

## Liberia special....

"I did terrible things to my country and my people....I know how many people I have killed, I know when I started killing, I know how many people I have raped.....When you go so deep into sharing blood like this, it makes you insane.....ordinary psycho-counselling cannot help, only Jesus has enough power to change you from this."

And so began my conversations with Joshua, formerly known as "General Butt Naked" in the 14 years war in Liberia. (He got his title by charging into battle naked, except for his shoes and gun) If anyone had told me that I would someday spend two days meeting with former child soldiers in the war torn country of Liberia, I would have said they were crazy. But here I was, sitting side by side with one of the infamous legends of the war, a man who was responsible for leading young warriors into battle and who has been attributed the responsibility for over 20,000 deaths during the civil conflict in Liberia under Charles Taylor.



**Joshua in battle – early '90s**

Now a follower of Jesus, and committed to "repairing what harm" he can, Joshua is surrounded by former fighters, some of whom he fought against; all of whom are desperate to share their story and seek forgiveness and healing.



**Joshua now – making dinner for the former fighters**

Then there is "Former General Allen", recruited at 14 years old, forced to eat the hearts of his victims to gain strength - and then he developed a taste for them.

"After the war, I was restless, I was not happy unless I could see blood - I used to watch people kill animals for food, just so I could see the blood." "I did not know what war was, until I was in it - at the front."



**Listening to the story**

Another former fighter says, "After the war I went into hiding. I had not had a bath for over three years, or changed my clothes. Joshua found me hiding in the graveyard, and said that I did not have to live like this. He took me to church, and I smelled so bad - but this old woman came right up to me at the door of the church, she hugged me and said 'welcome home'...that changed me. I thank God for my life this day."

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Two days of hearing the stories of how these men were recruited, brutalized, and how they turned into brutal killers was by far one of the most intense and emotionally draining things I have ever experienced. These men, now in their late 20's and up, were robbed of their childhood and thrust into war. And when the war was over, they were abandoned. It was summed up in one statement from a former boy commander: "When I was ready to kill for you, or do evil things for you, I had all the support I needed. Now, I want to do goods things and be a good person, where are the good people to support me now?"

A good question - a difficult one to answer. However I do know that Youth For Christ in Liberia is very active in working with people like Joshua to help re-integrate former child fighters into society....a society that really does not want them.

Luke and I spent most of a week in Liberia. We learned a lot - it will take time to process it all. We look forward to sharing more stories as time goes on. Please pray for Liberia, and for those trying to make a difference there.

Thanks for listening.  
Humbled by Grace,



Daryl

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### QUOTES from Liberia:

- "Youth For Christ has stepped in where the UN has left off" - Michael Holder, Pastor and Chaplain to the Liberian National Senate.
- "Yes, we need money to survive, but more than anything else, we need your intelligence (knowledge). Please, come and teach these men how to be carpenters, masons, mechanics; and teach them to teach others so that they can make a difference." - Joshua Blayhi, on the need to equip former fighters with careers.
- "Thank God ever so much for your visit to Liberia. Let me say that your visit to Liberia was a rewarding one. It serves as a courage for us you having made the sacrifice. The young people of Liberia appreciate your mission to Liberia and pray that God grant you the strength, favor and courage to tell our story to others." - Augustine Fredricks, incoming director of YFC Liberia.
- "That's where my sister is buried." (waving a hand at a grassy knoll by the ocean)  
"Mass grave, she was coming home from school and there was a raid. She ran, but was shot." Patrick Dorbor, YFC staff in charge of ministry to former child soldiers.
- "There is no-one in Liberia who has not been affected by the war" Hon. Clarice Alpha Jah, Liberian Senate.