

Interfaith Conflict, Trauma, and Art: An Indonesian Theological Voice of Healing and Peace

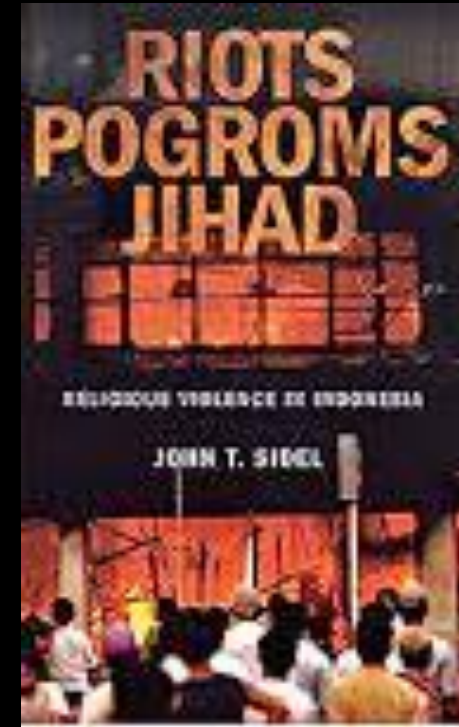
Septemmy E. Lakawa

Trauma, Faith, and Peacebuilding
International Forum on Interfaith and Transcultural Peacebuilding
Mission 21, Basel, Switzerland
August 18, 2023.

My Socio-theological Context: The shift in my theological paradigm

- **Indonesia: the country that has the world's largest Muslim population, ca. 80+% of 270+million of the total population.**
- **Jakarta Theological Seminary:** Teaching, researching, and advocating mission studies, feminist constructive theology, ecotheology, and trauma-informed theology.
- **History of violence**—state violence, religious communal violence, or religiously-motivated violence committed by individuals or groups in Indonesia (1965-1966, 1995-2005, 1998, 2018)—**"riots, pogroms, jihad"** (John T. Sidel)
- 1998 marked the shift of political power in Indonesia from the more than three decades of an **authoritarian regime** under the 2nd president, Soeharto, to the so-called **Reformation era**, with the promise of a **democratic state** based on the Indonesian state philosophy, Pancasila. The regime started its rule with a form of state violence known for the massacres of those accused of being members of the Indonesian Communist Party in 1965-66. The forced resignation of president Soeharto in May 1998 was also marked by the killing of students during student protests against him as well as the raping of Indonesian Chinese women and the assaults on and killing of Indonesian Chinese people in their homes and certain business areas, and that of the urban poor people in Jakarta, the capital city.

The increase of religious intolerance and the spread of the radicalization of religion.





Kemurahhatian & Trauma

Imajinasi Baru Misi Kristiani

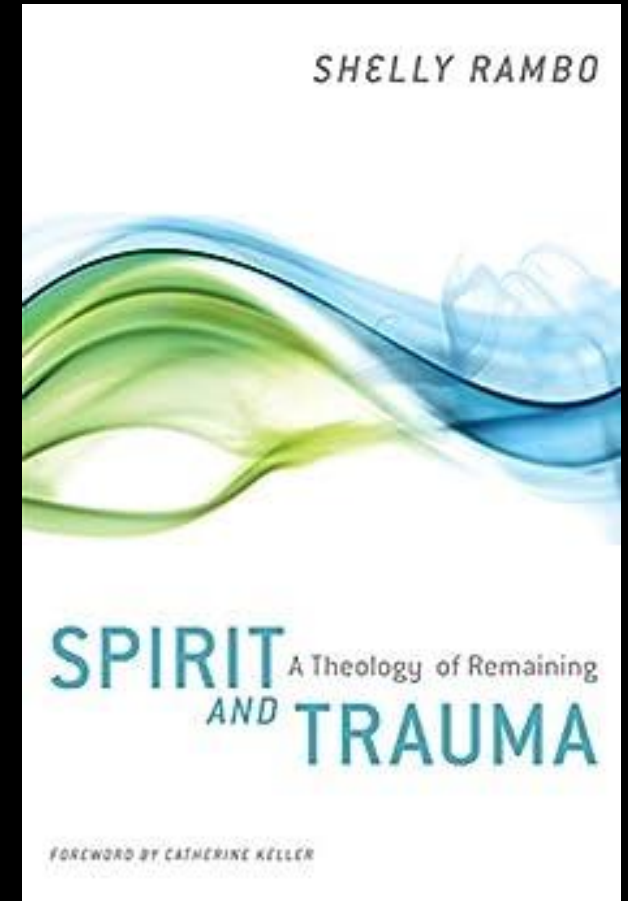
Septemmy E. Lakawa

- From 1995 to 2005, Indonesia witnessed one of the most violent periods in its modern history. These years contested the claim of Indonesia that it is a harmonious and religiously tolerant nation.
- My research in North Halmahera on the aftermath of Muslim-Christian communal violence.
- My research and work with local congregations and interfaith women's networks on trauma and the importance of interfaith collaborations on trauma healing as a core in the interreligious peace and reconciliation process.
- **An interfaith perspective on trauma is yet to be mainstream in interfaith collaborations for healing and peace in Indonesia.**

Trauma, Embodied Theology, and Art

Definition: **Trauma is “suffering that never goes away,” “suffering that remains” (Shelly Rambo).**

- In the face of trauma, one of theology’s tasks changes—from defining and deciding what the truth is to **testifying to the truth when it comes belatedly, incomprehensibly, and is unsayable.**
- In the face of trauma, theology becomes a testimony (Rebecca S. Chopp’s “poetics of testimony”).
- **Theology must become a practice and discourse of witnessing** (Shelly Rambo).
- A trauma-informed theology is an intercultural and intersectional theology.



Witnessing the wounds becomes imperative in constructing our theologies from within the history of violence.

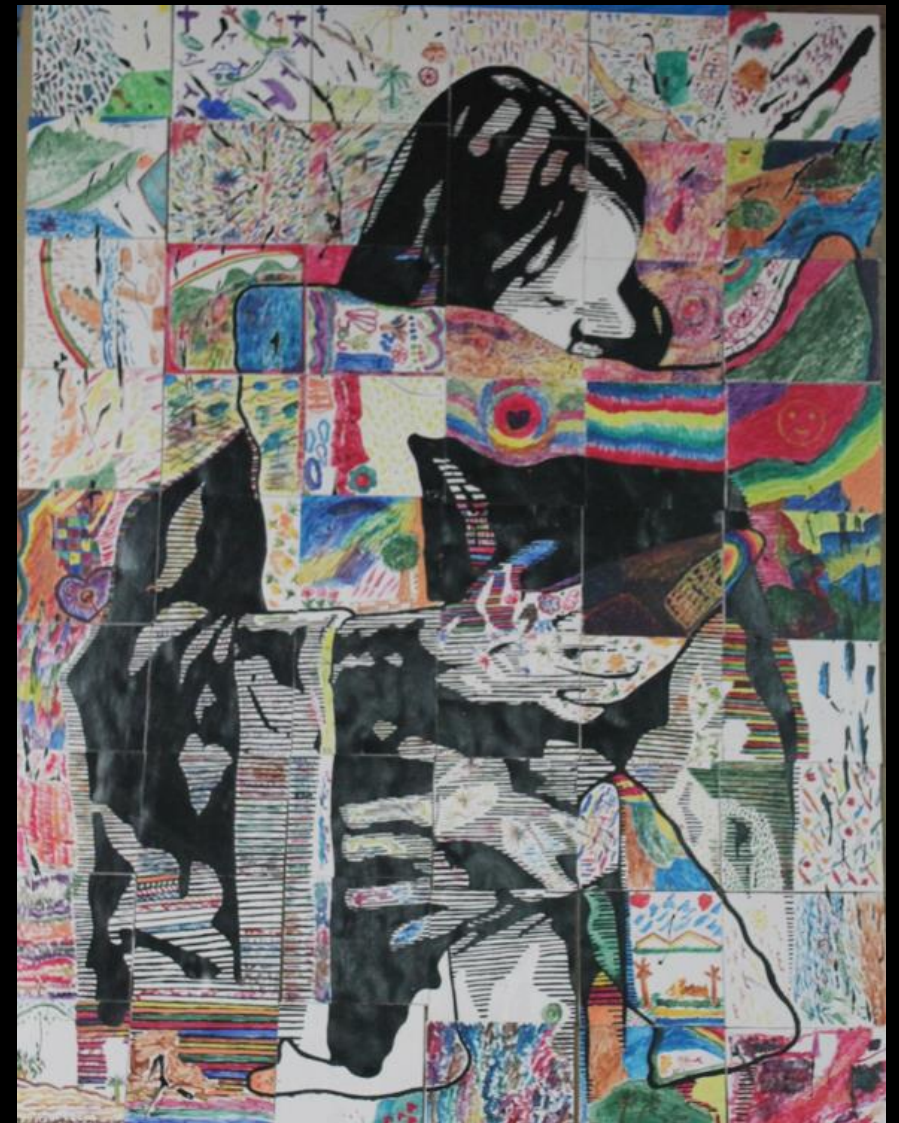
Septemmy E. Lakawa

- Trauma takes away our capacity to cope, adapt, and deal with our ordinary and familiar reality. Trauma reduces, even destroys, the brain's capacity to communicate memories of traumatic events, meaning **that trauma often cannot be communicated verbally. Instead, it is communicated through our bodies.**
- Bessel van der Kolk, a psychiatrist at Boston University, states that our “bodies keep the score”—**our bodies communicate the trauma that has happened to us even when our brains refuse to give it words.**
- Using Shelly Rambo's definition of trauma as the “suffering that remains,” the “suffering that never goes away,” **theology must witness to something that remains, that never goes away.**
- According to Judith Herman “Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning. . . . **Traumatic events** are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather they **overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life.**”

Two questions:

1. How can we perceive and respond theologically to our interfaith relationships through the lens of trauma and its aftermath?
2. What happens to the Christian understanding or practice of witnessing in the face of trauma when the human capacity for speaking, for narrating the wounds, has disappeared?

- Trauma is a physiological phenomenon—it is embodied, somatic. Therefore, in responding to trauma, **theology must be embodied**.
- As an incarnational religion/faith, Christianity is also an embodied faith—not foreign to the body (“this is my body, this is my blood . . . Given to you . . . Do this in remembrance of me”)
- My experiences working with and witnessing the healing process within local communities and churches in the aftermath of religious violence, including in the aftermath of natural disasters, testify to **the importance of embodied healing through art forms, especially dance**.



Jesus embraced the island of Sulawesi.
(A theological reflection on the aftermath of a natural disaster in South Sulawesi in 2018)
Artist: Lukas Eko Budiono (alum of Jakarta Theological Seminary).

The Polyphonic Sound of Faith— An Embodied Healing

- “An Aftermath Friendship”: Story of a female minister of her congregation in the aftermath of a suicide bombing by a Muslim woman in Surabaya in 2018.
- **2014 and 2015: FGD with Muslim and Christian women on women, peace, and healing—the sounds of *azan* and church bell.**

Septemmy E. Lakawa



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ASIAN CHRISTIANITY
4 (2021) 236-247



Aftermath Friendship: an Indonesian Feminist Theological Perspective on Trauma and Interreligious Peace

Septemmy E. Lakawa

Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Theologi Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

septemmy.lakawa@stfjakarta.ac.id

Abstract

This article offers an Indonesian Christian feminist theological voice on religion's contribution to peace as a risky interreligious practice of friendship following religious violence—thus, an aftermath friendship. I argue that aftermath friendship is a relevant feminist theological metaphor for the capacity and the role of women in negotiating difference and practicing healing from within the wounded interreligious relationship caused by religious violence. It is a practice of simultaneously building and recovering interreligious friendships that have been ruptured, for example, by the trauma of a religiously related attack on a church building. This article brings into dialogue women's aftermath narratives that are embedded in the ruptured interreligious landscape, the biblical concept of friendship, and feminist trauma theology to unveil the polyphonic features of interreligious peace, friendship, and healing.

Keywords

aftermath friendship – women – interreligious healing – trauma – ruptured landscape

An Introductory Sketch

God Breathes

- To end the presentation:
- **A video of me dancing to the song** I composed in 2018 during a trauma-informed spiritual retreat that my team and I facilitated to accompany a group of survivors of a natural disaster in central Sulawesi, Indonesia.
- **Dance can communicate trauma and the promise of healing when words falter—words fail to communicate the wounds.**
- As I stated in my other publication, **the dance reveals “a posture of embracing while releasing, bending down while refusing to give up, listening to the unsayable that comes from the body that remembers the violence, of holding the gap between the breathing in and the breathing out, of holding life in the aftermath.”**

God Breathes

Tempo: 60 bpm Lyrics & Song: Septemmy E. Lakawa, 2018

God breathes we breathe I breathe God breathes God we breathe I breathe God breathes God sur - ren ders we sur - ren - der I sur - ren - der God sur - ren - ders God we sur - ren - der I sur - ren - ders God em - bra - ces we em - bra - ce I em - bra - ce God em - bra - ces God re - mains we re - main I re - main God re - mains