermath of violence in Sierra Leone?

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## WHAT HAS BEEN DONE, HAS BEEN DONE

Ngaujah stands on the hillside above Freetown, where he has been able to build a house of zinc metal on a small piece of land given to him by the government. He does not plan to return to Kono, the district where he was born and grew up (and where he was captured by rebels), because he believes that there are better opportunities for him and his family in Freetown, the nation’s capital.



“What has been done, has been done,” he says. “Nothing will bring back my hands . . . When I was amputated, during the three days after that [when] I was wandering in the bush, I was asking God to take my life. But God has a plan. At this time in my life, I think God has a plan.”

- In the foreword to the second volume of *War is Only Half the Story*, Sara Terry writes, “The stories of aftermath are the stories of what it means to be human—in contrast to the stories of war, which all too often are the sad summary of what it means to be inhuman.” How does this image communicate the larger mission of the Aftermath Project?
- “What has been done, has been done,” Tamba Ngaujah says. “Nothing will bring back my hands . . . When I was amputated, during the three days after that [when] I was wandering in the bush, I

was asking God to take my life. But God has a plan. At this time in my life, I think God has a plan.” What does he mean? What is he suggesting about the aftermath of war? What is he suggesting about how he carries on?

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See the full project: <http://dev.unchartedigital.com/project/faith-chaos>